The historical investigation

IB DP History internal assessment: the historical investigation (guide first assessed 2017)

"It will be you tomorrow"

> A textbook tells this in a paragraph; an investigation asks one sharp question.

- Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935, with aircraft and poison gas.
- The League voted sanctions, but not on oil.

Your own research

At most 2,200 words, 25 marks, 20% of the HL grade.

- A topic you choose, answered from evidence.
- Your teacher marks it; the IB moderates.

Words follow the marks

Section 2 carries 15 of the 25 marks, so it gets most of the words.

- Section 1: about 500 words. Section 2: about 1,300. Section 3: about 400.
- A long section 1 takes words from section 2.

Three tests for the question

> The question makes or breaks the investigation.

- At least ten years in the past.
- The classic failure: a life story retold with no question.

From topic to question

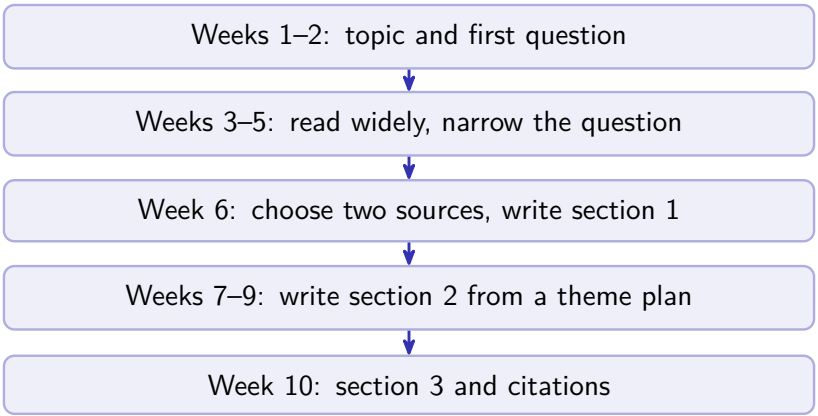
> How far was the Hoare–Laval Plan the decisive blow to the League's credibility?

- Each cut makes the question smaller.
- Choose a topic with a real debate between historians.

Weak and better questions

Weak	Why	Better
Why did the League fail?	a whole field	How far was Hoare–Laval the decisive blow?
What was the Great Leap Forward?	description only	Local officials or central policy: Sichuan, 1959–61?
Was Hiroshima right?	a moral question	How far did Soviet entry shape the decision?

A timeline that works



Two sources for section 1

Source 1: the plan as leaked

British–French proposals, December 1935.

Shows what they would give an aggressor.

Source 2: Hoare's memoir

Nine Troubled Years, 1954.

His motives, from the inside.

Value and limitation, for the question

	Leaked plan	**Hoare's memoir**
value	what they would give	motives, from inside
limitation	never carried out	written 20 years later

Weak and strong evaluation

> Hindsight limits the memoir; it still shows the fear of a war on two fronts.

- Weak: "The memoir is biased because Hoare wrote it."
- Strong: why he wrote that way, and what is still valuable.

Evidence grouped by theme

> Agreement and contradiction are both findings.

- One group of evidence for each part of the argument.
- Cite in the text (author, page) and give a full bibliography.

A theme plan for section 2

> Every theme argues, weighs the other side and leads to the judgement.

- **Analysis**, not narrative: each part argues one point.
- Name the historians who disagree and say why.

A section 2 paragraph

1. **Argue** the leak mattered more than the terms
2. **Evidence** sanctions left out oil; Hoare resigned within a week
3. **However** some say credibility died with Manchuria, 1931

Decision

True for Asia; in Europe the plan ended the expectation.

Section 3: reflection on method

Earns nothing

"I learned a lot."

Earns marks

"I read only English sources,

so Ethiopia appears through outsiders."

Common mistakes

> Answer the question you asked, in an argument, with a judgement.

- Section 1 that describes the sources but does not evaluate them.
- Historians named but not weighed; citations missing.

Check yourself

