ROBSON PRIZE 2022

Answer ONE question. Essays should be typed (footnotes are not obligatory) and should not exceed 3,500 words in length.

SECTION A – BRITISH HISTORY

1. What does the evidence of coinage reveal of life in Anglo-Saxon England?

2. Assess the achievement of King Alfred.

3. What was the impact of the Norman Conquest?

4. What drove the legal reforms of Henry II?

5. What, if anything, was so ‘great’ about Magna Carta?

6. Why did medieval English kings intervene in Ireland?

7. What made a ‘good king’ in late medieval England or Scotland?

8. What was the significance of the Peasants Revolt of 1381?

9. To what extent was Henry VII the ‘last medieval king of England’?

10. Should we celebrate, or execrate, the reign of Henry VIII?

11. Why were there such marked regional differences in the impact of the early Reformation in England?

12. Why were there no further rebellions against the Tudor regime after 1569?

13. Assess the causes of the English civil war.

14. What was not restored after 1660?

15. ‘There was nothing glorious about the Glorious Revolution when viewed from an Irish or Scottish perspective.’ Discuss.

16. Assess the benefits to Scotland of the Union with England of 1707.
17. To what extent was Robert Walpole’s longevity in office simply the result of the inadequacy of his opponents?

18. What did it mean to be a Tory before 1760?

19. What impact did the French Revolution have on domestic British politics?

20. ‘The greatest problem for the Whigs was that they had nowhere to go and nothing to do after 1832.’ Discuss.

21. How important was Peel to the revival of the Conservative party after 1832?

22. What was novel about Chartism?

23. What role did Gladstone play in holding together the Liberals?

24. Why was Irish Home Rule such an explosive issue in British politics?

25. How did Disraeli alter the ‘culture of Conservatism’?

26. Assess the significance of ‘New Liberalism’?

27. What role did socialism play in the rise of the Labour Party?

28. What was the impact of women’s enfranchisement on political life?

29. What was the political impact of the British Union of Fascists?

30. Has the significance of the 1945-1951 Labour Governments been exaggerated?

31. What factors fuelled British de-colonisation?

32. To what extent has the chaos of the 1970s been exaggerated?

33. Why did the Scottish or Welsh Nationalists fail to make a sustained electoral breakthrough in the 1970s or 1980s?

34. ‘Without the SDP Thatcherism would have been inconceivable.’ Discuss.
35. What did Thatcher and Blair have in common (beyond electoral success)?

36. ‘It was British membership of the European Union, not Brexit, that represented an historical anomaly’. Discuss.

SECTION B – EUROPEAN HISTORY

37. Account for the demise of the Western Roman Empire.

38. To what extent was Charlemagne the ‘Father of Europe’?

39. Account for the rapidity of the Arab conquests 634-711.

40. Assess the significance of the cult of Chivalry.

41. Account for the First Crusade.

42. What was the significance of the Fourth Crusade?

43. Assess the impact of humanism on European culture and society in the early modern period.

44. Account for the flourishing of the arts in the Renaissance.

45. How unified was Calvinism as a religious movement across Europe?

46. What factors determined the success of the Counter Reformation?

47. What was the impact of the Thirty Years War?

48. How did the pattern of persecution of witches vary across Europe?

49. What factors contributed to the Golden Age of Spain?

50. How did the Enlightenment differ across Europe?

51. Why did Tsars want to westernise Russia in the eighteenth century?

52. What did Louis XIV and Frederick the Great of Prussia have in common?
53. Was the Terror the inevitable result of the French Revolution?

54. To what extent did Napoleon consolidate the achievements of the French Revolution?

55. Were the Revolutions of 1848-9 doomed to failure?

56. ‘For a dictatorship, the French Second Empire was remarkably democratic.’ Discuss.

57. What role did economics play in the Unification of Germany?

58. To what extent has the significance of the Risorgimento been exaggerated?

59. Assess the significance of the reign of Tsar Nicholas II.

60. Was the collapse of the Habsburg Empire inevitable by 1914?

61. ‘The Germans snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in 1918.’ Discuss.

62. ‘The Bolsheviks came to power because they promised peace and land.’ Discuss.

63. How popular was Fascism in interwar Europe?

64. How do you explain the radicalization of Nazi anti-Jewish policies after 1939?

65. ‘At the root of the Cold War was the German question.’ Discuss.

66. To what extent was the fall of the Iron Curtain the result of a crisis of confidence on the part of Communist elites?

SECTION C – WORLD HISTORY

67. What role did non-Europeans play in the early history of British and French colonial expansion?
68. How was the East India Company able to extend its power in India before 1820?

69. How did Pacific Islanders respond to the arrival of Europeans?

70. How independent was Latin America after c. 1830?

71. Why was the Qing dynasty able to survive the Taiping rebellion but not the events of 1911?

72. When and why did the Ottoman Empire decline?

73. What role did Africans play in the expansion of European power in Africa?

74. Why were the Nationalists (KMT) more effective in urban than in rural China?

75. To what extent was imperial expansion popular in interwar Japan?

76. How was the Indian National Congress able to retain and expand its broad base of support during the first half of the twentieth century?

77. What impact did the Second World War have on the European empires?

78. To what extent was nationalism in South-East Asia a product of Japanese imperialism?

79. How did the Cold War change U.S. policy to Latin America?

80. What was the significance of the Cuban Revolution?

81. 'Apartheid fell because it failed economically.' Discuss.

82. What has been the historical relationship between Islam and anti-imperialism?

SECTION D – NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY
83. How democratic were the mainland American colonies by 1750?

84. ‘There was no “American Revolution” for African Americans.’

Discuss.

85. How did the political role of women change after the end of the Civil War to the passage of the 19th Amendment?

86. Compare and contrast the styles, policies, and legacies of Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan.

87. ‘The New Deal was more about politics than economics.’ Discuss.

88. Was Black Power a natural outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement?

89. Was ‘Trumpism’ an anomaly in US political culture?

SECTION D – HISTORIOGRAPHY

90. ‘The History of religion should only be written by the irreligious.’

Discuss.

91. What does History owe to Marxism?

92. ‘Podcasts are where serious History is now done.’ Discuss.

93. What is wrong with the way History is taught and examined at school?

94. What does the study of gender in the past contribute to our understanding of gender today?