

HAT

History Aptitude Test

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Breakdown of how to answer each type of question: Read the passage carefully and try to draw out some common themes that arise from it. This will help when writing up your response, allowing you to have a clear, structured essay. The essay question is generally quite broad to enable a wide range of arguments. When writing the essay, begin with an introduction, outlining your 'line of argument' (LOI), everything else that you mention in the main body of your essay should back-up your LOI. Generally speaking, you should have about three/four points in your main body to defend your LOI. It is recommended to write thematically, hence why the grouping of themes mentioned earlier. Always finish off with a conclusion, even if you have to skip a point because of time. This is because you have been asked to write an essay which must include a conclusion.

The passage given is from a primary source. It is almost certain that you have never encountered it before and that you have no historical knowledge of period. You are not expected to know, need or provide any contextual knowledge. The point of this test is to see how you come up with points and arguments, and how you then present those in an essay format.

There is only one hour for this test, so time management is extremely important. Take 15 minutes to actively read the passage. Active reading includes highlighting/underlining, annotating and one word summary of each paragraph. Spend 5 minutes to plan your essay. This is mostly about structure, as you should have an idea of your points and LOI from the reading. This leaves you with 40 minutes to write your essay. If you have time left over, read over your work. If a thought/point comes to you halfway through, add it in at the end with an asterisk symbol (*) to represent where it is meant to be in your essay.

Avoid using convoluted language with numerous subordinate conjunctions. Instead, try to always use main clauses with conjunctions to demonstrate the flow of thought in the essay. Ensure your spelling, punctuation and grammar is correct. Avoid using fancy punctuation (such as semi-colons and dashes), rather make sure proper nouns are capitalised, commas and full-stops are present, and the right apostrophe is used for omission or possession.

WHAT IS THE HAT?

The History Aptitude Test (HAT) is a 60 minute long exam that consists of 1 section only.

What does the section entail?

A primary source extract/passage will be presented and an essay question will follow. You are required to write a response to that essay question.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Annotate the passage well as this will become the basis for your plan and structure of the essay.
- Break up your 60 minutes accordingly (perhaps you may want to spend more time planning if you are a fast writer)
- Sort out the logistics of the HAT well in advance. This includes booking the test, locating the test centre, and any payments (possibly an admin charge by the centre).
- Remember to finish off with a conclusion.
- No historical contextual knowledge is required.
- Don't be alarmed by the primary source. It was deliberately chosen because it is extremely niche and would be unknown to everyone. However, that does not mean it is useless. It was deliberately chosen because there is valuable stuff to unpick.
- Have one LOI (stated in the introduction) with all your points supporting it (throughout the main body). This ensures you follow a logical argument.
- Begin each sentence with a clear signpost, informing the examiner what the rest of the paragraph will be about. This not only helps the examiner, but also helps you to stay focused and follow a clear, structured approach.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE A "GOOD SCORE"?

There is not really a "good score". The point of the HAT is to see how you think, come up with arguments, draw evidence from the passage and present all of that (in a structured and logical way) in the form of an essay. It forms one part of the application process.

USEFUL LINKS

- Familiarise yourself with different primary sources. This would have been done throughout your time in school (secondary/Sixth Form education). The skills needed to unpick the relevant, important parts are transferable to any source, regardless of the time period.
- Go over the past papers on the University of Oxford website. See what the paper will be like, what the passages are like, the essay question. Attempt to annotate and write up the essay (by-hand) with and without time restrictions.
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/admissions-tests/hat>