

# Using historical sources: a guide for A-level students

*with particular reference to The Wars of the Roses*

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Illustration of the Battle of Barnet (14 April 1471) on the Ghent manuscript, a late fifteenth-century document

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## Part 1: Using fifteenth-century sources

### What is a source?

This introduction to fifteenth-century sources has been written with sixth-form students like you in mind. It began with some A-level students being asked questions about the nature of late medieval sources and what they thought the challenges might be for students looking at them. The structure of this introduction is based upon their responses and it is designed to help students overcome problems they have.

Before you begin looking at sources from the fifteenth century, you need to think about what a 'source' really is. History teachers (and exam boards!) seem to talk incessantly about sources. A good working definition is that a source is a remnant from the past – a letter, a picture, a hand-carved axe head, a field system we can still see, a monastic chronicle, a Nazi propaganda poster, a stained-glass window.

1. Can you list other types of sources that you have come across in your history studies so far? Think back to Key Stage 3 and GCSE history lessons too.
2. Can you think of a better definition of a historical source?

Above all else, we need to remember that these 'sources' were not created with us in mind at all, nor were they created to be the complete record of events, attitudes and beliefs that we often mistake them to be. The best modern analogy I can think of is of a text message or Instagram post – these could be found (downloaded?) in 500 years' time and picked over by historians of that era to find out what twenty-first-century youth culture was like, but for you, the text or post had a different purpose entirely. And you may well be mortified to find out that your words are thought of as representative of a particular group or period, or even representative of you, if your texts and messages from a few days are all that survives some cataclysmic digital destruction. Imagine messaging a friend to ask them to come over and this being interpreted by future historians that you were in a relationship because they have no other evidence so they have had to fill in the gaps with what they think was likely. Or that by trailing back through all your surviving pictures, historians of the future 'work out' that teenagers (all people maybe?) dressed in a particular uniform and took pictures of their faces with seemingly religious significance.

This modern example helps to explain why we need to be careful when reading and drawing conclusions from late medieval sources such as the personal letters the Paston family wrote to each other in the fifteenth century. We love the fact the Paston letters are numerous and detailed, but we need to set them in context – other

people wrote letters that have been lost, the letters had a particular purpose at the time and they are not necessarily typical or representative of all of England.

We could be pretty negative and say that all we have are snippets. That said, with care, preparation and prior knowledge of the period, we can do something amazing and get a glimpse of part of the past. And we should perhaps be thrilled to get a glimpse of a part of the past rather than disappointed we cannot recover everything. Some of the things we can do with sources are staggering: we read letters and hear worried mothers and loving newlyweds; medieval stained-glass windows help us imagine clothes and how textiles were separated by social status; muster rolls of armies reveal how complex the bureaucracy of the fifteenth century was and from the lists work out where actual people lived. But we always need to remember that all our sources are fragments and that, when studying as far back as the fifteenth century, we are not likely to find one source that will provide ‘the answer’ (whatever that is!).

What teachers sometimes call ‘source work’ cannot be reduced to simple questions of ‘is it reliable?’ or ‘is it useful?’ This booklet is about answering some questions about typicality or value, but it is more about exposing you to some very interesting sources and ways of tackling them. No teacher will ever tell you to forget about reliability or utility or provenance, but I want to argue that this is just the start – we ask these questions so we can **find things out** about the past!

3. Think of questions you have been asked about sources in past lessons or in past exams. Which is the type of question that makes you think the hardest? Which questions have you not found historically challenging?
4. Why do you think looking at sources is such an important part of studying history at A-level?

## How do we know about the fifteenth century?

Historians at all levels are able to construct knowledge about the past (what my grandma might call ‘the real facts’!) but in order to analyse and pick apart a source we need knowledge of the period to start with. It is a little bit of a chicken and egg situation! For the rest of this section, I’ll be assuming you have some knowledge of the Wars of the Roses and late fifteenth-century culture as I want you to identify and discuss some of the major challenges students meet when looking at source material from this period.

Perhaps before you read any further, it would be helpful to get into a late medieval mood. Think jousting, wars with France, monastic religion and castles.

5. Make a list of all the things that would have been 'produced' *in this period* that could conceivably be found by historians or archaeologists today and used as sources.

When I asked my Year 12 students to come up with a list of sources, they produced lots of good ideas that I have put into column one. Column two is a list of things that I came up with once they had run out of ideas.

Column One	Column Two
paintings	pottery
tapestries	stone buildings
books	metal plate armour
letters	wall paintings in churches
chronicles	muster rolls of armies
court records	prayer books
royal records	reports to foreign ambassadors
annals	finance records in the Exchequer
histories	jewellery
Parliamentary laws	legal contracts
	field boundaries and roads
	the first printed texts

You can see that the lists we came up with have some differences. I had thought a bit more about non-written sources, including those which may require some specialist skill to decode – the work of an archaeologist for example. My list is also slightly more period-specific – you could have 'letters' or 'paintings' from many periods, but there is something nicely medieval about, for example, armour and the first printed texts. As a teacher, however, I fully understand why my students didn't suggest jewellery, graffiti or stone buildings – they have never had a chance to study any of these.

6. Why might it be a problem for historians to use only written documents and neglect other sources?
7. Why might teachers and exam boards mainly use written documents?

One thing that many of my students said was 'speeches', which I didn't accept as a good answer. While we do have records of the speeches given by Chancellors at

the opening of Parliaments, these are not actually recorded verbatim (with every word included) but are more like reports on what was said. I had to explain to my students that ‘speeches’ in the modern sense may well have been given before a battle or in Parliament but these were not written in advance and recorded as happens now. I think this was an example of some students not thinking carefully about ***the period they were actually studying*** and resorting to general source types like those we thought about at the start. Late medieval sources are not quite like modern sources.

8. Consider each of the following source types (all common in the fifteenth century). What would you hope to learn from each of these different source types about the fifteenth century?
  - I. Town chronicles
  - II. Personal letters
  - III. Records of the Exchequer

## **What sorts of challenges could you face when analysing fifteenth-century sources?**

Sixth-form students don’t always like thinking about medieval sources. They complain that the sources are harder to understand and that they struggle with the fact the sources are not always ‘accurate’ (casualty figures in battle are a real minefield!). Students also worry about having to spend more time looking at the ‘motive’ of who wrote the source and about considering ‘who was writing’. This isn’t necessarily different to modern sources, but students always seem to feel as if they have less to say when looking at earlier sources.

Often the biggest worry students have is the difficult language used in fifteenth-century texts. You can train your brain to understand more if you are exposed to the medieval style often, and you may need to sit with a dictionary as you are learning, but often the argument or message of a source can be understood without reading every word. The hard language is rarely as bad as students think and exam boards make adaptations.

As for considering provenance (both the ‘motive’ and ‘who was writing’) and how to comment on it, below is a two-part structure for completing this task of commenting on provenance, something that exam questions on sources often ask you to do.



## How do you use the provenance of the source to assess its usefulness for historians?

Nearly all exam boards at A-level ask students to tackle the question of provenance and value. What they are normally asking students to do is read a caption of a few lines which gives some basic information about the source and use this information to comment on how valuable (or not) aspects of the source are to an historian studying a particular topic.

It is useful to see this as a two-stage project. Stage One is considering the provenance of the source in terms of the circumstances in which it was written and Stage Two is considering the 'motive' behind creating the source at all. And remember, that creation of the source is most likely to have been for a **particular purpose at the time** rather than to record events for posterity.

### Stage One: who, when, where

In this table is a list of a few things that you may need to know about the provenance of a fifteenth-century source. These are formed as questions you may well want to ask in general and some example of how this could be specific to the fifteenth century.

Main question	General questions	Examples of period-specific questions
Who produced it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did he or she know about the topic or event?</li> <li>• Have they received the information first- or second-hand?</li> <li>• Does their position, status, job, gender or nationality give them a particular insight? Or is it the opposite?</li> <li>• Was there one author or many?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the author a member of the royal court around the king, so in a position to have privileged information?</li> <li>• Was the author a woman, so likely to have limited knowledge of the events of battle?</li> <li>• Was the author from a foreign country, perhaps misunderstanding events as they happened?</li> <li>• Is it an anonymous city chronicle, produced by many hands over many years?</li> </ul>
When was it produced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can we be certain of the date?</li> <li>• How soon after the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it a section of a town chronicle written in sections by anonymous authors over a</li> </ul>

	event was it produced? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it was produced nearer the time, is this necessarily more reliable?</li> </ul>	decade or more? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it a letter dated to Holy Week 1461, so shortly after the Battle of Towton which had taken place on Palm Sunday?</li> </ul>
Where was it made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the author geographically close to the event described?</li> <li>• Did the type of place influence the nature of the information in the source?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it a monastic chronicle from St Albans, in theory secluded from the world but a centre of two battles?</li> <li>• Was it a letter written from Burgundy to the Yorkist faction back home?</li> <li>• Was it a record of events in the city of London, the heart of many political actions?</li> </ul>

When you write comments about the provenance of sources, it is not enough simply to list the information of who, when, where, and how. Don't make the mistake of thinking that this information alone analyses the provenance. Too many students at the start of the year **simply copied out** the information given in the caption of the extract when asked to explain how far an extract might be useful to historians.

Instead, you must make connections **between** the information in the caption given, your existing historical knowledge and the topic you are being asked about. This is essential because you will always be asked to answer a question about the usefulness of the source rather than simply paraphrase existing information. Always find a way to link the information to what you know of the period and use this combined knowledge to comment on how useful, valuable or reliable the source itself may be.

9. Fill in this table. It has been started off by reminding you of some historical knowledge and giving clues in the end column, but you'll need to draw on much more.

Information about a source	Existing historical knowledge	Possible comment on provenance in order to assess the source's potential value to historians
An extract from Gregory's Chronicle about the Battle of Towton	Gregory's Chronicle was written in London. The battle of Towton took place in	This could mean that the author doesn't ...  It does tell us what was known ...



	Yorkshire.	
A letter written by the Duke of York to the town of Shrewsbury asking for support before he tried remove the Duke of Somerset from power at Dartford in 1452	The Duke of York needed to gain support for his protest. Shrewsbury is not far from Ludlow, the Duke's seat.	The provenance here is more about the known author. Considering this was written by the Duke of York, this could make the source valuable for a historian assessing how he built support.  Additionally, it could be useful for informing historians of...
A Burgundian traveller in England in 1472 writing to the Duke of Burgundy describing the readeption of Henry VI.	Burgundy was an ally of Edward IV against Henry VI. The readeption had happened in October 1470 to May 1471.	

That said, your comments cannot always be definitive. You need to include lots of tentative, hedging language so that you can think carefully about how certain your claims are. Remember the task with the text messages and Instagram pictures at the start – historians of the future won't be able to say much that is 'certain' by looking at these sources, nor can we claim everything we suggest about the value of sources is certain.

10. Can you think of any good tentative phrases similar to these? Perhaps once you have thought of some you could rank your list in terms of 'certainty'.
- X **may have** an impact on Y
  - X **was likely** to influence Y because
  - X **could have** been phrased like this because Y

Next time you read an historian writing about sources, make sure you take note of just how certain they appear to be and what words they use to explain how certain they are.

## Stage Two: purpose

The second stage in assessing the value of sources is to consider the 'motive' or the purpose behind the construction of the source. For clarity, provenance and purpose have been separated out here, but both are essential.

While exam questions often give you lots of information about the provenance, they rarely tell you about the purpose explicitly. You need to use your historical knowledge to **make inferences** about why sources were created and how this purpose has an

impact on what the source tells us (and how reliable, typical or useful we think that is).

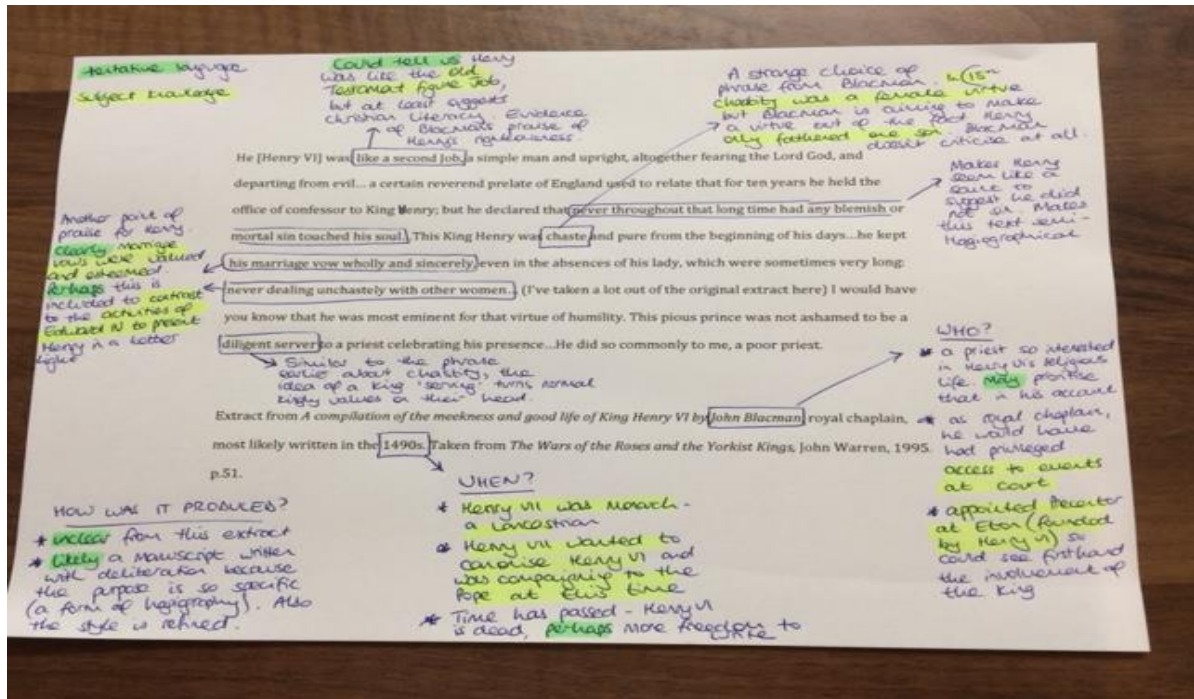
11. Use the two examples below and try to predict what sort of information will be contained in each of the sources based on the provenance and purpose. This is a great way of thinking about how purpose can shape the message of a source.

Source and provenance	Clues as to the purpose	Prediction of what kinds of information the source will include and what it will not.
A chronicle called 'The Great Chronicle of London'. It was written in English from 1189 to 1512. Various writers seem to have added sections so the authors are anonymous. The writers seem to have been citizens of London.	The writers were interested in changes in the history and development of London and its major events	
Jack Cade's Proclamation of Grievances, 1450. Cade, the leader of the popular revolt or protest in Kent in 1450, issued this list of grievances which was sent to towns and villages around the south of England.	Cade was seeking support for his protest which took place after the French recaptured English lands in France. At the time there was also heavy taxation and unemployment and two of the king's advisers have been murdered.	

Very often when reading a text, you'll need to use what it says to work out what the purpose was intended to be. Look carefully at the words chosen – if the Duke of York is described in negative terms in a government document, it may be because the purpose was to bring down some legal punishment against him or to turn the political classes against him. Look at what the exam boards call the 'tone' of the language in the piece as you try to work out the motive.

## An annotated example: 'What can historians learn about the fifteenth century from this source?'

In the example below, you can see what might be done when faced with a new source and a question about how valuable it is. This is just a selection of what you might say.



Here are just a few things you could say in answer to the question 'what can historians learn about the fifteenth century from this source':

- Christianity was important; Blacman (and presumably his audience) knew Christian values like chastity and knew of stories like that of Job.
- Marriage vows were important to priests (and Blacman tells us that Henry VI kept his). These comments clearly suggest that not all men did keep their vows. Perhaps this tells us something else about wider society.
- Becoming a saint required others to write about your character and activities in the best possible light.

By reading the source carefully, what else can you find out about the fifteenth century that is not already listed? What about ways in which this source is not valuable (what does it not tell us?)

As you can see in the example given, lots of tentative phrases are used and knowledge of the subject is used to make comments about the text and the

provenance. Often when working, this will happen naturally in your head but as practice, it makes sense to write everything out.

Have a go at doing exactly the same sort of annotations to the following extract.

*Despite the King's professed love for Clarence, the large grants he has given him and his forgiving of past offences, the duke for all this, no love increasing but rather growing daily more malicious, has not [been slow to] conspire new treasons. [Indeed he has] falsely and traitorous intended and purposed the destruction and disinheriting of the king and his issue and the subversion of all politic rule of the realm...And over this the duke, fully intending to exalt himself and his heirs to the regality and crown of England, [has] falsely and untruly noised, published and said that the king our sovereign lord was a bastard and not born to reign over us....*

Rolls of Parliament: The Attainder of George, Duke of Clarence, January 1478.  
Quoted in Keith Dockray, *Edward IV: a source book*.

## Part 2: Chronicles and other sources

### What are chronicles?

When studying the medieval period, we have to get to grips with evidence from sources we call chronicles. Alongside annals (usually short factual year-by-year records), chronicles were the main genre of historical writing in the medieval period so they have always been very important to historians.

Chronicles are detailed and give continuous accounts of events in chronological order (because history was understood as a linear process with a beginning and an end), usually in prose but occasionally in verse. They give us information about events and can also convey the historical, political and cultural attitudes of their writers and their audiences. It was the aim of historical writing to relate what had happened, but also to educate, to encourage people to do good and to warn against doing wrong. For these reasons, many chronicles comment on the recent past and events they have witnessed or heard about from contacts.

Chronicles from the period 1450-85 can be categorised broadly into different types:

- a) **Monastic chronicles** Until the mid-fifteenth century, monasteries were important centres for the production of chronicles. Monks were literate; they could read and write and knew Latin (the language of learning) and had access to the skills and equipment (quills, parchment, ink) to record events. Many were well informed about national events because they were well placed in towns, received important visitors and some abbots attended parliaments. These monastic chroniclers were often keen to record the history of their monastery as well as of the major events of their own time. Many also included government documents and newsletters in their chronicles. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, the tradition of monastic chronicles had faded, so fewer monastic chronicles provide evidence for the period 1450-85.
  
- b) **Town chronicles** As the tradition of monastic chronicles was dying out, town chronicles, particularly centred in London, emerged. Literacy was growing fast in the fifteenth century and these chronicles appealed to the interests of the wealthy and influential mercantile classes. Historians have been very critical of the deficiencies of the town chronicles; one eminent historian, Charles Ross, described them as 'essentially annalistic rather than analytical, uncritical of their sources, and offering no explanation of the causes or significance of the events they describe'. Despite this, the surviving town

chronicles (some are only fragments) form a large collection of historical writings, often closely connected with each other because writers borrowed material from each other or continued an earlier version. They can provide important evidence if they were produced close to the site of events they describe so, for example, they are particularly valuable as evidence for events in London. The town chronicles are also particularly valuable for the attitudes and opinions they convey, again particularly in London.

- c) **Brut Chronicles** are known as 'Brut' because they originally told the story of Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain, and the early history of the country. Many copies of Brut chronicles still exist, revealing their popularity in the fifteenth century. One feature is stories including omens such as drops of blood landing on washing as a sign of battles to come. This may lead us to think all chronicles say this kind of thing and so reveal a lot about medieval thinking but it's a particular feature of this type of chronicle so may say more about this genre of chronicle than about fifteenth-century thought in general. One major version used by historians is known as 'Davies' after its nineteenth-century editor.
- d) **Histories** By the 1460s and the reigns of the Yorkist kings (beginning with Edward IV), a genre of writing emerged which we call histories. Histories focus on a particular theme and set out to explain, not just describe, events. Several appear to have been written to provide official government versions of events to justify the actions of the government at the time. They contain considerable detail, often unknown from other sources, and were written by highly-educated officials, but we have to be aware that they were written to influence opinion at the time and so are not completely objective accounts of events.

### **Guidance on the chronicles**

The chroniclers of the fifteenth century provide essential details about events and people of the Wars of the Roses. Without them we could not create a narrative of the major events of the period so it's important not to underestimate their value.

However, there are pitfalls in using them which must be taken into account when assessing each source as evidence for a particular issue. For instance:

- Most chronicles were produced in the south of England, especially London. Consequently, the geographical distance from the north and the anti-northern prejudice in some southern chronicles means they tend to have little accurate information about the north and are sometimes very confused about it.

- Almost all the chronicles writing about the period 1450-71 are pro-Yorkist because they were written after the accession of Edward IV in 1461. Chronicles written after 1485 are hostile to Richard III and written in favour of Henry VII.
- Few chroniclers saw battle sites for themselves, relying instead on reports of battles which were often incomplete or patchy.
- The authors of many chronicles are often unknown and they were not writing academic history as we think of it today. They were recording what interested them or to set out a particular viewpoint.

## What sort of other records, letters and papers are there?

There are very many other kinds of sources, some of which survive in huge quantities and provide historians with a great deal of information about the careers of individuals, what lands they owned and what positions they held. These sources allow us to create a much more detailed picture of events, building on the narrative base created by the different kinds of chronicles described above.

Government records:

- Chancery Patent Rolls and Close Rolls – literally rolls of information listing appointments made by the king, grants of land, the members of commissions appointed to deal with serious crimes, recruit soldiers for the king etc. These tell us about the policies of kings, who benefited from royal patronage, which individuals were influential in each region and how that changed if the king changed.
- Documents from the Exchequer – details about royal finances.
- Law court records – details on legal cases.
- Parliament rolls – record the major issues discussed in Parliaments, including the statements made by the government to present its views. Little information has survived about detailed discussions or elections.

Public information such as proclamations, manifestos, newsletters, political ballads

- Usually such propaganda was used by opponents of whoever was in power but also includes government proclamations.

There are also official, semi-official and private letters. These include:

- Reports sent by ambassadors from France, Milan and other states to their governments about events in England.
- Collections of family letters e.g. the papers of the Paston family from East Anglia. Only a handful of such collections of family letters have survived.



## Information about some of the source material that is likely to appear on an A-level exam paper

### **Annales Rerum Anglicarum (The Annals of the Affairs of England)**

A short, disconnected 'scrapbook', a list of events written in Latin by an unknown author, still writing in 1491. It is not always accurate in its chronology but provides some information about the 1450s and up to 1468 which is not found elsewhere. This is of some use for historians but, because it is not found elsewhere, is not corroborated by another source. Its greatest value is for events when the writer had been present e.g. when Edward was acclaimed King by the people of London in 1461. He seems particularly well informed about the battles of Wakefield, Mortimer's Cross and the second battle of St Albans.

### **Bale's Chronicle**

A brief chronicle of the city of London covering 1437-61 which is contained within a longer common-place book – a kind of 'scrapbook' of writings that interested the owner and compiler. Bale, a London lawyer, has been suggested as the author but there is no clear evidence to identify the author. It is notable for its criticism of the failure of Henry VI's government to protect law and order but was written in the 1460s.

**Brut Chronicle** - see introduction above and An English Chronicle below

### **Commines**

Philippe de Commines (c.1447-1511) was a Burgundian, an adviser to the Duke of Burgundy and later to Louis XI of France. Around 1489-96 he wrote a memoir of his career, partly as a guide for rulers and so takes care to explain causes and consequences of events. He writes with lively detail and is interested in people but inevitably his views are in favour of either Burgundy or France – he tends to be critical of Edward IV, is hostile to Richard III, more positive about Henry VII. He had no first-hand knowledge of England but as a diplomat met English people in exile (including Edward IV in 1470 and 1475), for example in 1469-71. His major value is for the reign of Edward IV (despite his criticisms of Edward) and particularly for England's relationship with Burgundy and France, for events in Calais and Burgundy and for the English invasion of France in 1475.

### **Chronicon Angliae (Giles' chronicle)**

An anonymous Latin chronicle, probably written by a cleric at the end of the 1450s. It is known as 'Giles' Chronicle' after J. A. Giles who edited it for publication in the nineteenth century. It is of value for 1450-55, finishing before the battle of St Albans in 1455. Unusually it is critical of the Duke of York in the 1450s, especially over his actions leading to the Dartford Incident in 1452 and is not overly hostile to the Duke

of Somerset – unlike the majority of chronicles which are written after 1461.

**The complaint of the poor commons of Kent (Cade's Manifesto)** from Jack Cade.

In 1450 Cade's rebels listed their complaints in written petitions to the King. As the rebellion continued, new versions of the complaints were written which tells us how the aims of the rebellion developed. The petitions repeatedly stress complete loyalty to Henry but the emphasis at the beginning on grievances about local problems in Kent decreased and greater emphasis was placed on national problems such as the failure of the war with France and the treachery of the king's corrupt advisors. Copies of these documents were distributed around the south of England to build support for the rebels in 1450.

**The Croyland Chronicle: First Continuation [also spelled Crowland]**

The original Croyland Chronicle was written by the Benedictine monks of Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire. It covers the period 616 to 1117. The First Continuation was written by an anonymous prior of the abbey and covers events from 1149 to January 1470. It is mostly concerned with the history of the abbey itself but does comment on the events of the 1450s and 1460s. Its value for historians is however very limited as the author did not have direct knowledge of many outside events although both Henry VI and Edward IV paid brief visits to the abbey. Its chief value may be in reflecting contemporary opinion, being tolerant of Henry VI, moderately supportive of Yorkist policies and is critical of the influence exercised by the Woodvilles after Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464. It is largely hostile towards northerners, as a result of the threat to the abbey from Margaret of Anjou's army early in 1461 as it marched south towards London.

**The Croyland Chronicle: Second Continuation (1486) [also spelled Crowland]**

The Second Continuation of the Croyland Chronicle was written by April 1486, eight months after Henry Tudor's victory over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. Professor Michael Hicks has recently suggested that it was actually written in two chunks – the majority (from 1459 up to Bosworth in August 1485) in the autumn of 1485 and the remainder in April 1486. The continuation can be described as an early history as it has a clear theme – the story of the Yorkist kings - and attempts to explain events rather than merely record them. The author does not give his name though he does tell us that he was a doctor of law and a member of the Royal Council (though a great many people were councillors so this does not help a great deal!) Historians have tried to identify the author and several possibilities have been suggested but no agreement has been reached. The best summary is that he was a senior civil servant who witnessed many events in London.

The continuation is regarded as the most important narrative of events of the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III, as the author was exceptionally well informed, providing material that can be found nowhere else. This makes it a very valuable

source for the period. In a number of places, the author writes with first-hand experience and provides eye-witness evidence for example of the distress of Richard III and Queen Anne when they heard of the death of their son. The author aims to give 'a truthful recital of the facts without knowingly intermingling therewith any untruthfulness, hatred or favour whatsoever'. However, he does make his views and subjectivity clear - he is deeply critical of Richard III and particularly of his 'plantation' in the south of his northern supporters ('the north whence all evil comes'). It is possible that he may have been influenced by Tudor propaganda but equally he may well have seen Henry VII as a saviour after Richard's reign. For example, he refers to Henry being described as 'an angel sent from heaven through whom God had deigned to visit his people and set them free from the evils which had hitherto afflicted them beyond measure', although he does not make clear if this is his or a more general opinion at the time of Henry's accession.

### **Dominic Mancini**

An Italian cleric and humanist who probably came to England in the summer or autumn of 1482 as part of a diplomatic mission. He was recalled to France following Richard's coronation and, several months later, by December 1483 he wrote an account of recent events in England culminating in the usurpation of the throne, including about what he had seen and heard. Since he was writing after his return to France, he may well have been influenced by hindsight and his desire to please his patron by telling as dramatic a story as possible.

The resulting manuscript is mainly of interest for the three months following the death of Edward IV, but it includes comment on Edward himself, his court and the politics of the last years of his second reign. In particular, he penned a lively character sketch of the king and he has much to say about his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, Woodville influence on Edward and the hostile relations which, he believed, had long prevailed between the Woodvilles and Richard of Gloucester. Mancini is critical, even hostile, towards Richard's usurpation but his departure from England means he provides no coverage of Richard's reign. There are several reasons why we need to be cautious in using Mancini as a source. It is likely that he spoke no English and, being new to England, he may have been susceptible to propaganda and influence from those hostile to Richard. He does not reveal his informants but it is highly likely that he obtained information from fellow Italians in the capital and from people linked to the Woodvilles such as John Argentine, Edward V's doctor. He never seems to have left London and is hazy about events and places outside the capital. His chronology is not always perfect and his account does contain some factual errors. For example, he was two days out with the death of Edward IV. Having said that, he says when he is very unsure of something and there is little doubt that he was an eye-witness to some events in London. He is also one of the few writers providing a near-contemporary account of events in 1483.

## **An English Chronicle**

This Chronicle is a version of the Brut style of chronicle (see introduction above) and is sometimes known as 'Davies' after its nineteenth-century editor. It is a continuation of a much longer history of England going back to the foundation of Britain which was up-dated to include contemporary events. It was not written year by year, however, and the coverage of the events of 1450 to 1461 were written in the early 1460s in Edward IV's reign by an unknown but decidedly pro-Yorkist author. Many London citizens supported York and the war with France as this brought wealth to the merchants of London who provided supplies to the troops and lent money to the king to finance military campaigns. This chronicle ends in 1461.

The London provenance of the English Chronicle is demonstrated by its detailed knowledge of the city, its detailed account of Cade's rebellion in 1450 including the insurgents from Kent fighting with the citizens of London on London Bridge and of events in London after 1458. It also includes newsletters and documents. Its coverage is however episodic with gaps in places and some events out of order but much detail in other places. It is particularly detailed about the years 1459-61, emphasising with some satisfaction, the accession of Edward IV. The pro-Yorkist view comes across in its hostile attitude to the dukes of Suffolk and Somerset and its explanation for the beginning of fighting, its pro-Yorkist views about the first Battle of St Albans and the Loveday. It also bemoans the loss of Anjou and Maine which was part of Henry's marriage agreement to Margaret of Anjou in the Treaty of Tours, 1445.

## **Francesco Coppini, Bishop of Terni**

Coppini was sent by Pope Pius II to England in 1459 to try to win English support for a Crusade and help bring peace between Henry VI and Richard of York. Instead of remaining neutral he enthusiastically supported the Yorkists and accompanied the Yorkist force in 1460 to the battle of Northampton. He left England after the Yorkists defeat at the second Battle of St Albans. His letters to the Pope and the Duke of Milan are greatly affected by his support for York and by his lack of real knowledge of events and places in England.

## **Gregory's Chronicle (c.1461)**

A valuable source for events in and around London during the 1450s and 1460s and the first main phase of the wars in 1459-61. Gregory's Chronicle records the major events of London from the accession of Richard the Lionheart in 1189 to the events of 1469. It was named after William Gregory who was born in Mildenhall, Suffolk around 1400. He became a wealthy member of the Skinners' Company in London as shown by the bequests he left in his will to his family and to churches in London and his native Mildenhall. Historians believe that William wrote the account of the chronicle which covers the 1440s and up to 1450, perhaps to 1451-52 when he became Lord Mayor of London. After this, the events of the 1450s and 1460s were continued by an anonymous (possibly clerical) author, writing in the 1470's.

Unsurprisingly, Gregory's Chronicle displays a southern bias with well-informed accounts of, for example, Jack Cade's Rebellion in 1450 and Edward IV's unpopular decision to debase the coinage in 1465. The chronicle's record of the events of London is supported by a detailed assessment of the wider events of 1459-61 including an account of the second Battle of St Albans in 1461. This suggests that the author took part or knew someone who took part. It is likely that Gregory's accounts of these major events can be called 'eye-witness' as he would have been a prominent citizen of London at the time, giving added credibility to this as a source of evidence. Often showing a sense of humour, the author gives an insight into the attitudes of London's mercantile elite as well as interesting detail on the wider problems faced by Edward IV in the 1460s and is very helpful on the Lancastrian resistance of 1461 to 1464 and Edward's attempts to reach agreements with the Beaufort family. It ends in 1469, two years after Gregory's death in January 1467.

### **Harleian manuscript 433**

This detailed administrative document is a register of the grants of land and appointments to office throughout the country made by Richard III. Much of this also reappears in the Patent Rolls. This information allows historians to build a detailed picture of Richard III's use of patronage to build support. It is clear that he originally wanted to maintain the support of his brother's supporters but later had to make many grants of lands and offices to his northern affinity to build a support base and maintain control in the south. This information also allows historians to follow the careers of many individuals and to see the changing patterns of power in individual counties.

### **Hearne's Fragment**

A section of a document written in the early sixteenth century by a man (perhaps a royal household servant) acquainted with Edward IV. The majority of the document has disappeared. This remaining section covers 1461 to 1470. The author's purpose was to write down what he'd heard Edward say and what he'd witnessed. He is sympathetic to Edward and critical of Warwick. Thomas Hearne was not the author but the eighteenth-century antiquarian who first published this document.

### **Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV (c.1471-72)**

The Historie is the most important narrative of the events from 2 March to 26 May 1471, charting the arrival of Edward IV from Burgundy to the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, to his defeat of Thomas Neville, the Bastard of Fauconberg's assault on London and finally to Edward's recovery of the English throne. It was either written for or adopted by Edward as an official Yorkist account of his restoration to the throne. It initially circulated as a short French newsletter (c. May 1471), designed to set out Edward's version of events to foreign courts. Although the Historie is clearly a work of Yorkist propaganda, its immediacy, detail and eye-witness perspective make it a highly valuable historical source. The Historie is written in an extremely detailed and powerful narrative style. It is keen to justify Edward's campaign, accounting for

his actions and constantly emphasising Edward's leadership and bravery in battle and how God showed his support for Edward throughout his campaign. Despite this Yorkist sympathy, the narrator is honest about the problems Edward faced. For instance, he records how Edward attracted very little support on his landing, how he was turned away by the town of Hull and how he was fortunate not to have been pursued and stopped by Warwick's younger brother John Neville, marquis of Montagu. Yet for all of the problems described, the author goes on to show how it was because of Edward's abilities and God's support that he was able to overcome them. The Yorkist sympathies of the author of the *Historie* are most clearly displayed in his very unconvincing description of the death of Henry VI in the Tower of London which he claims to have been caused by 'pure displeasure and melancholy'.

### **John Blacman**

Blacman wrote an account of Henry VI entitled 'A Compilation of the Meekness and Good Life of King Henry VI'. Blacman was born in 1407-08, studied theology and became a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, in 1436 and of Henry's foundation of Eton College. He later became a Carthusian monk and, most importantly, Henry VI's confessor (personal chaplain) so he knew the king well and closely observed his religious beliefs and behaviour. Blacman's account is very much about Henry as a man of religion rather than Henry as a king, perhaps because he wants to portray Henry positively, which would have been difficult if he had written about Henry as king. He therefore emphasises Henry's sense of morality and his desire to put religion and prayer before all else. Blacman wrote at some point between Henry's death in May 1471 and his own in 1485.

### **Jean de Waurin (c.1394-1474)**

Waurin was a Burgundian soldier, politician, chronicler and compiler. He belonged to a noble family and witnessed the battle of Agincourt from the French side, but later fought on the Anglo-Burgundian side in the later stages of the Hundred Years War. This seems to have given him a strong interest in English events. He visited England in 1467 and also met leading English figures such as Anthony Woodville, Lord Rivers, brother-in-law of Edward IV and maybe the king himself during his temporary exile in 1470-71 which may explain his pro-Yorkist leanings. Waurin's chronicle was intended as a complete history of England but his account varies a great deal in accuracy. On the one hand he loved good stories, and may well have made up material to fill gaps; we do not know who provided much of his information though he did use newsletters, accounts such as the *Arrival* of Edward IV and the *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire* and information from those he met. On the other hand his account provides a unique view from Europe of the Wars of the Roses, includes contemporary viewpoints and opinions and some very detailed information, particularly on battles and warfare between 1459 and 1471.

## **Letters**

Several collections of letters from fifteenth-century families survive. The main collections are those for the Paston, Plumpton, Cely and Stonor families. Of these only the Paston letters contain a substantial amount of material that is relevant to national politics. The other collections focus on local matters, finances and estates and trade etc. The most valuable letters for national events are perhaps two letters written by Simon Stallworth to Sir William Stonor in June 1483 which report what Stallworth knew about events in London at the time of Richard III's seizure of the throne. For the Paston letters see the entry below.

## **The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire (c. 1470)**

This chronicle is a pro-Yorkist account of the events of three critical weeks in March 1470. Similar to *The Arrivall*, it is an official account written by an anonymous royal servant of Edward IV, designed to present the government's version of events and to implicate both Clarence and Warwick (who had fled to France) as the ringleaders of the rebellion. Edward IV is portrayed as vigorous and effective whereas the inclusion of rebel confessions such as that of Sir Robert Welles, the leader of the Lincolnshire rebellion, further supports his intentions of justifying Edward's kingship.

Despite being propaganda in support of Edward IV's regime and repeatedly condemning the treason of his enemies, the *Chronicle of the Lincolnshire Rebellion* is nevertheless a very valuable source for its very detailed description of events and what it tells us about what Edward wished people to know about the events. It was written skilfully and persuasively and only shortly after the rebellion itself had ended. It recalls events in a detailed chronology and gives us a great deal of information that is not to be found anywhere else.

## **The Great Chronicle of London (published 1516)**

The author of the *Great Chronicle of London* is unknown, but may have been a wealthy London merchant and alderman called Robert Fabyan, who died in 1513. The author of the *Great Chronicle* uses a wide range of sources, including details from other chronicles and possibly some of his own experiences (if the assumption about Fabyan being the author is correct). The *Great Chronicle* was written during the reign of Henry VII and so the author was obliged to portray the new Tudor regime favourably while condemning the previous Yorkist regime of Richard III. Despite this Tudor/Lancastrian bias, the *Great Chronicle* provides detailed and reasonably balanced accounts of Edward IV, including his secret marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 and of the great tournament held at Smithfield in 1467, involving the king's brother-in-law, Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales and Anthony, the illegitimate son of the Duke of Burgundy. This tournament would have been of great interest and importance to the people of London. Although more vague on the events which occurred beyond the capital, it is the recording of first-hand observations of moods and opinions in London that makes the *Great Chronicle* a valuable source of information about the period.



### **Milanese State Papers**

Semi-official reports from the envoys of the Duke of Milan in England. They have little knowledge of the geography of England and are generally thought to rely quite a lot on rumour. For example, in 17 June 1471 they report that Edward IV had not only ordered the murder of Henry VI, but also of Margaret of Anjou. However, these reports give a sense of the concerns and opinions of the moment such as the popular belief that Warwick was playing a bigger part in government than King Edward himself immediately after 1461.

### **Thomas More (1478-1535)**

Friend and Lord Chancellor of Henry VIII, later executed by Henry, he was a humanist of renown. He wrote his 'History of King Richard III' around 1513-18, using models of classical writing which included invented speech and drawing upon classics such as Tacitus to describe Richard as the 'bad' Tiberius and Edward as the 'good' Augustus. More was not trying to write an objective history but intriguingly some of his contacts had first-hand knowledge of the Yorkists (such as his father and his master Cardinal Morton whom he served as a boy). He also had access to the London chronicles and the work of Polydore Vergil. He also uses phrases such as 'this I have by credible information' and shows detailed knowledge of Londoners and London in Richard's time.

### **Paston Letters**

This is a collection of letters between members of the Paston family of Norfolk and their friends and business contacts, dating between 1422 and 1509. The letters within the family generally concentrate on family matters and legal and other business but the letters they received from other contacts, particularly from London, give us a good deal of valuable information about national events. For example they provide examples of the kinds of news circulating after battles such as St Albans in 1455 and Towton and provide reactions such as that to the recovery of Henry VI from illness in 1454. This is by far the most valuable collections of letters from the period, revealing a great deal about social life, local politics and national events.

### **Polydore Vergil (c.1470-55)**

Vergil was an Italian churchman and humanist who came to England in 1502 to work for another Italian who had been appointed bishop of Hereford. Vergil lived in England for much of the rest of his life. He was asked by Henry VII to write a history of England, completing the first manuscript c.1512-13 which, unusually, was divided by reign and he dedicated his completed work to Henry VIII.

Vergil is regarded as a major and well-informed source, providing a detailed narrative of events, particularly of Henry VII's reign but also an extremely detailed narrative of Edward IV's reign, writing on both his failures and strengths. He criticised the Yorkists, believing that instability was started by Richard Duke of York. He was extremely critical of Richard III arguing that he wanted the throne as soon as he

heard of Edward's death but only had the means to do so when he allied with Buckingham. For evidence he consulted men who could remember back to the Yorkist period and took part in key events and consulted chronicles such as the London chronicles and Crowland chronicle to gather information. His writing was undoubtedly favourable to the Tudors but he made great attempts to distinguish fact from fiction as he was notably critical of myths and tried to establish cause and effect.

### **Richard of York's Manifesto, 1452**

The manifesto (sent to the town of Shrewsbury) was one of a number sent by York to towns in 1452 when he was raising support for his challenge to Somerset as the king's chief adviser. York marched his army from the Welsh border towards London and hoped to win support by inciting hatred against Somerset. The letter therefore tells us how York was justifying his actions, what he was saying about Somerset and that he was not criticising Henry VI.

### **Parliament Rolls**

The rolls of parliament were the official records of the meetings of the English parliament, summarising the major issues discussed. These are not a word-for-word report (like the modern Hansard) but clear, overall summaries. They tell us what the king's government wanted people to know, setting out its justifications for raising taxes, for example, or its assessment of the progress of war and diplomacy. They also provide, for example, lists of rebels condemned for treason in Acts of Attainder and justify the accusations e.g. the account of Buckingham's rebellion in 1483 which lists all those involved and the organisation of their rebellion.

### **John Rous (d.1491)**

John Rous was a Warwickshire chaplain and antiquary, who wrote the Rous Roll during the reign of Richard III, praising the king in notably extravagant terms as a man who ruled his realm 'full commendably'. Following Henry VII's accession, however, Rous did his best to suppress his earlier account of Richard III and dramatically rewrote his account of Richard III in his 'History of the Kings of England' (*Historia Regum Angliae*), creating an incredibly hostile portrait of the king which portrayed Richard as deformed.

### **Somnium Vigilantes**

A political tract (account) written on behalf of Henry VI's government that gives a defence of the condemnation of the Yorkists at the Coventry Parliament in 1459. It was probably written by Sir John Fortescue, a Lancastrian official and political thinker. It argues that York's behaviour and actions had damaged and challenged the common good, peace and interests of the country and its people throughout the 1450s and so the Yorkists deserve condemnation as traitors and neither pardon nor mercy.

## **John Stow**

Stow was an Elizabethan writer in the late 1500s who copied some earlier documents into his history 'A Survey of London'. These include the rebels of Jack Cade's rebellion 1450: 'the law serves for nothing these days but to do wrong', 'his false council has lost his law', 'his merchandise is lost, his common people is lost, the sea is lost, France is lost, the king is so beset he may not pay for his food', 'he owes more than any king of England should', 'daily traitors about him'.

## **Warkworth's Chronicle (c.1480)**

Most useful for the events of 1461-71, this chronicle is commonly referred to as Warkworth's Chronicle, after John Warkworth (d.1500), a Cambridge academic, whose name is on the only surviving copy of the manuscript. Warkworth is the man most likely to have written this important account although he may simply have transcribed or commissioned it. In 1483, Warkworth presented his college with a handwritten copy of the Brut chronicle to which was appended, as a continuation, the only surviving copy of this chronicle. Its longer title is 'A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth'. This chronicle is an especially valuable insight into the events of 1461 onwards and particularly the conflicts between 1469 and 1471. John Warkworth is believed to have been a northerner, born perhaps near the village of Warkworth in Northumberland, and is the only chronicler of the period with both a considerable interest in, and knowledge of, northern affairs which therefore offers a valuable and rare northern perspective at a time when most other chronicles were heavily influenced by southern interests and strongly suspicious of or hostile towards the north.

Although covering the reign of Edward IV, Warkworth's Chronicle is critical of Edward. It provides information on the Lancastrian resistance that centred on the northern castles of Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh between 1461 and 1464, and it is a major source for northern rebellions, such as the rebellion of Robin of Redesdale in 1469 and the Welles Uprising in Lincolnshire in 1470. The chronicle is sympathetic to Henry VI, whose restoration in 1470 is described as giving great joy to 'the more part of the people', and it is critical of Edward IV, who is particularly condemned for his financial exactions. The chronicle also mentions the dissatisfaction of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, with Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 and the author condemns John Tiptoft, the Yorkist Earl of Worcester, who for his execution of Lancastrian sympathizers is said to have been 'greatly behated among the people'. The chronicler also hinted that Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Edward's brother, had some responsibility for Henry VI's death in 1471. The chronicle also describes the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury. Warkworth's Chronicle has, however, received a mixed press from fifteenth-century historians: on the one hand, it has been described (by Antonia Gransden) as a 'well-informed, contemporary and generally moderate account' of the first 13 years of Edward IV's reign (1461-74); on the other, it has been criticised (by J. R. Lander) as 'compressed to the point of confusion and inaccuracy, its author a man writing without notes,

whose memory is suspect and whose chronology is unreliable'. Although frequently confusing and sometimes incorrect in chronological details, Warkworth's Chronicle is a useful source for the earlier years of Edward IV's reign.

### **John Whethamstead's Register (also Whetehamstede)**

Most useful for Henry VI, the origins of the conflict, the Battle of St Albans, May 1455 and its aftermath. John Whethamstead was born in Hertfordshire around 1392. At the age of 16, he entered the Benedictine Order at St Albans Abbey and became abbot in 1420 until he resigned in 1440. He then served as abbot for a second period after the death of his successor between 1451 to his death in 1465. Whethamstead was an energetic and successful abbot. During his period as abbot in the 1440s, he entertained many influential visitors at the abbey, including Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (younger brother of Henry V) with whom he forged close links to through their common scholarly interests. St Albans abbey was particularly well placed north of London, receiving many important visitors and merchants travelling to and from London who passed on information to the abbot.

Whethamstead is one of the few monastic chroniclers still recording events during the early stages of the Wars of the Roses. He praised Henry VI as a simple, upright man but one who could not resist those who urged him to unwise decisions and wasteful extravagance. He is generally sympathetic to the Yorkists but still capable of criticising their actions. His Register records events during his second period as abbot (1451-65) and is most notable for the first-hand account of the events surrounding the Battle of St Albans fought in May 1455. For example, we know that after the battle, he was given permission from the Duke of York to bury Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Thomas, Lord Clifford, Lancastrian leaders killed during the battle. The abbey at St Albans continued to be closely linked to events during the latter 1450s and into the 1460s. For instance, Henry VI spent Easter in 1459 at the abbey and after the defeat of the Yorkists at St Albans on 17 February 1461, the northern Lancastrian army led by Margaret of Anjou did great damage to abbey property. In addition Whethamstead's account of Richard of York's attempt to claim the crown late in 1460 is of particular value as it may well be based on his own eye-witness account because, as abbot, he was probably in attendance at parliament.

## Part 3: What are the specific requirements for the AQA A-level exam?

As the title above suggests, we now turn to the specific requirements of the AQA A-level History Component 2B. This section builds on your learning from the other sections and from your A-level course and is specifically about how to approach the exam questions when you are in the exam room. Think of the exam room as rather like a driving test. In your driving lessons, you practice driving and, most of all, after you have passed your test, you continue to learn to drive as you drive for different purposes, you drive to more places and you enjoy it more. I think it's rather the same with the study of history. But in the driving test, as in the exam room, you are there to do a very specific thing: to show the examiner in the specific time and under their instruction that you are competent. This section is about being able to show the AQA examiner the level of competence you have achieved.

### In the exam you will have a compulsory source-based question:

- It requires you to use three written sources produced during, or very shortly after, the period 1450-99
- Each of the sources will be 120-150 words in length
- The compulsory source question carries 30 marks
- You will have 60 minutes in which to plan and write your answer
- The generic question stem will always be: 'With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying...' (what they are studying is the specific part of the question)

Notice that you are **not** required to compare the sources.

The crucial word here is **value**. You could say: 'What does the source add to our knowledge and understanding of the past?' It is a deliberately broad term and you will need to make sure that you do not focus on just one aspect of what makes a source valuable.

## How do you assess the value of a source?

You can assess the 'value' of a source from lots of different angles. What is it that affects the value of a source? Here are some ideas in a list.

<b>A source's value can be affected by:</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	Who was the source produced for? How has that affected what has been written?
<b>Date</b>	What can the date of composition/creation tell us? What was going on at the time of the event being written about that might have affected the content of the source? What was going on when the author was writing that might have shaped what they wrote?
<b>Accuracy</b>	How does what it says compare to what we have learnt? What do we know? How can our knowledge help us decide if the source seems to be accurate?
<b>Details</b>	Does the source make vague assertions or are there plenty of precise details in it? Does the writer give the impression of being well informed?
<b>Focus</b>	Is the author concerned with the topic of the question we have been asked? The source may be about something else so does that make it less valuable for the question we have been asked?
<b>Reliability</b>	Does the author seem to be trustworthy? Or is there something about their tone or their background that might make us doubt their reliability? Are they reliable for one thing, but not another?
<b>Opinion</b>	What is of interest to us in any opinions given? Do they shed interesting light on views of events at the time?
<b>Location</b>	Where did the action take place that the author is writing about? Where was the author in relation to the action s/he writes about?
<b>Insight</b>	Is this source written from the perspective of an insider or an outsider to the action?
<b>Clarity</b>	How much does the author seem to know, or be prepared to reveal?
<b>Sponsor</b>	Did someone ask for the source to be produced? If so, what were their expectations and how did they influence what was written?

That's probably quite a daunting list, so let me explain how it is to be used.

In an exam you are likely to be nervous. Some people find this can prevent them from thinking as broadly and clearly as they usually do. This might mean that you focus on only one or two aspects of what makes a source valuable. If you do this you will make working with the sources harder and you will not show the examiner

what you can do. Having a checklist that you are familiar with can help calm your nerves and keep you thinking broadly. Read down the list of headings in the table and you will see it makes the words: 'A Dad Frolics'. That's deliberately silly in order to be memorable. You can scribble that at the top of your exam paper and it will remind you to think **broadly** about what can make a source valuable. (Of course, you could put the same letters into an anagram sorter and come up with a better one.)

That said, you won't find all the aspects of what makes a source valuable in every exam source. You also won't have time in an exam to explore the term 'value' in full. Remember, the checklist is just designed to calm your nerves, keep you thinking broadly, and to provide you with some good terminology that you can use in your answers to raise the standard of the language you are using.

## What is the examiner expecting me to do?

For each one of the three sources the examiner is expecting you to assess the value of the source **for a specific purpose** (the one given in the question):

- Explain, analyse and evaluate the provenance, tone and emphasis of the source using your knowledge of the historical context, AND
- Explain, analyse and evaluate the content and argument of the source using your knowledge of the historical context.

There are several things to note here:

- Analysing is what you are doing when you are studying what makes it valuable. For example, analysing the value of the source in relation to its provenance, tone and emphasis is about asking and answering questions such as: 'How does when the source was written affect its value for the purpose?' and 'What is the focus of this source?' Analysing the value of the source in relation to its content and argument is about asking questions such as: 'Do the opinions given shed any interesting light on the topic in the question?' and 'How accurate is the information given that relates to the topic in the question?'
- Just re-read the bullet point above. It should be clear to you that you can't really answer those sorts of questions unless you really know your subject matter. You need knowledge to be able to explain what you mean. The examiners are quite blunt about the fact that candidates who have really spent time learning the topic inside out will do well. It is a depth study and they are expecting depth of knowledge about events and people to be on display. If you go into the exam unclear about who was who, and the details of what happened when, you are going to do very badly.



- Related to this, the examiners are expecting about two-thirds of what you write to be about the content and argument, and about one-third to be about provenance, tone and emphasis.
- Evaluating is about giving your overall view about the value of the source FOR THE TOPIC OF THE QUESTION. Note that you have to give this view in relation to the source's provenance, tone and emphasis AND its content and argument
- Remember, for A-level you are not required to compare the sources.

## But how do I tackle this sort of question?

Let's have a look at thoughts you might have when first reading a source:

The diagram shows a central text block with several callout boxes pointing to specific parts of the text. The text is a historical account of Richard III's usurpation of the throne. The callout boxes contain the following thoughts:

- What help am I being given?** (points to the source title)
- What do I know about him?** (points to the author's name)
- How, when and why did it happen?** (points to the start of the main text)
- Doesn't like him!** (points to the phrase 'Richard III. It is unclear how Mancini acquired such detailed information.'
- Grudge vs Woodville view – developed in detail.** (points to the start of the main text)
- Back before 1483.** (points to the phrase 'In 1478 the then Richard Duke of Gloucester was so overcome with grief for his brother's death that he was overheard to say he would one day get his revenge.'
- Gets onto how not why in last part – not very specific – reported?** (points to the end of the text)

*Source A From an account by Domenico Mancini of the usurpation of the throne by Richard III. Mancini was an Italian who visited England in 1483–1485 and witnessed the usurpation of Richard III. It is unclear how Mancini acquired such detailed information.*

In claiming the throne Richard was motivated not only by ambition but also by lust for power, for he also claimed that he was goaded by the ignoble family of the queen and the affronts of Edward's relatives by marriage. In 1478 the then Richard Duke of Gloucester was so overcome with grief for his brother's death that he was overheard to say he would one day get his revenge. From then on he very rarely came to court, preferring to keep within his own lands and set out to acquire the loyalty of his people through favours and justice. All were afraid that if Richard then went on to take the throne and governed alone, that those who bore the blame for Clarence's death would suffer death or at least be ejected from their high estate. No sooner had the death of Edward IV become known, when Richard had established the attitude of everyone, and with the help of friends in the capital, Richard and the young King entered London with 500 soldiers. But, after Hastings was removed, all of the attendants that had waited on the King were denied access to him. The King and his brother were withdrawn into the inner apartments of the Tower and day by day began to be seen less, till at length they ceased to appear altogether.

Hopefully you can see that this person has read this and is immediately spotting things that are about the value of the source and is also starting to set the source in the context of their knowledge.

Let's have a look at an example of part of an answer...

This source has **some value** for a historian studying **the usurpation of Richard III**. The **provenance** of the source is that it was probably written by a wealthy London merchant and alderman. **If so**, he may well have been present to hear the **announcement of the illegitimacy of Edward IV in mid-June 1483**. This could explain why he is able to put **emphasis** on recounting the specific timing of events, from Sunday, through Tuesday to Thursday, and to adopt a factual and detailed **tone**, such as when he describes the people present in the Great Hall at Westminster. As far as we are aware, from the **fragmentary source evidence**, this is a factual account of what happened five weeks after Edward IV's death. It describes the process of usurpation in London and is **probably a valuable eyewitness, or first report account, giving interesting, specific details**. However, the **content** is entirely focused upon the events in London in mid-June and **therefore has severe limitations**. **There is nothing mentioned about Richard's northern support base, his interception of King Edward V en route to London, imprisonment of Woodville rivals and imprisonment of the princes**. Therefore we are missing crucial information about how the usurpation happened. The **content** does give us the **publicly declared reasons for usurpation**, such as the claim to illegitimacy, but there is nothing about **much debated other motives, such as Richard's vulnerable Neville inheritance**.

**The colour code is:**

- **Blue = focus upon the issue**
- **Pink = Focus on PTE + CA**
- **Green = Knowledge**
- **Yellow = judgement**

Notice the following ingredients:

- There is a judgement precisely focused upon the question in the first line.
- The first thing tackled is the **provenance**. This is a way to get 'into' the source. It will give you clues that inform all your answer. You are not given much provenance information on the paper. However, remember, there are not that many sources that the examiners can use and you have lots of information about sources from the time earlier in this booklet. Remember also that most of the sources from this period do just give us a partial picture. You will want to have read the first section of this booklet again just before your exam.

- There is a focus upon provenance, tone and emphasis and upon content and argument. (Editor's note: the content and argument section has been reduced in this example.)
- There is a consideration of strengths and limitations in relation to the topic.
- There is a sophisticated concluding sentence that makes a very clear judgement about what in particular the source is valuable for. This is **crucial** for a high grade!

**NOTE:** do not feel bound to separate the sections on provenance, tone and emphasis and then content and argument. This will vary from source to source, but all the ingredients must be there.

These answers are not going to be easy for examiners to mark. 'So what?' you might say. Well, you need to make sure that an examiner does not miss that you are doing everything that you are required to do. It would be a very good idea to signpost your answer so that there is no chance of anything in your answer being over-looked. Worry less about beautiful paragraphing with these answers, and more about pointing out the elements of your answer. Look back at the sample answer again, and you can see that the key words an examiner is looking for are very clear.

### **Practice is the key to success**

Hopefully by the time you walk into the exam hall you will have practised many of these types of questions.

It would also be a good idea to think up all sorts of phrases that could be useful to you. For example:

- 'The tone is unsurprising as...'
- 'It was produced at a time when...'
- 'However, the value of the source can be questioned because...'
- 'The provenance of the source limits it because...'
- 'The provenance has an impact on the tone and emphasis by...'
- 'This can be challenged by...'
- 'This can be corroborated with...'

A template for practising source work is provided at the end of this section. It is designed to take you through all the stages of explaining, analysing and evaluating the source question. To use it you take a source of about 120-150 words from your

course and put it into the space provided. Your teacher will be able to give you guidance about the sort of topic to cover.

If you want to find source material to add yourself, then we recommend turning to the source collections put together by Keith Dockray. There are medieval documents available online, but there are complex issues about translations and versions that can get confusing. These books by Dockray will provide you with a range of selected and relevant sources. You can reduce them further to 120-150 words. You will also find some information about provenance in the introductions and at the start of each chapter.

- *Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: a source book* (Sutton History Paperbacks, 23 March 2000)
- *Edward IV: a source book* (Sutton History Paperbacks, 25 March 1999) (re-issued as *Edward IV: from contemporary chronicles, letters and records*)
- *Richard III: a source book* (Sutton History Paperbacks, 25 September 1997)

When you use the template, make your first step to think of five precise and specific things you know about the topic. Then complete each of the other boxes on the sheet. When you have completed every box, you could give your work to a friend so that they can add their ideas. You can then discuss how to make an answer even better.

Notice that we use the words corroborate (a fancy word for 'support') and challenge (a not so fancy word for 'being against'). These are useful words to have in your vocabulary for the exam.

An example with a source and question already added is also provided.

# How valuable is this source for...?

(A DAD FROLICS!!)

To warm up - 5 details I know about this topic:

Find a source from your course and put it here. Think of a content focus to make a question - ask your friends / teacher to help.

The provenance and tone of the source:

The contents and argument of the source:

How my knowledge corroborates the value...

How my knowledge challenges the value...

How my knowledge corroborates the value...

How my knowledge challenges the value...

One third on **provenance, tone and emphasis!** Two thirds on the **contents and argument!**

## How valuable is this source for...?

(A DAD FROLICS!!)

In the interim John Earl of Lincoln and Francis Lovell, having received from Margaret an army of about 2,000 Germans under the command of Martin Schwartz, a high-born German outstanding for his skill in war, crossed over into Italy and at Dublin they treated the boy Lambert just as if he were born of the royal blood and deserving of being crowned king in the traditional way. After this, having scraped together a multitude of impoverished and all but unarmed Irishmen, whose general was Thomas Fitzgerald, they sailed to England with the new king and, having made the effort, came to land not far from Lancaster. They were relying on the assistance of Thomas Broughton, the leading conspirator. But King Henry, who was not slothful in his own cause and who had anticipated this which happened, had a little previously dispatched some squadrons of cavalry both to keep watch for his adversaries' arrival and also to arrest certain men come from Ireland so he might learn his enemies' plans.  
(Polydore Vergil)

Extract from Polydore Vergil's History (1512-13)

How valuable is this source to a  
historian studying the defeat of  
Lambert Simmel?

To warm up - 5 details I know about this topic:

The provenance and tone of the source:

How my knowledge corroborates the value...

How my knowledge challenges the value...

How my knowledge corroborates the value...

How my knowledge challenges the value...

The contents and argument of the source: