Peterhouse Vellacott History Prize 2018

Writing your essay

Write an essay of between 2,000 and 4,000 words including footnotes and appendices 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 clearly on the first 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 they have hitherto studied in the sixth form classroom.

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 Tuesday 20th March 2018. 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 Tuesday 27th March 2018 – 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.

Please direct any questions to essayprize@pet.cam.ac.uk.

Prizes

Each competition has a prize pool of £750. Winners will be contacted by post - please make sure your postal address and other contact details are entered correctly!
Vellacott History Prize Questions 2018

1. How important were gardens to urban landscapes in EITHER the Ancient Near East OR Renaissance Italy OR nineteenth-century Britain?

2. What are the chief problems with trying to read books of the Bible as historical documents?

3. How long were political speeches in the ancient world?

4. Did historians in antiquity have any interest in the lives and experiences of women?

5. ‘The conversion to Christianity of the Roman empire was an unmitigated disaster for the long-term survival of the empire’, Discuss.

6. Why did the Carolingians fall?

7. Was there an Old English state prior to 1066?

8. Was the ‘Investiture Controversy’ about more than investiture?

9. What sort of things have survived from the so-called Dark Ages in the British Isles, and why?

10. Why did monarchy become and remain the most common form of government in the middle ages?

11. Should we be more surprised by the decline or the longevity of the Byzantine Empire?

12. How powerful a force was the ‘community of the realm’ in the later medieval English polity?

13. Why was heresy viewed with such concern by the later medieval papacy?

14. Who benefitted from the Black Death?

15. What was the political significance of EITHER art OR architecture in the quattrocento?

16. Was there a renaissance in religion in the fifteenth century?

17. ‘My own wish is to be a citizen of the world, to be a fellow citizen to all men.’ [ERASMUS] Discuss Erasmus’ cosmopolitanism.

18. Why were the Ottomans so Eurocentric?

19. Was the household the natural unit of EITHER economy OR society in early modern Europe?

20. What happened to heraldry after the end of the middle ages?

21. Why did people emigrate to the New World in the seventeenth century?

22. How was Dutch primacy in European trade established?

23. What factors shaped state formation in West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth century?
24. Discuss the effect of the changing role of horses in economy and society in EITHER early modern America OR early modern Africa OR early modern Europe.

25. Why did it prove so difficult to end the Thirty Years War?

26. ‘The two cultures [of humanism and science], in short, were not locked in the battle that the pamphleteers of the New Philosophy called for; they coexisted and often collaborated, and sometimes the scientists proved to be better readers of texts than their scholarly friends.’ [GRAFTON] Discuss.

27. 'Don't speak ill of him...France has never been so high in the esteem of other nations as during the thirteen years of his reign. There was some quality of greatness then in everything that people did'. STENDHAL, Le rouge et le noir. Do you agree with Falcoz’s view of Napoleon?

28. How international was the Great Awakening?

29. Was there an industrious revolution?

30. Why were there so few revolutions in Europe between 1850 and 1917?

31. How and why did concepts of race change during the nineteenth century?

32. Has shared communication been fundamental to the development of nationalism in the twentieth century?

33. How relevant are Mahan and Mackinder today?

34. Is England conceivable without Europe?

35. Was the twentieth century a period of secularization?

36. Is Trump a reaction or a revolution?

37. ‘The historian has to know what it is that he wants to know; and if there is no authority to tell him, as in fact (one learns in time) there never is, he has to find a piece of land or something that has got the answer hidden in it, and get the answer out by fair means or foul.’ [COLLINGWOOD] Discuss.

38. Why do historians disagree?