

Common Entrance History Revision Tips - For Parents

Preparation for the History Common Entrance exam is very much about **quality** rather than quantity. Sitting for hours, reading through reams of notes, will not be as useful as focused, specific and exam related revision. Any help that you could give would be very gratefully received.

The CE History Exam - 60 minutes

The paper is challenging for all and the most common complaint from the children is that there is not enough time to complete everything to the standard they would like - this is a very fair point and one that all prep school history teachers have been arguing for years. Unfortunately, it will not change this year. Exam technique must be looked at in some considerable detail and this they have done during their CE course.

The paper is split into **two sections** and this is how they work...

Section A - Evidence Questions

In the June exams, the subject matter for the source section will be either **Richard I (the Lion-Heart)** or **the Black Death**.

The children will be presented with three sources:

- 2 written and 1 pictorial.

Each source will have a brief description of its **provenance** and there will always be a mix of contemporary with more modern sources. There will be four questions. The children know that they take a very specific format and will be able to explain to you the 'rules' for answering each one.

Section B - Essay Section

I expect the children to prepare fully for 3-4 different essays although from the 10 essays on offer they must choose **ONE**. Each essay is divided into Part A (20 marks) and a Part B (10 marks) and both must be answered as separate entities.

I have suggested:

- The Norman Conquest
- Henry II & Thomas Becket
- The Black Death (& Peasant's Revolt) - this might appear in the evidence section
- King John - possibly not in depth

Part A will always ask the children to **'Describe'** an event, a problem or a battle.

Part B will always ask the children to **'Explain'** something that links to that event, problem or battle. They must avoid repetition and must be analytical in Part B. This essay must lead with ideas and have the historical evidence to support them, not a story followed by a short comment at the end.

Children are encouraged to **P.E.E.** lots

Revision - Keep it very focused. Do not revise everything!

Children are encouraged to break **large chunks** of information into **manageable slices** using colour coded note taking. A very simple structure could be as follows:

1. Pick a topic.
2. Use past exam papers to choose an essay title
3. Using a blank piece of A4 paper, start by writing the chosen essay title (separate Part A 'Describe...' and Part B 'Explain...') in the middle of the paper and then use the revision notes to create key coloured 'legs' for the spider. Chronology and numbering of the 'legs' may help some boys to bring order to their essay.
4. The written detail should be brief and may include little pictures which can help to trigger memories, very much in the style of mind mapping.
5. Use different colours for different legs and keep it all very neat.
6. When complete, your child should be able to give a detailed explanation as to what they have written. If not they need to go back to their revision notes.
7. This plan can then be used to write a full essay under time pressure - no more than 30 minutes for both Part A (15-20 mins) and B (10-15 mins).
8. Always follow a Part A plan with a Part B plan as the two are closely linked. Part B must be led with your child's thoughts and not a regurgitation of Part A.