



Teacher material

Understanding academic interpretations of the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914

Activity Plan

Give the students a copy each of the student worksheet (see Student Material) and ask them to work on Task 1 – understanding the interpretations.

TEACHER NOTE 1

You might want to direct them to the wider range of interpretations summarised on the Historiana site in the 'World War 1: who was to blame?' section.

You could ask students to swap worksheets when they have completed this task. They could then peer review their answers. Do they think that their peer has accurately summarised the interpretations? If not, can they help them to improve their understanding?

Students then work on Task 2 – contrasting the interpretations. Individual students may need some help to find three points.

After students have done and talked about Task 3 with a partner, check their answers. The two right answers in this case are: 'the historians have different views about how change happens' and 'the historians have asked different questions of the source material'. These are not the most exciting reasons, but the two interpretations are both from respected academic historians. In the Clark interpretation the idea of asking different questions of the source material is made clear.

After students have discussed Task 4 in pairs, discuss as a whole class how far these historians seem to have different views about how change happens.

Task 5 involves the students writing a paragraph to show that they have understood what they have learnt about academic historical interpretations. Again, these could be peer reviewed before being marked by the teacher. The final part asks students to think about how they could become better informed in order to make their own evidence-based judgements. [TEACHER NOTE 1](#)

Sources:

1. Extract from: Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918* [Translated as *The Great War*] (Gallimard, 1969).
2. Extract from: Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (Allen Lane, 2013).