Discussion about making judgments in Modern History
Transcript

This video is available for viewing at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/27010.html.

Kevin McAlinden:  
State Review Panel Chair  

Peter, let’s have a conversation around this Category 1 extended written response to historical evidence. This is one that has been designed, in relation to, the theme “studies of hope”. It focuses specifically on, um, these, on the story of Mahatma Gandhi. And on the, Salt Tax protest of 1930/1931. Students over the past five or six weeks have been examining the whole story of the struggle for independence in India around this debatable point of whether in fact he can — Gandhi can — be called a success or was he in fact a failure. Um, and I’d just like some feedback really on the instrument and what you think of the instrument. It has been derived from the general objectives and from the criteria.

Peter Lawrence:  
State Review Panellist  

I’ve had a look at the piece and I, I think it’s a great piece of assessment. The first quote that you use looks at that element of Gandhi and non-cooperation, which then gives students a context to write this Category 1. And then in your second part of the first page you’ve gone into and provided, you’ve modelled for students that this is going to be a contentious issue, and that first quote will be supporting of … the first source will be supporting of Gandhi. And then your second one is an Indian source which is critical of Gandhi. And that gives students the idea of about perspectives, and that what they will have to then do themselves. It definitely relates to Criterion 2 when you do that, because it allows students, definitely within that A standard, to evaluate and to make a decision based on both primary and secondary sources, so I think that’s great.

Kevin McAlinden:  
State Review Panel Chair  

I think when I was designing the instrument I was really conscious of the fact that for a successful Category 1 to be attempted, the question has got to have a contentious and debatable point in it. Something where the students can actually argue for, or against, a particular case. Since they have to use stimulus material, which we’ve provided, it allows them to select from that stimulus material the evidence that they see that relates to the, the triumph or indeed to this, to the failure. So when you look at the instrument you’ll see that there are a variety of sources associated with it, and these sources have been designed in such a way as to present the positive side for Gandhi. The triumphant and Gandhi. And at the same time to bring out those elements of criticism. So in designing the instrument, what I was trying to do was fulfil on the conditions, the syllabus conditions that really say that Category 1 essays ought to have a point of contention in them, that allows students then to argue a case for and against and base their argument very largely on stimulus...
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Peter Lawrence:
State review panellist

I think the sources are balanced in terms of your seen, unseen, primary and secondary. And I think you've done a really good job in finding those critical sources about Gandhi because it is difficult that Gandhi almost has a saint-like perception in history and it's difficult and the students find it difficult to criticise Gandhi. And so I think you've got the balance correct in terms of allowing students to actually make that decision. Because you're correct. You need a contentious issue, but you also want students to be able to have the sources to make that synthesis themselves.

Kevin McAlinden:
State Review Panel Chair

Choosing the source material is really critical, I think, in the design of a Category 1 instrument and finding differing perspectives because the criteria effectively asks us to respond to have students respond to different perspectives. Can we just have a look at the way in which criteria might link and feed into the task, and just, you know, if we're asking students to do certain things, does the task actually allow them to do the things that we, that we're expecting them to do. And I suppose the first thing is Criterion 2, which is general objective two: “forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry”. The key thing that students are asked to do — and it’s quite clearly there is to use, and the word “use” is highlighted — use a range of primary and secondary sources in order to develop an argument in order to answer a question. The way that this is, that I've tried to construct this is, in fact, when you look at the task in bold, I’ve got the expression “using the evidence supplied” so that it’s a very clear directive to students that “This is Criterion 2 that is being referred to in this task.” Have you a sense of the other criteria …?

Peter Lawrence:
State review panellist

I've had a, I've had a look at this, the response and the way that I develop a Category 1, as you would know, is that going across Criterion 2 and looking at the full range of descriptors across the three key dot points, in terms of using a diversity of primary, secondary sources, evaluates and synthesises. Making sure those three dot points are within the task is a very important element.

Kevin McAlinden:
State Review Panel Chair

Well in designing the task, in order to allow for all ranges of student abilities, it’s clearly set at the highest level in that everything that a student is required to do for an A I think is covered in here. There's clearly an element of comprehending both the explicit and the implicit. There’s clearly the need for students to analyse and interpret. You can see that in the task. Identifying perspectives, well that’s clearly that’s a major part of it and they’re given very clear instructions about how they should do that. The sources provided provide you with different perspectives about the issue. You’re required to reflect these different perspectives, so that, that’s very clearly there. Corroborating of the evidence is built into it. It’s certainly implicit, if not directly explicitly stated. They’re asked to evaluate the sources, so that’s significant. And of course the whole thing requires the synthesis and insightful decisions.
So the — the task — is really designed around that A standard, but you’re right when you say that if you look at the C standard there is certainly a lot that a C student can do in here in terms of looking at the, the more narrative elements of the work.