



National Certificate of Educational Achievement
TAUMATA MĀTAURANGA Ā-MOTU KUA TAEA

Exemplar for Internal Achievement Standard History Level 3

This exemplar supports assessment against:

Achievement Standard 91437: Analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders

An annotated exemplar is a sample of student evidence, with a commentary, to explain key aspects of the standard. It assists teachers to make assessment judgements at the grade.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority

To support internal assessment

Grade: Achieved

For Achieved, the student needs to analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders.

This involves identifying different perspectives and then providing historical evidence that explains why the perspectives were/are held. Explanations need to be 'as a historian' (rather than in role-play format), specific, and with a depth that is appropriate for curriculum level 8.

The student has chosen a historical event (the Suffrage Movement in the UK) and has analysed perspectives on a contested element of this event: whether the Suffragettes helped or hindered the women's suffrage movement in the UK and the subsequent passing of the 'Representation of the People Act 1918.'

This student analyses three different perspectives. The contemporary but opposing perspectives of Emmeline Pankhurst and Viscount Helmsley, and the perspective of historian Fern Riddell.

The depth of discussion and supporting evidence across the response reflects curriculum level 8. For example, in the discussion provided for Pankhurst's perspective, the student has referred to historical evidence, such as the lack of change garnered from non-violent methods (the failure of different petitions), that supports the perspective that a militant approach was necessary.

The response includes some basic analysis, as required by the overall standard descriptor. This is shown in the discussion of the influences and experiences that shaped Pankhurst's perspective. It is also evident where the student draws similarities between the perspectives of Riddell and Helmsley, highlighting how entrenched gender roles and norms shaped the views of those who believed suffragette action was predominantly a hindrance to the overall cause.

For Merit, the standard requires an in-depth analysis whereby students evaluate, as historians, the validity of different perspectives of the contested event. This involves appraising and presenting an opinion.

For example, the Pankhurst perspective might be considered valid, as it is supported by several instances in history whereby men also were required to resort to violence or militancy to achieve a change in power dynamics—and therefore women should not be judged differently.

A greater depth in explanation and of examples or historical evidence provided throughout the response would also be required for the threshold of 'an in-depth' analysis to be met for Merit.

Did the suffragettes help or hinder the cause of the cause British Women's Suffrage Movement?

This report will discuss whether or not the suffragettes helped or hindered the cause of the British Women's Suffrage Movement. The three different perspectives that I will talk about are Emmeline Pankhurst's (who believed the suffragettes did help the cause), Viscount Helmsley's (who thought that the suffragettes hindered the cause) and Joyce Marlow's point of view. Then I will discuss which point of view is most convincing to me and why.

Perspective 1 – Emmeline Pankhurst

Emmeline Pankhurst believed that the suffragettes helped the cause of the British Women's Suffrage Movement. Pankhurst herself had been a suffragist- she was a member of the Manchester women suffrage committee and later the Women's Franchise League. Pankhurst expressed her belief by stating *"When we have tried every way, but we have had contempt poured upon us. Violence is the only way that we have to get the power every citizen should have"*. Through this quote, she expressed how the efforts of the non-violence movements have led to no change yet a tireless fight. For example, the actions that the suffragists took was one in 1866 where women took a petition to parliament in which they asked to be allowed to vote. However, no action was taken, and the actions of the women were ignored. And again in 1907, women from Northern England, who worked in the cotton and synthetic industry brought forward a petition appealing the right for women to vote. The petition gained over 37,000 signatures. However, again, the petition failed and the movement was ignored. These repetitive events were what motivated Pankhurst to believe that violence would be the only way for change to be made. It led to her creating the Women's Social and Political Union, enabling a more confrontational method to be used.

Pankhurst took many actions during her lifetime. From 1908 to 1909 she was imprisoned three times. One of her imprisonments was due to her presenting a leaflet issued to people to 'rush the House of Commons'. Pankhurst emphasises the importance of this action as the government had blocked a conciliation bill on women's suffrage. Pankhurst knew that the non-violence movements did not have enough power to create change and the length of time this had gone on became tired and drained the hope of many. For Pankhurst however, she had gone through years of involvement with the suffrage movement and it was the lack of progress that caused her to become fed up with the system.

Although Pankhurst was a suffragist herself, she had become disillusioned after seeing so many of the bills failing. The bills were passed through legal means, using the system and following the process. This is what the suffragists had done, Pankhurst herself was involved in it. She knew that it had not worked and believed something else needed to be done that was more confrontational. Hence, Pankhurst introduced violent methods in order to create a wake-up call towards the government and create a militant movement in hopes of faster change. Pankhurst states *"We were willing to break laws that we might force men to give us the right to make laws"*. This statement from Pankhurst shows her militant attitude towards the violent movement and the strong hopes she has that the violent methods may work.

Emmeline Pankhurst's childhood encouraged her political views growing up. Her Father, Robert, was involved in reforms and her grandfather was an active member during the Peterloo Massacre in 1819. Her grandmother was in the Anti-Corn League which was known for their influence that helped to minimise the tax on corn and oats so that food may become more affordable. Pankhurst's political family allowed her to grow to become strong and opinionated in her views which is evident through her demanding and militant speeches. When Pankhurst was 14, her mother took her to witness and be a part of a public meeting regarding women's rights in Manchester. This meeting was the inspiration that made Pankhurst want to become a suffragist. Pankhurst had the support of her parents as they both were in support of women's suffrage. She is a primary source and has a first-hand account of what life was like for women in Victorian times.

Perspective 2 – Viscount Helmsley (suffragettes hindered the cause of the British Women's Suffrage Movement):

On the contrary, Viscount Helmsley believed that the suffragettes did not help the cause of the British Women's Suffrage Movement. Viscount Helmsley believed that the suffragettes hindered the British Suffrage Movement because women using force is disgusting and gives the whole sex a bad name. He reminded us in his speeches during the early 20th century that if women were allowed the vote, it will be the militant woman who used violent methods such as throwing rocks at windows and burning the house of Arthur du Cros that will be taking the greatest part in politics. He goes on to ask, during his speech to the House of Commons, if this is what people of Victorian England really want, and how society would be impacted by this. During the Victorian era, the idea that women were supposed to remain in the household while men were the only ones in public involvement in politics was a common one, this is what has influenced the perspective of Helmsley. Women should be devoted to their husbands and families. In the Victorian era, Helmsley's view was a dominant one and they believed that women were not meant to be out in the street protesting but should stay in their place and which was in the household, looking after children. Helmsley's perspective is shaped by his own experiences and position of power. From a very young age, he was involved with politics. He was born into privilege and inherited the title from his father. If women gained the vote then Helmsley and those who were in power would have had to think about what changes would come, this is what has shaped his perspective.

Perspective 3: Historian Fern Riddell

There is a third perspective among historians that has emerged in the last couple of decades and that is the idea that the suffragettes helped and hindered the movement. Fern Riddell, a British cultural historian with a particular focus on the Victorian era, takes this stance. Riddell's main argument, for the suffragettes hindering the cause, is that their actions actually made people worry and fearful of them. She uses primary evidence from the time discussing confrontational methods employed by the suffragettes such as bombing, arson and chemical attacks. Riddell then compares the past attacks on public transportation to those today and states that as we can imagine and have seen in our modern world, of course, this makes people fearful. She goes on to discuss why people were fearful, particularly on account of the fact that women were supposed to be in their households, getting married and raising children rather than acting in such a violent manner.

Riddell's point and emphasis on the traditional role of women are also valid as this is what we have already seen with Helmsley's perspective. She states the government were fearful of the suffragettes returning to their violent methods following World War I and this is what made Parliament give women the vote in 1918. Ultimately the government did not want to deal with any internal attacks or disruptions at home, they wanted to focus on ensuring the economy and society of Britain would return. The focus could not be taken away from recovery and ultimately, Riddell argues, this is what gave women over 30 years of age the right to vote following the war. Riddell's perspective is valid as had the suffragettes been successful in their attempt to gain the vote completely then women would have had the vote earlier instead of waiting until 1918. I do believe that Riddell's perspective is valid as the suffragettes were able to gain attention, but it was not always positive. However, Britain did not emerge out of World War I with a strong economy like the United States of America, so they had to take time to put their energy into recovery. Having to fight two different battles, recovery and within, would have been a lot, and this meant the suffragettes were influential in achieving the vote for woman.

I believe that the most convincing perspective is Emmeline Pankhurst'. She is right that women could not get the vote by just using the non-violent method. Being a suffrage and being more confrontational drew attention to them and made people stop and think about what society was doing at the time to women. Emmeline Pankhurst knew what life was like having not used nonviolence and she realise that violence was the only way. She is also a primary source piece of evidence and we are getting a first-hand account of what happened during the British Women's Suffrage Movement.

Grade: Merit

For Merit, the student needs to analyse, in depth, different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders.

In addition to the achieved criteria, this involves evaluating, as an historian, the validity of different perspectives of the contested event. Evaluating involves appraising and presenting an opinion. The analysis should be supported by historical evidence and examples that reflect expectations at curriculum level 8.

The student focuses on a clearly contested aspect of the event, whether the U.S. was justified in using atomic bombs on Japan, and explains both the revisionist and post-revisionist perspectives.

For each perspective the student fully unpacks the varied reasons and ideas that the perspectives are comprised of. Additionally, the varied, consistent, and specific use of evidence to explain the perspectives, in particular, the strong use of primary sources and unpacking of the historical context, helps the overall response to meet the descriptor of 'in-depth,' as is required in the achievement standard at Merit.

In addition, clear appraisals are made about the perspectives that have been explained. There is well-supported evaluation, as a historian, of the validity of these perspectives. This includes consideration of the accuracy, bias, and reliability of the primary sources used by each side to support their viewpoint. It also addresses whether the evidence used by revisionist historians was available to Truman and examines how source evidence can be, and has been, used to challenge opposing interpretations. This analysis clearly meets the requirements for Merit.

For Excellence, a conclusion must be drawn as to which perspective is most valid, based on their engagement with the evidence and the ideas it contains. In this sample, the student remains 'on the fence' rather than considering which perspective is best supported by historical evidence.

For example, a point of contest central to each perspective is whether Japan was close and willing to surrender, whether Truman knew this, and whether alternative conditions could have been considered to entice surrender. The student might then conclude that the indisputable evidence, rather than counterfactual commentary or retrospective evidence, best lies on the post-revisionist side, and thus they find this perspective to be most credible and valid.

On the 6th of August 1945, the USA used the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. 3 days later, they dropped another atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki. In total, these bombings resulted in the deaths of 240,000 people. Over the years, there have been many debates over whether President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified. There are multiple perspectives on this event, two of them being revisionist and post-revisionist. The revisionist perspective opposes the dropping of the atomic bomb while the post-revisionist perspective believes that the dropping of the bombs was the best decision that could have been made given the circumstances.

Revisionist

The revisionist perspective opposes the dropping of atomic bombs. This perspective believes Japan was helpless and on the verge of surrendering, and it was the Soviet entry into the Pacific War that truly influenced their surrender, not the bombs. Those who believe this perspective believe that the main reason for dropping the bomb was to send a message to Stalin and the Soviet Union, warning them to stay out of American foreign affairs.

In June of 1945, Japan's navy had been sunk, their army was strongly limited, and many cities were destroyed by American terror bombing. Despite this, the Japanese refused to surrender, due to the US demanding an unconditional surrender. Oliver Stone (2012) argues that this was the only obstacle to the Japanese surrender. If the Japanese agreed to an unconditional surrender, they feared that they might have to get rid of their emperor, whom many looked to as a God. They would rather be destroyed in the war than be forced to give up their emperor. According to Gar Alperovitz (2011), key advisors such as Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, who, before the bomb was used, strongly recommended to Truman that the war would end without the use of the atomic bombs if the surrender agreement specified that Japan could keep the emperor. Truman refused. Despite this, when Japan did surrender after the bombings, they were allowed to keep the emperor anyway.

Stone strongly argues that it was the Soviet entry into the war that caused Japan to surrender, rather than the atomic bombings. During the Potsdam conference (July 17 - August 2nd 1945), evidence from Truman's personal diary and a letter to his wife indicates that he and Stalin agreed for the Soviet Union to enter the Pacific war. In his diary, Truman says "He'll be in the Jap War on August 15. Fini Japs when that comes about". Before the Potsdam conference, US intelligence advised in April of 1945 that Japan would surely surrender when the Soviet Union entered the war; "If at any time the U.S.S.R. should enter the war, all Japanese will realise that absolute defeat is inevitable." Stone claims that Japan was much more concerned with the Red Army, even after the first bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, Stone quotes General Masakazu Kawabe: "It was only in a gradual manner that the horrible wreckage made of Hiroshima became known; in comparison, the Soviet entry into the war was a great shock because we had been in constant fear of it". Upon the Red Army's entry into Manchuria on August 8th, 2 days after the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan took a heavy loss with an estimated 700,000 dead, injured or captured. Stone argues that the Japanese government and officials had no time to react and agree to surrender before the second atomic bomb was dropped in Nagasaki a day later. Stone backs this argument up with quotes from Japanese officials; Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki said "Japan must surrender immediately or the Red Army will take not only Manchuria, Korea, Karafuto but

also Hokkaido. This would destroy the foundation of Japan.” This quote from the Prime Minister of Japan shows that the Soviet entry into the war had much more of an effect on the surrender compared to the US, as the Japanese believed they would deal with them. Due to this evidence, it is believed that had Truman waited until after the Soviet entry into the war, the bombs would not have needed to be dropped. Alperovitz backs this up, saying “there was very little to lose by using the Russian attack to end the war...There were still three months to go before the first landing could take place in November. If the early August Russian attack did not work as expected, the bombs could obviously have been used anyway, long before any lives were lost in the landing.”

The revisionist perspective is that Truman had other motives. Stone claims that the dropping of the bombs was not a military decision, citing the fact that 6/7 U.S WWII military leaders were against dropping the atomic bombs. Admiral William Leahy, Truman’s chief military advisor, said after the war, “The Japanese were ready to surrender, and it wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon”. Both Alperovitz and Stone use multiple pieces of evidence to argue that the atomic bombs were a political decision. Alperovitz points to evidence such as Walter Barey, who was heavily involved in making the atomic bombs, recalling a conversation with Byrnes, who told him that he was concerned about Russian influence spreading in Europe, and he believed that demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable. Stone also uses a quote from Leslie Grove, the General in charge of the Manhattan Project, which says “There was never any illusion on my part that Russia was our enemy and the project was conducted on that basis.” At this time, the Soviet Union was expanding their influence over Europe, which the US saw as a threat to their control and power.

Post-revisionist

The post-revisionist perspective is for the dropping of the atomic bombs. The post-revisionist perspective argues that the Japanese were not about to surrender, so the bomb saved the lives of the soldiers who would have invaded Japan. Many counterarguments to the revisionist perspective are provided by historians. This perspective believes that dropping the bombs was both a military and political decision that ended the war and a warning to the Soviet Union.

The post-revisionist perspective argues against the revisionist perspective that the Japanese were close to surrendering. Both Robert Maddox (1995) and Lewis Fretz (1995) acknowledge the revisionist belief that Japan was essentially defeated, with Maddox saying, “By any rational calculation, Japan was a beaten nation by the summer of 1945”. However, they disagree that Japan was close to surrender without the use of atomic bombs. Maddox argues this by referencing the Japanese “Fundamental Policy to Be Followed Henceforth in the Conduct of the War,” which pledged to “prosecute the war to the bitter end in order to uphold the national polity, protect the imperial land, and accomplish the objectives for which we went to war.” Truman and other US government officials had no reason to believe this wasn’t true, they believed that Japan would fight until they absolutely couldn’t anymore. This belief was reinforced when the US invaded the island of Okinawa, Japan fought as they said they would in this policy. 100,000 out of 107,000 Japanese soldiers ended up dead at the end of the 3 months of fighting, many by suicide as they would rather take their own lives than surrender to the US, according to Fretz (1995). This invasion showed the US government that the Japanese would fight as hard as they could, for as long as they could,

taking many American lives with them. Because of this, Fretz and Maddox believe that Truman made the only decision he could in this scenario, to drop the bombs and quickly end the war. Fretz says that “Truman was advised that any Allied invasion of mainland Japan would result in 1 million casualties, probably 2 million being killed.” Because of this, Fretz believed that dropping the bombs was the lesser of evils. Maddox agrees with this, saying that as Truman was Commander in Chief of the American armed forces, he had a duty to the men fighting for the US and says “One can only imagine what would have happened if tens of thousands of American boys had died or been wounded on Japanese soil and then it had become known that Truman had chosen not to use weapons that might have ended the war months sooner.” While this is a good point, the revisionist perspective has a strong opposing argument, that the invasion of Japan was months away from happening and that the Soviet entry was planned for mid-August.

Fretz and Maddox further their argument that Japan was nowhere near surrender by discussing the debate within the Japanese government over surrender. Although Emperor Hirohito had overall power in Japan, it was up to the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War to decide whether Japan should surrender. This is due to the centuries-old tradition of Emperors not interfering with politics, to maintain their reputation and protect their lives from any extremists. The Supreme Council at the time was made up of Prime Minister Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, Minister of Foreign Affairs Shigenori Togo, Minister of the Army General Korechika Anami, Minister of the Navy Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, Chief of the Army General Staff General Yoshijiro Umezu, and Chief of the Navy General Staff Admiral Soemu Toyoda. Fretz counters the revisionist argument that if the surrender agreement had been amended Japan would have surrendered, claiming that this Supreme War cabinet was strongly divided, with General Anami, General Umezu and Admiral Toyoda being strongly opposed to the idea of a surrender without 4 conditions: “the guarantee of the imperial monarchy, the disarmament of Japanese troops by Japanese commanders, the conduct of war crimes trials by Japanese officials, and the absence of any postwar occupation of Japan or just a token occupation in a few designated areas.” Fretz claims that “obviously any American administration that agreed to these conditions would not survive in office and, after its removal from power, its members would be charged with dereliction of duty or even treason” so therefore, due to the three extremist members in the War council, there was no way Japan would surrender unless the atomic bombs were dropped. It was only once the atomic bombs were dropped, the Soviets entered, and the Emperor stepped in, that Japan surrendered. Even then, the extremists still fought against the surrender but were overpowered.

Within Fretz and Maddox’s perspectives, they provide counterarguments for some of the revisionist points. Both historians deny Stone’s argument that 6/7 US military leaders were against the dropping of the bombs, claiming that they each thought their branch of the military would be the one which would eventually end the war and that they only voiced their disagreements after the fact, saying “There is no persuasive evidence that any of them did so, apart from Eisenhower.” Even saying this, Maddox argues that Eisenhower’s disagreement may not be entirely accurate, referring to the fact that Eisenhower’s story changed many times throughout the years after the bombings.

The validity of the revisionist argument is also somewhat countered by Maddox who highlights the retrospective bias present in the revisionist perspective, claiming that any

information that came out after the war, that Truman did not previously have access to, is irrelevant to deciding whether the bombs should have been dropped or not. As Truman had no access to some of the information that came out after the war, it shouldn't be used to argue against the dropping of the bombs, as the decision was based only on information available at the time. It is unfair to judge Truman's decision without considering what he was and wasn't aware of at the time.

Much of Stone and Alperovitz evidence they use to back up their arguments is reliable, many of which are quotes from government officials and US intelligence. The use of Truman's diary to back up their arguments is a very reliable source, as it provides a firsthand account of Truman's mindset and knowledge at the time. However, it may contain his personal bias. Evidence used by Stone such as the quotes from US officials such as William Leahy, and General MacArthur may be inaccurate as these quotes were said after the event, so therefore there is a chance that they were misremembered or taken out of context of the conversation. Some of the information and evidence used by Stone and Alperovitz was only made available after the war, such as quotes from Japanese officials about their fear of the USSR. Truman and other US officials wouldn't have access to that information when deciding to drop the bomb, so there is a question about whether this information is relevant to the argument of the morality of dropping the bombs, weakening the revisionist argument.

I neither agree nor disagree with both the revisionist and post-revisionist beliefs on what ended the war. Both arguments do make valid points, as the atomic bombs demonstrated that America had way more power than Japan, and the Soviet entry was what Japan feared most. As both groups provide valid evidence, and cannot refute the others argument, I don't agree with either perspective. Instead, I believe that it was the combination of the Soviet entry and the bombs that caused Japan to surrender.

Grade: Excellence

Excellence requires a comprehensive analysis of different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders.

In addition to the Merit criteria, this involves making judgements, as a historian, on the historical validity of different perspectives of the contested event, drawing conclusions that demonstrate thorough engagement with the evidence and the historical ideas it contains.

The student identifies and explains the contemporary perspectives of the Elizabethan government and Catholic supporters, along with the Protestant legal and revisionist Catholic perspectives, on whether the execution of Mary Queen of Scots was justified.

The explanation of these perspectives captures the wider historical context and the complexities in the decision. For example, Elizabeth's hesitation and later, her distancing from the order, her moral/political reluctance to execute an anointed monarch, and how and why ministers and parliament pressed for action.

Each perspective has been supported by specific historical examples and evidence. Some examples include references to historical events such as attempted plots on Elizabeth's life and to primary source material, intercepted ciphered letters, contemporary rhetoric, and historiography.

The tone of the response is consistently evaluative, with the student frequently assessing the validity of each perspective. They consider the influences, biases, and the supporting or contrasting evidence that strengthens or weakens the credibility of each viewpoint. Some examples of this include

- Historians' critiques (Antonia Fraser and John Guy) disputing the reliability of translated cipher letters and highlighting potential edits.
- How Elizabeth's blame-shifting to Davison undermines the validity of the perspectives that support Mary's execution as justified
- Procedural irregularities surrounding the trial and execution
- The complexities of Mary's agency and reputation, and how this counters the 'victim narrative'

After weighing the validity of the various perspectives and the supporting evidence, the student judges that the Protestant perspective is more flawed than the Catholic revisionist perspective. This conclusion follows logically from the student's discussion of the validity of each viewpoint and the evidence used to support them. The student then makes a final judgement that the execution was "*politically understandable but neither legally nor morally correct.*"

Did Mary, Queen of Scots Deserve to be Executed?

The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots happened on February 8, 1587 and was one of the most defining moments of the Tudor age. Very few events in Europe during the sixteenth century have generated such lasting controversy or provoked such polarised interpretations. Mary Stuart's death was not merely a matter of justice, but a collision of religion, power, law and politics. To contemporaries it represented an act of state security and divine necessity. To others, it was political murder sanctioned by expediency. In the centuries since, historians have continued to debate whether Mary truly "deserved" execution.

The contemporary perspective of Elizabeth's government, regarded Mary's execution as lawful, necessary and divinely justified. Elizabeth's advisers, especially Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley) and Sir Francis Walsingham, perceived her as a dynastic and ideological threat. As a Catholic with legitimate Tudor blood, Mary was the natural alternative to Elizabeth, whom the Pope had excommunicated in 1570. To English Catholics, she embodied the hope of restoring the Catholic monarchy, to Elizabeth's government, she personified threat and civil war. From the moment the Babington Plot was uncovered in 1586, Elizabeth's ministers believed they had irrefutable evidence of Mary's guilt. Sir Francis Walsingham's intricate network of spies intercepted ciphered letters between Mary and the conspirator Anthony Babington. The letters appeared to show Mary endorsing a plan to assassinate Elizabeth and restore the Catholic faith in England. Walsingham's decipherer, Thomas Phelippes, famously added the marginal note "The Queen of Scots' answer to Babington's letter – plainly approving the design against Her Majesty's person." This annotation sealed Mary's fate. To Walsingham and Burghley, Mary's consent to regicide nullified her status as sovereign and made her a traitor under English Law. The bond of Association of 1584, signed by hundreds of nobles and even by Mary herself, bound its adherents to avert or pre-empt any plot against the Queen. In their eyes, Mary's approval to Babington's scheme invoked that oath and legitimised her execution.

The Privy Council argues that the act of correspondence itself, offering encouragement or reward for Elizabeth's assassination, constituted high treason under the Act for the Queen's Safety (1585). The legal reasoning was reinforced by the religious and political rhetoric of the period. Protestant England viewed itself as a "New Israel" beset by papal conspiracies and foreign threats. Mary's Catholic identity transformed her into both a theological enemy and a political rival. In speeches to Parliament, Burghley described her as "a serpent," whilst Walsingham called her "a canker in the state." These metaphors of infection and betrayal emphasize the perceived divine duty to purge sin and treason. For contemporaries steeped in providential thinking, executing Mary was not vengeance but purification.

Yet even within Elizabeth's council, there was unease. Elizabeth herself hesitated for months before signing the death warrant for Mary. She was aware that executing an anointed monarch was unprecedented and could set a very dangerous example. Her hesitation was both moral and political, morally she feared divine judgment, politically she knew the execution would provoke outrage across Catholic Europe, especially from France and Spain. According to court records and letters preserved by Lord Burghley, Elizabeth told her secretary Davison that "she could not put to death the bird that sought shelter in her nest." Nonetheless, Parliament and her ministers pressed relentlessly. Mary had become the focus of numerous conspiracies to overthrow Elizabeth, including the Ridolfi (1571), Throckmorton (1583) and Babington (1586) plots. Each of these strengthened the conviction among Elizabeth's council that so long as Mary lived, England could never be secure. They insisted

that sparing Mary would invite further plots and risks Elizabeth's assassination. In the end, Elizabeth signed the warrant but later claimed that Davison had sent it to Fotheringhay without her explicit order, an act of convenient denial that reveals the tension between moral science and political necessity.

Assessing the validity of this contemporary perspective requires acknowledging both its context and its bias. The fear of Catholic insurrection was genuine. England in the 1580s faced internal divisions, economic strain and the looming menace of Spain. Mary's existence was a magnet for conspiracy. In this sense, Elizabeth's counselors were justified in perceiving her as dangerous. However, their case rested on intercepted evidence controlled entirely by Walsingham's agents. Historians such as Antonia Fraser and John Guy have demonstrated that the lagged cipher letters were translations, not originals and may have been edited to strengthen the prosecution. The government insistence that the trial proceed "with or without" Mary present, also undermined claims of due process. Thus, while the Elizabethan state's perspective was historically credible in its logic of survival, it lacked impartiality. It was less a pursuit of justice than an exercise of power disguised as law.

A second, modern Protestant legal interpretation, emerging from twentieth century historiography, argues that Mary's execution was legally defensible and politically inevitable, though ethically troubling. This view, advanced by historians such as Alison Weir, David Loades and Geoffrey Elton, contextualises Elizabeth's decisions within Tudor Realpolitik. In their analysis, monarchy in the sixteenth century was not constrained by the notions of due process or human rights familiar today, it was governed by the imperatives of security and divine order. To allow a rival claimant implicated in treasonous correspondence to live would have been political suicide. From this standpoint, Mary's trial, though irregular, was consistent with the norms of Tudor justice. Weir observes that Elizabeth's ministers acted under extraordinary pressure "The existence of the Queen of Scots was a continuing menace to the peace of the realm, her death, though lamentable, was the only remedy." Loades similarly notes that "to the Elizabeth mind, the safety of the sovereign and the safety of the state were one and the same time." The Protestant-legal school thus interprets Mary's execution as a tragic but rational act of governance, an assertion of lawful sovereignty in a time of existential threat.

Support for this view can be found in the legal documentation of the trial itself. The commission at Fotheringhay comprised forty peers and judges, who unanimously found Mary guilty. The procedures, though biased, followed statutory form: the indictment was read, the evidence presented, and a sentence pronounced under the authority of Parliament. From the perspective of constitutional evolution, the trial demonstrated the capacity of English law to adjudicate even cases involving royalty - a milestone in the development of parliamentary sovereignty. In this sense, Elizabeth's government may have believed it was upholding the rule of law rather than subverting it. But contemporary analysts who take this view also recognize the event's overwhelming moral complexity. As historian John Guy argues, "Mary was condemned not as a proven murderer but as a potential one." The tension in this logic is neatly summed up in that Protestant legalist proposition; legality in Tudor England equated to political expediency. The law was a means of survival, not a neutral arbiter. The acceptability of this interpretation also depends on whether one believed that the safety of the realm warranted a twisting of justice. For many historians the answer is yes. But only according to sixteenth century logic.

The third perspective, a contemporary Catholic and revisionist view, disputes both the Elizabethan and Protestant-legal narratives with Mary as a religiously persecuted figure and political pawn. Revisionist historians, including Michael Lynch, Elizabeth Tunstall and Alexander Wilkinson stress the moral injustice of her trial and the lack of proper procedural

justification for it. They say the execution of Mary was not an act of law, but a cold blooded getting rid of a political nuisance.

From their perspective, the case against her was shaky. The ciphered letters which comprised the backbone of the prosecution were translations made by Walsingham's clerks, and no originals have been preserved. Mary was not allowed to access or authenticate any of these documents. Legal counsel, the right to call witnesses and an opportunity to plead her case before Elizabeth were denied to her. These procedural irregularities make the verdict dubious by any measure, including Tudor justice. Furthermore, Mary was a foreign sovereign so should not have been prosecutable under English law. In subjecting her to trial Elizabeth's council implicitly repudiated the principle of monarchical equality that underpinned European diplomacy.

Mary's death was seen as martyrdom by her Catholic contemporaries. In France and Spain pamphlets and ballads described her as a saintly sufferer. A Jesuit chronicler called her "the Phoenix of Scotland, burned in the ashes of English heresy." This account was retained also in subsequent historiography, especially in the nineteenth century when romantic authors transformed Mary into a tragic heroine betrayed by political machinations. Although contemporary revisionists steer clear of the hagiography, they continue to support the fundamental contention that her conviction was a mockery and execution undeserved.

The case for a revisionist interpretation is also strengthened by looking more closely at the political situation in 1586 and 1587. Elizabeth's ministers knew that to execute a monarch was to establish an ominous precedent applicable to all sovereigns. Indeed, when James VI of Scotland complained about his mother's death, Elizabeth maintained that she had not ordered it. The orchestrated dance of blame — accusing Secretary Davison of issuing the warrant without consent — indicates Elizabeth knew it to be questionably legal. Additionally, Mary's death gave ammunition to Catholic Europe, creating anti-English feeling and encouraging Philip II to send the Spanish Armada in 1588. Long-range, then, the implementation did nothing to protect England and only further inflamed religious war.

But the revisionist version has its own biases as well. By placing such prominence on Mary as a victim, it can obscure her agency and political miscalculations. Mary's communications with foreign powers, her previous marriage to Lord Darnley and subsequent wedding to the Earl of Bothwell (whom much of Scotland accused of murdering Darnley) had already made her reputation a cause for concern. She was not some innocent bystander in the politics of her time. But the revisionist school's moral indictment still holds: A trial lacking fairness or transparency cannot yield a deserved execution.

The Elizabethan state interpreted her death as lawful self-defence; the Protestant-legal school as an unfortunate but necessary assertion of sovereignty; and the Catholic-revisionist tradition as a wicked execution inspired by fear and bigotry. Each contains elements of truth. It's also historically the case that Elizabeth's government did actually face real threats. Whether the latter was complete or not, the Babington Plot was genuine. But the government's tampering with evidence and procedure delegitimizes the moral rightness of the result.

When we judge the truth value of an historical claim, we must examine what evidence and for what reasons a claim is made. The earliest Elizabethan view, being by far the most contemporary, is also the least trustworthy. It was formed through propaganda and the politics of survival. Ministers such as Burghley and Walsingham had an interest in demonstrating Mary's guilt, for to fail to do so would reveal the weakness of England. The Protestant-legal version, at a greater distance, may fall to the risk of anachronism in rationalising Tudor repression as necessary. Revisionist accounts, on the other hand, have had the benefit of hindsight and access to a fuller basket of sources. It acknowledges the

political manipulation without sometimes quite sounding the depths of the real threat Mary represented.

Of the three perspectives, the Catholic revisionist interpretation is the most convincing. It finds that although Mary's existence was a real political threat the form she was arraigned on is a deliberate misuse of legal procedure for political ends. The evidence was fixed, her defence refused, and her sovereignty invaded. The evidence against her, as surmised by Walsingham's agents, was never proved by Mary herself, and this insufficient method made her unable to answer in her own defence—even though the English law of that era guaranteed such that kind of right to all. Moreover, Elizabeth's later disavowal of responsibility and reluctance to sanction public defense of the act suggest her awareness that it was morally and legally problematic. Historians like John Guy and Antonia Fraser have pointed out that the Babington letters emerged from a selective interpretation, designed to produce a guilty verdict. Therefore, Mary's trial was not justice but her expediency. The Protestant and Elizabethan perspectives justify her death with the name of necessity, but necessity cannot wipe out an absence of justice. Here the revisionist argument is at its strongest: the execution of Mary was politically understandable, but neither legally nor morally correct.

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