

‘The Aspiring Historian’

KS4/5



**CHELTENHAM
BOURNSIDE
SCHOOL**

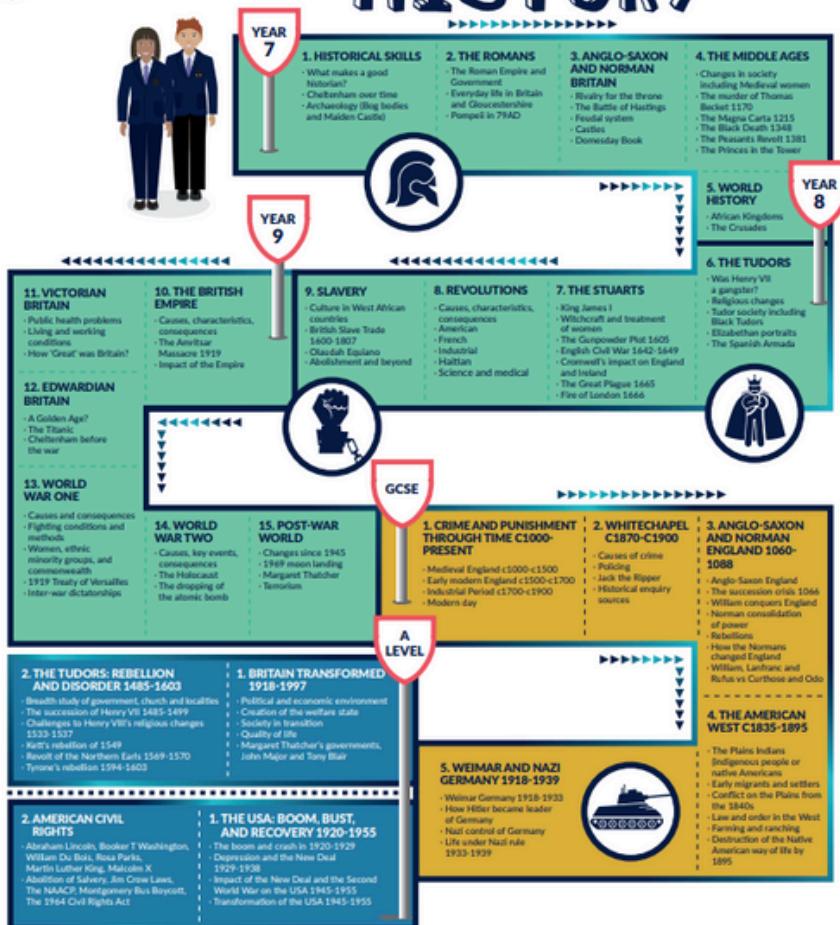


Inspiring lives through learning

'The Aspiring Historian'



HISTORY



'The Aspiring Historian'



Welcome to this booklet of Aspire tasks and activities designed to prepare you for A-level History and the study of History at University. Whether you are already passionate about the past or just beginning to explore its importance, this guide will help you build the skills and confidence you need for the next stage of your historical journey.

Studying History is about much more than memorising facts and dates. It teaches you how to think critically, weigh evidence, make convincing arguments, and understand different points of view. These skills are vital not only for success at A-level and university, but also for a wide range of careers - from law and journalism to politics, education, and beyond.

History challenges you to ask big questions: Why do societies change? How do people gain or lose power? What can the past teach us about the world today? It helps you become a thoughtful, informed, and questioning individual - someone who can navigate a complex and fast-changing world with insight and perspective.

This booklet offers a mixture of short tasks, longer challenges, and reflective activities to stretch your thinking. Engage fully with them, and you will be well on your way to becoming a skilled and confident historian.

Mr Lockyer
Head of History and Politics

Reading list



USA History Fiction Wider Reading

Task: Read one of these USA fiction books and write a book review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- **The Great Gatsby:** - F.Scott Fitzgerald
- **City of Flickering Light** - Juliette Faye
- **The Girls at the Kingfisher Club** - Genevieve Valentine
- **Josephine Baker's Last Dance** - Sherry Jones
- **Crossing the Horizon** - Laurie Notaro
- **The Diviner's** - Libba Bray
- **Cane** - Jean Toomer
- **The Girls of Murder City** - Douglas Perry
- **The Grapes of Wrath** - John Steinbeck
- **Of Mice and Men** - John Steinbeck
- **To Kill a Mockingbird** - Harper Lee
- **The Giver of Stars** - Jojo Moyes
- **Tobacco Road** - Erskine Caldwell

USA Article Reading

Task: Read 3 one of these USA Articles and write a review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the Article says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- Women in the Ku Klux Klan Movement
- New Deal Reconsidered
- Post-war American Society
- Flappers and philosophers and farmers: Rural-Urban tension in the 1920s
- New Deal policies and the persistence of the Great Depression
- McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism

Reading list



USA History Non-Fiction Task

Task: Read one of these USA Non-fiction books and write a book review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- **Anything Goes: A Biography of the 1920s** - Lucy Moore
- **Pursuing Life and Liberty: Equality in the USA, 1945–1968** - Robin Bunce)
- **The Truman Years, 1945–1953** - Mark S Byrnes
- **Prosperity, Depression and the New Deal: The USA 1890–1954** - Peter Clements
- **The Eisenhower Presidency 1953–61** - Richard V Damms
- **An Introduction to American History, 1860–1990** - Alan Farmer
- **USA, 1890–1945** - Chris Rowe
- **The United States 1917–54: Boom Bust & Recovery** - Geoff Stewart and Les Barker
- **The USA, 1917–45** - Susan Willoughby and Doug Willoughby
- **American Culture in the 1920s** - Susan Currell
- **Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974** - James T Patterson

Tudor Non-Fiction Wider Reading

Task: Read one of these Tudor non-fiction books and write a book review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- **My Heart is My Own (about Mary Queen of Scots)** - John Guy
- **Two Queens in One Isle** - Alison Plowden
- **Six Wives** - David Starkey
- **Disorder and Rebellion in Tudor England** - N. Fellows
- **Henry VIII and the Reformation in England** - K. Randall
- **Elizabeth I: Meeting the Challenge** - J. Warren
- **English Reformation** - C. Haigh
- **Early Tudor Government** - S. Gunn
- **England Under the Tudors** - G.R Elton
- **Prince, Pastors and the People** - S. Doran
- **Tudor Rebellions** - A. Fletcher and D MacCulloch
- **The Mid-Tudor Crisis** - D. Loades
- **Authority and Disorder in Tudor Times 1485–1603** - P. Thomas
- **Emergence of a Nation State** - A G R Smith
- **The Reformation and the English People** - J. Scarisbrick

Reading list



Tudor Fiction Wider Reading

Task: Read one of these Tudor fiction books and write a book review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- Matthew Shardlake series: Dissolution/Dark, Fire/Sovereign/Revelation/Heartstone/Lamentation/Tomblond - C. J. Sansom
- Wolf Hall/Bring Up the Bodies/The Mirror and the Light - Hilary Mantel
- The Other Boleyn Girl/The Boleyn Inheritance/The Queen's Fool/The Kingmaker's Daughter/The White Princess etc. - Philippa Gregory
- A Tip for the Hangman - Allison Epstein
- Six Tudor Queens series - Alison Weir
- Jane the Quene/The Path to Somerset/The Boy King - Janet Wertman
- His Last Letter - Jeane Westin
- Tudor Dawn - David Field

Tudor Article Reading

Task: Read one of these Tudor Articles and write a review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered
- The Great Council in the Reign of Henry VII
- Henry VII, The Great Administrator
- Kett's Rebellion in Context
- The Religion of Henry VIII
- The Concept of Order and the Northern Rising, 1569
- Violence and Social Conflict in Mid-Tudor Rebellions

Reading list



Transformation of Britain from 1918 to 1997

History Aspire Non-Fiction British History Books

Task: Read one of these British History books and write a book review to share with your teacher. Include details of what the book says, how interesting it is and how well written it is.

- **Tony Blair: A Journey** (2011) - *Tony Blair*
- **Margaret Thatcher: The Autobiography** (2013) - *Margaret Thatcher*
- **A History of Modern Britain** (2009) - *Andrew Marr*
- **British Society Since 1945** (1982) - *Arthur Marwick*

Competitions



History Aspire Debate Club

Join the Debating club and take part in an inter-school team debate, or the Historical Association individual debate. [The Great Debate / Secondary / Historical Association](#)

Listen and Watch



Podcasts

Task: Listen regularly to at least 3 of these History-related Podcasts below throughout the year and give regular updates of what they say to your teacher during your History lessons. These are available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.



In Our Time – History (BBC Radio 4)

- Why listen: Academic-level discussions hosted by Melvyn Bragg with leading historians. Covers a huge range of historical topics.
- Ideal for: Building background knowledge and critical thinking skills.



History Extra (BBC History Magazine)

- Why listen: Weekly episodes featuring expert historians discussing popular and niche topics. Very accessible and always well-researched.
- Ideal for: Broadening subject knowledge and historical perspectives.



Dan Snow's History Hit

- Why listen: Engaging interviews with top historians. Covers key themes in British and world history.
- Ideal for: Extra context and up-to-date interpretations.



You're Dead to Me (BBC)

- Why listen: Combines expert analysis with humour. Greg Jenner (also behind Horrible Histories) interviews academics and comedians.
- Ideal for: Making history engaging without losing depth.



Empire (William Dalrymple & Anita Anand)

- Why listen: Focuses on the British Empire—its origins, consequences, and legacies. Brilliant analysis of imperialism and colonialism.
- Ideal for: A-level units on Empire, decolonisation, and global history.



Hardcore History (Dan Carlin)

- Why listen: Epic, multi-hour episodes with deep dives into major historical events (e.g. World Wars, Mongol conquests).
- Ideal for: Serious students wanting detail, drama, and insight.



Revolutions (Mike Duncan)

- Why listen: Explains key revolutions from the English Civil War to the Haitian and Russian revolutions.
- Ideal for: Any course studying revolutions or radical political change.



The Rest is History (Tom Holland & Dominic Sandbrook)

- Why listen: Combines wit and depth. Covers a wide span of global topics with intelligent commentary.
- Ideal for: Thematic breadth and historiography awareness.

Listen and Watch



Tudor History Audio-Visual Task

Task: Watch a combination of 3 different documentaries, videos or films or one entire TV Series. Write a review on each of the 3 to share with your teacher. Sum up the main plot, what it told you about the Tudor period and how good you believe each video/documentary/film or entire series was and why.

Documentaries/videos:

- [Lucy Worsley BBC British History's Biggest Fibs: The Wars of the Roses](#)
- [A Complete History of the Tudor Dynasty](#)
- [David Starkey, King Edward VI of England](#)
- [Tony Robinson, Walking Through History: The Tudor Way](#)
- [BBC, Bloody Queens, Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots](#)
- [Timeline, When Henry VIII Fell in Love with Anne Boleyn](#)

TV Series:

- [The Tudors](#) (available on All 4/Sky Boxsets)
- [Wolf Hall](#) (available on BBC iPlayer)
- [The White Queen/The Spanish Princess](#) (Available on Amazon Prime)
- [Blackadder Part II](#) (available on BBC iPlayer/Britbox)

Films:

- [Elizabeth \(1998\)](#)
- [Elizabeth: The Golden Age \(2007\)](#)
- [Mary Queen of Scots \(2018\)](#)
- [The Virgin Queen \(2006\)](#)
- [The Other Boleyn Girl \(2003\)](#)
- [Lady Jane \(1986\)](#)

Listen and Watch



Transformation of Britain from 1918 to 1997

Subject Knowledge Enhancement

Task: Watch at least one film from 3 of these different time periods and write a review on each one to share with your teacher. Sum up the main plot, what it told you about the period and how good you believe the film was and why.

1918–1939: Interwar Britain

The Remains of the Day (1993)

- Set in 1930s Britain, explores class, duty, and the rise of fascism through the eyes of a butler in a great house.
- Themes: class structure, appeasement, decline of aristocracy.

Chariots of Fire (1981)

- Based on real events in the 1924 Olympics; captures interwar attitudes to religion, nationalism, and class.
- Themes: British identity, social mobility, prejudice.

The 39 Steps (1935, Hitchcock version)

- Spy thriller, but very revealing about national paranoia and the mood of the 1930s.
- Themes: fear of war, nationalism, modernity.

1939–1945: WWII Britain

Goodnight Mr Tom (1998)

- Follows a young boy who is evacuated during the Blitz.
- Themes: civilian life in wartime, family resilience, bombing of cities.

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943)

- Satirical look at British military traditions and changing values.
- Themes: patriotism, decline of empire, transformation of warfare.

Listen and Watch



1945-1960s: Welfare State & Postwar Change

To Sir, With Love (1967, UK/US co-production)

- **Why it mattered:** Sidney Poitier as a teacher in a tough London school, trying to connect with working-class teens.
- **Themes:** Education, race, respect, generational conflict.
- **Teen appeal:** Emotional and optimistic; iconic title song.

Carry On Sergeant (1958) – Humorous look at National Service & military discipline

Carry On Doctor (1967) – Humorous look at NHS hospitals and health care

A Hard Day's Night (1964) – The Beatles

- **Why teens loved it:** Captured Beatlemania, youth energy, music, and style.
- **Vibe:** Fast, fun, cheeky – pure 60s pop culture.

1960s-1970s: Cultural Shifts and Decline

Kes (1969)

- A boy from a poor Yorkshire background finds hope through his relationship with a kestrel.
- Themes: education system, working-class struggle, lost potential.

Quadrophenia (1979) – Dir. Franc Roddam

- **Story:** A Mod youth searches for identity amid 1960s subcultures and violence in Brighton.
- **Themes:** Rebellion, mental health, consumerism, youth disillusionment.
- **Historical value:** Although set in the '60s, the film speaks to the alienation and frustration of 1970s young people.

Listen and Watch



USA History Audio-Visual Task

Task: Watch a combination of 3 different documentaries, videos or films. Write a review on each of the 3 to share with your teacher. Sum up the main plot, what it told you about the period and how good you believe each video/documentary/film was and why.

Documentaries/videos:

- [The Century-America's time series](#)
- [The Harlem Renaissance](#)
- [Al Capone](#)
- [American voices-Boom and Bust](#)
- [The Roaring 20s Crash Course](#)
- [The Great Depression Crash Course](#)
- [The Great Depression](#)
- [Stories from the Great Depression, National Archives](#)

Films

- [The Untouchables \(1987\)](#)
- [Great Gatsby \(1974/2013\)](#)
- [Of Mice and Men \(1992\)](#)
- [Speedy \(1928\)](#)
- [Bugsy Malone \(1976\)](#)
- [Midnight in Paris \(2011\)](#)
- [Seabiscuit \(2003\)](#)

Listen and Watch



Regularly visit these Websites to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in History. Regularly share what you are finding out with your History teacher in lessons.

JSTOR - <https://www.jstor.org/> Academic journal archive. Many UK universities offer free access. Ideal for essays, historiography, and reading around topics.

History Today - <https://www.historytoday.com/> Accessible yet sophisticated articles by historians on a wide range of topics. Great for learning how historians write and debate.

The British Library – Learning <https://www.bl.uk/about/learn> High-quality digitised primary sources and analysis. Themed collections on topics like Empire, WW1, Women's Rights, etc.

Massolit <https://massolit.io/> University-level video lectures by top historians (e.g. on Cold War, Tudor England, Nazi Germany). Perfect for depth and historiographical insight

The National Archives – Education

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> Includes original documents, case studies, and source analysis exercises. Excellent for practising how to read and evaluate sources.

The Historical Association- <https://www.history.org.uk> Resources, podcasts, and articles aimed at both students and teachers. Offers historiography, curriculum-linked content, and guidance on how history is studied.

Spartacus Educational - <https://spartacus-educational.com/> Encyclopedic site with detailed biographies, timelines, and thematic coverage. Useful for context and sourcing opinions on historical figures and periods.

Listen and Watch



Follow the following people and groups to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in History. Regularly share what you are finding out with your History teacher in lessons.

@HistAssoc – [The Historical Association](#) Essential for serious students—links to teaching resources, competitions, and historical debate.

@Dr_LucyWorsley – [Dr Lucy Worsley](#) Public historian and broadcaster. Engaging and educational tweets about British history and historical interpretation.

@RichardEvans36 – [Prof. Richard J. Evans](#) One of the UK's most respected historians. Good for historical commentary and academic thinking.

@TomHHistory – [Tom Holland](#) Author and co-host of The Rest is History. Insightful commentary on classical and modern history.

@HistEdPod – [History Education Podcast \(Alex Fairlamb & Helen Snelson\)](#) Focuses on how history is taught and learned—great for aspiring history teachers or students interested in pedagogy.

Work Experience and Events



Work Experience | Historic England

Virtual work experience programme designed to give delegates an insight into the wonderful careers available within heritage.



English and History University Taster | Springpod

This Subject Spotlight begins by exploring the early Middle Ages (500-1100), focusing on the social, cultural, and linguistic changes that shaped medieval England.



Work Experience | The National Archives

A structured work placement is a chance to learn more about what it is like to work in an archive, and to get some practical and hands-on experience.



Work Experience | The Linnean Society

We offer unpaid work experience placements to people aged 15-18 who are interested in natural history, science education, or libraries and archives.



Volunteering | Museum of Oxford

Volunteering opportunities inside the Museum space and outside with the wider community; remotely and in-person; public-facing; and behind-the-scenes.



Work Experience | Cotswold Archaeology

Our Work Experience programme provides students with a unique opportunity to gain valuable insight into the various stages of the archaeological process and the many career paths available within the discipline.



breakfast lectures



The Careers Team at Bournside deliver regular Inspire Breakfast Lectures. Open to students in Year 10 - 13, these business-focused breakfasts invite speakers from all corners of industry to share their professional experiences and valuable insights with Bournside students over breakfast; opening our eyes to the opportunities available across many industry sectors.

[Take a look at upcoming speakers and reserve your space here.](#)



