

## Section I

25 marks

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

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In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- present a detailed, logical and well-structured answer to the question
  - use relevant issues of historiography
  - use relevant sources to support your argument
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Using the Source, answer the question that follows.

### Source

#### What history is

How do historians . . . make history? By that I mean what consequences flow from the fact that all the events and processes in ‘the past’ are ‘turned’ by the historian into that narrative we call history? . . . What are some of the consequences that flow from this view of history as a narrative about the past constructed by the historian in the present?

Much of the debate on viewing history as the narrative construction of the historian, is [whether] this judgement distorts what history is, what historians do, and it reflects upon the objectivity and truth-seeking nature of the exercise . . .

The study of the past has never been static. The practice of history has witnessed many shifts and turns in the way it is thought and undertaken . . . In spite of this rich variety of methodological developments or shifts and turns of interest, the foundational way historians ‘*know* things about the past’ has been unchallenged. Despite the use of statistics, the new themes (society, women, gender, culture) and the application of fresh concepts and theories, there remain two steady points in the historian’s cosmos\*: empiricism\*\* and rational analysis . . .

Doubts about the empirical-analytical as the privileged path to historical knowing have emerged. This has not happened in history alone, of course. In all the arts, humanities, social sciences, and even the physical and life sciences, the question is increasingly being put: how can we be sure that empiricism and inference really does get us close to the true meaning of the past? In history how can we trust our sources — not because they are forgeries or missing, but because of the claims empiricism is forced to make about our ability not only to find the data, but also just

Source (continued)

as importantly represent their meaning accurately? It is not an abstract or scholastic philosophical question to ask, where does meaning come from in history? Is it the past itself? Is its meaning simply ushered in by the historian? Is the historian merely the midwife\*\*\* to the truth of the past? Or is the historian unavoidably implicated in the creation of a meaning for the past? Does the past contain one true meaning or several? Is there one story to be discovered or several that can be legitimately generated? I think most historians today would agree on the latter analysis. The difference comes over the consequences of that implication, and what it does for truth. In other words, is it the historian who provides the truth of the past as she represents it rather than as she finds it? . . .

And the very big question, is history what happened, or what historians tell us happened?

PROFESSOR ALUN MUNSLow,  
*History in Focus*, 2001

\* Universe, world

\*\* The theory that knowledge is gained from experience or observation

\*\*\* One who assists at birth

**Question 1** (25 marks)

With close reference to the issues raised by Munslow, critically evaluate the role of the historian in the construction of history.

Support your argument with reference to at least TWO sources you have studied.

**Please turn over**