

Essential Question:

How do different schools of historical thought interpret the same evidence in different ways, and what does this reveal about history as a discipline?

Part I: Topic & Source Set Selection

Students must choose a topic between 1815 and 1914 that:

- Has social, political, and economic dimensions
- Allows for multiple interpretations
- Connects clearly to 19th-century intellectual movements
- Is historically significant

You will write a brief intro to why you chose this topic and how it meets the criteria above.

Primary Source Set (6 – 8 total)

Must include a mix of:

- Written (laws, letters, speeches, memoirs)
- Visual (political cartoons, posters, illustrations)
- Statistical or institutional (factory reports, census data)

Part II: Historical Context Section

The purpose of historical context is to ground the reader historically before interpretation begins. This section should be descriptive, not interpretive. No historiography yet.

Required Elements:

- Key background events
- The event's placement in the timeline/chronology (why *this* moment matters)
- Social and economic conditions
- Political structures and tensions

Part III: Historiographical Frameworks

You must select three historiographical schools, at least two of which must have clear roots in the 19th century. You will address each school-of-thought individually.

Each section includes:

1. Explanation of the school
2. Why it emerged (historical/intellectual context)
3. What kinds of questions it prioritizes

Approved Historiographical Schools:

- Marxist/Materialist Historiography
- Liberal/Political Historiography
- Whig History
- Nationalist Historiography
- Social History
- Cultural/Intellectual History
- Feminist & Gender History

Part IV: Interpreting the Sources (Core of the Project)

For each historiographical school, analyze your primary sources as a historian from that school would. You should not rewrite the sources in each section but reinterpret them. I will provide an example on canvas of what this could look like.

Each section must answer:

1. What does this school emphasize in the sources?
 2. What evidence becomes most important?
 3. What historical argument emerges?
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Part V: Comparative Synthesis

You will compare their selected schools-of-thought after their interpretations:

- Which interpretations conflict?
 - Which interpretations overlap?
 - What does each school ignore or minimize?
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Part VI: Reflection on Historical Thinking

Consider the questions below to reflect on the process that you have gone through in completing this project.

- Which interpretation did you find most convincing, and why?
 - How did the historian's priorities shape their conclusions?
 - Did your own thinking change during this process?
 - What does this project suggest about whether history is "objective"?
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Technical Requirements

- 12 pt. font
- Double spaced
- 6-8 pages, not including bibliography
- Formatting according to CMS (Chicago Manual of Style). I will provide supports for this on canvas.
- Organized by clearly labeled sections
 - I. Introduction & Research Focus
 - II. Historical Context
 - III. Historiographical Frameworks
 - IV. Primary Source Set
 - V. Interpretive Analysis
 - VI. Comparative Synthesis
 - VII. Reflection on Historical Thinking

AP European History
Historiography Project

You will be assessed using the single-point rubric below.

Rubric Category	Proficient Descriptor
Historical Context & Accuracy 10 points	- Accurately situates the topic within the 1815–1914 European context - Clearly explains relevant political, social, and economic conditions - Demonstrates strong command of factual content without major errors - Provides context that meaningfully supports later interpretation
Understanding of Historiographical Schools 10 points	- Clearly explains three historiographical schools - Accurately describes each school's core assumptions and priorities - Demonstrates clear connections between historiography and 19th-century intellectual developments - Uses historiographical terminology correctly and purposefully
Primary Source Analysis & Interpretation 10 points	- Analyzes the same primary source set through each historiographical lens - Moves beyond description to interpretation - Explains how different schools emphasize different evidence - Constructs plausible, historically grounded arguments from the sources
Comparative & Methodological Thinking 10 points	- Clearly compares interpretations across historiographical schools - Identifies meaningful similarities and differences in conclusions - Explains how methodological priorities shape historical arguments - Demonstrates understanding that historical interpretation is shaped by perspective
Reflection on Historical Thinking 5 points	Thoughtfully reflects on how historiography influenced interpretation - Demonstrates awareness of the historian's role in shaping narratives - Explains how the project deepened understanding of history as a discipline - Reflection is specific, analytical, and connected to the project work
Organization, Evidence Use, & Academic Practice 5 points	- Paper is clearly organized with logical structure and labeled sections - Sources are properly cited using a consistent citation style - Evidence is integrated smoothly and purposefully - Writing is clear, academic, and coherent
Total Points: 50	

Project FAQs

AP European History
Historiography Project

1. Does my topic have to be one specific event, or can it be a broader issue?
Your topic does not need to be a single event. However, the broader your topic is, the harder it will be to do well. Since you are analyzing the topic using 6–8 primary sources, you should keep it focused enough that you can meaningfully interpret those sources rather than staying at a surface level.
2. What if my topic technically starts before 1815 but continues after it?
That is fine. Context or early developments may begin before 1815, but the main event, topic, or development you are analyzing must take place after 1815. Check Canvas for a list of suggested topics if you are unsure.
3. Can I use translated sources?
Yes. Translated sources are acceptable, but you are responsible for making a good-faith effort to use reliable translations and to be aware that translation choices can affect meaning.
4. Do I need to use all 6–8 sources in every historiographical section?
Yes. Each historiographical analysis should draw from the same overall source set. However, depending on the school of thought, a source may be emphasized or interpreted differently in each section.
5. Should I summarize my primary sources anywhere, or only interpret them?
You will provide the primary sources in full so they can be read independently. You do not need to summarize them extensively in the paper. Quoting is acceptable, and paraphrasing is encouraged when using specific evidence to support your interpretations.
6. Am I supposed to pretend I am a historian from that school of thought?
Yes. In each interpretive section, you should approach the sources as if you are a historian working within that historiographical tradition.
7. Is it okay if different schools reach very different conclusions using the same evidence?
Yes. In fact, this is one of the central goals of the project.
8. Do I need to argue which interpretation is “right”?
Not directly. Your evaluation of the strengths and limitations of each school of thought should appear in the comparative synthesis and reflection sections, rather than in the individual interpretive analyses.
9. Can I use “I” in the reflection section?
Yes. First-person voice is appropriate in the reflection section.
10. How many secondary sources do I need?
There is no fixed number, but most students will likely need approximately 12–15 secondary sources, given the requirement to explain and apply three historiographical schools of thought.
11. How do I cite historians correctly in Chicago style?
Refer to the Chicago style resources provided on Canvas.

12. Can I use AI to help me understand historiography?

Yes, with limits. AI may be used as a thought partner for brainstorming, planning, or locating sources, similar to how it is used in NHD research. It may **not** be used for analysis, interpretation, or generating historical arguments. When in doubt, follow NHD's AI policy.