

PETERHOUSE VELLACOTT HISTORY PRIZE

Writing your essay

Write an essay of between 2,000 and 4,000 words on one of the following questions. Include a bibliography and ensure all sources are referenced. **Essays must be submitted as a PDF** via the online form. Please ensure that the pages in your essay are numbered and that your name and school appears on every page. Please also name the pdf file in the following format: Prize-Question number-Surname-Initial e.g. Vellacott-2-Smith-F.pdf.

Competitors are advised that the main focus of the essay should **not** be material previously or currently being studied by the entrant as part of their sixth form studies. The entrant may refer to topics that will be studied in future so long as, at the time of the closing date, the entrant has received no formal tuition on the topic in question. All entries must be verified by a Head of Sixth Form or Head of History confirming that the essay is the entrant's own work and that the main focus of the essay is not something which s/he has hitherto studied in the sixth form classroom. Good luck!

How to submit

A maximum of **two entries** per competition per school can be accepted, except by prior arrangement with your school. All entries must be approved by a teacher, so make sure your History teacher and Head of Department know you are entering and you have the relevant email address to hand when you create your account. Once essays are uploaded to our system, it is not possible to make changes – please ensure you are happy with your work before pressing 'submit'. It is unfortunately not possible to provide feedback on essays.

The deadline for you to submit your essay is 16:00 GMT on **14th March 2016**. Essays which are not submitted by this time will not be considered under any circumstances. Your teacher will then receive emails from Peterhouse asking them to confirm that you are eligible and that the work complies with our guidelines, as listed in this document and on our website. They must do this by 16:00 GMT on **18th March 2016** – please inform them of this. Essays which have not been approved by a teacher will not be considered. For this reason, submission by post, fax or email will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, and only by prior arrangement.

Prizes

All three competitions have a top prize of £500 and a second prize of £250; several further essays will be highly commended. Winners will be contacted by post - please make sure your postal address and other contact details are entered correctly!

Vellacott History Prize Questions 2016

1. 'If all you have to tell us is that one barbarian succeeded another barbarian on the banks of the Oxus or the Jaxartes, what benefit have you conferred on the public?' [VOLTAIRE]. Discuss.
2. Should classical Sparta be described as a totalitarian state?
3. To what extent can **either** Classical Athens **or** the Roman Empire be described as a 'slave society'?
4. 'After Herodotus and Thucydides, the practice of history-writing in Europe changed remarkably little for the next thousand years.' Discuss.
5. Was there a 'Third-Century Crisis' in the Roman Empire?
6. Was the triumph of Christianity within the Roman Empire inevitable?
7. How significant was Charlemagne's coronation as Emperor in AD 800?
8. When did the Middle Ages begin and end?
9. Who was the first ruler of the English?
10. How did the Normans manage the pre-Conquest English past?
11. With what effect and by what means did the popes govern the Church in the later middle ages?
12. Why were heretics persecuted in the later middle ages?
13. Should we be more surprised by the violence or the tranquillity of the later medieval English polity?
14. 'Gold and silver destroy feudal subordination' [Dr Johnson]. Discuss.
15. What can we learn from the vernacular literature of the middle ages?
16. What were the public functions of art in the Italian Renaissance?
17. Why was Machiavelli's book *The Prince* so controversial?
18. In what ways did indigenous societies adapt and respond to Spanish colonial rule in the Americas?
19. 'The Atlantic slave trade destroyed Africa's potential for rapid economic and political development.' Discuss.
20. Why did European powers make alliances with **either** the Ottoman Empire **or** the Persian Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?
21. What factors promoted missionary activity by European Christians in Asia before 1800?
22. Why did the Council of Trent seek to draw up an Index of Prohibited Books?
23. Did fathers rule in early modern Europe?
24. How did the experience of the Southern Netherlands differ from that of the North between 1580 and 1650?
25. Was early modern Europe a culture defined by migration?
26. What caused the rise of serfdom in Europe from the late seventeenth century?
27. Did Spain **and/or** Portugal decline in the eighteenth century?
28. Was there a 'structural transformation of the public sphere' [Habermas] in the eighteenth century?
29. How and to what effect did the political ideology and practice of Islam change after 1750?
30. Account for the popularity of neo-classicism in the arts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe.
31. 'If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was right.' [James Parton, 1874] Explain America's enduring fascination with Thomas Jefferson and his ideas.
32. What music was popular in nineteenth-century Europe?
33. Did attitudes to human sexuality change significantly between 1789 and 1890?
34. What did the revolutions of 1848 achieve?
35. Why was child labour a problem for nineteenth-century societies?
36. Do Woodrow Wilson's virtues as a moral force in diplomacy outweigh the consequences of his political failings at the Paris Peace Conference and at home?
37. To what extent did the First World War signal the rise of a new politics across the Middle East?
38. What did the Great Depression mean for non-Western societies and economies?
39. 'Great Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role.' [Former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, 1962] Discuss.
40. Why did so many late twentieth-century societies 'learn to love the bomb' [Stanley Kubrick]?
41. Discuss the historical significance of **one** of the following places or buildings: Route 66; the IBM Watson Research Center; the MCG; Reading Gaol; the "Walkie-Talkie".