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De-coding exam questions

The examiners are not trying to catch you out: they are giving you a chance to show what you know – and what you can do with what you know. However, you must stick to the question on the exam paper. Staying focused on the question is crucial. Including information that is not relevant or misreading a question and writing about the wrong topic wastes time and gains you no marks.

To stay focused on the question you will need to practise how to 'de-code' questions. This is particularly important for Section B of the exam paper. Follow these **five steps to success**:

Step 1 Read the question a couple of times. Then look at **how many marks** the question is worth. This tells you how much you are expected to write. Do not spend too long on questions only worth a few marks. Remember it is worth planning the 12- and 16-mark questions.

Step 2 Identify the **conceptual focus** of the question. What is the key concept that the question focuses on? Is it asking you to look at:

- the **significance** of a discovery or individual
- **causation** – the reasons why an event or development happened
- **similarities** – between the key features of different periods
- **change** – the extent of change or continuity, progress or stagnation during a period?

Step 3 Spot the **question type**. Are you being asked to:

- **describe** the key features of a period
- **explain** similarities between periods or why something happened
- **evaluate** how useful a source or collection of sources is
- reach a **judgement** as to how far you agree with a particular statement.

Each question type requires a different approach. Look for key words or phrases that help you work out which approach is needed. The phrase 'How far do you agree?' means you need to weigh the evidence for and against a statement before reaching a balanced judgement. 'Explain why' means that you need to explore a range of reasons why an event happened or why the pace of change during a period was fast or slow.

Step 4 Identify the **content focus**. What is the area of content or topic the examiner wants you to focus on?

Step 5 Look carefully at the **date boundaries** of the question. What time period should you cover in your answer? Stick to this carefully or you will waste time writing about events that are not relevant to the question.

Look at the exam question below. At first glance it appears this question is just about Jenner's vaccination against smallpox. This shows the danger of not de-coding a question carefully. If you simply describe what Jenner did you will not get many marks as you are still not focusing on the actual question.

The conceptual focus is significance – you need to reach a judgement on how far Jenner's work was a 'major breakthrough' in the prevention of disease.

The date boundaries for the question are c.1700 and c.1900. If you include references to events in the twentieth century you will waste time and not pick up any additional marks.

6. Jenner's vaccination against smallpox was a **major breakthrough** in the prevention of disease in Britain during the period c.1700–c.1900. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

(16 marks)

16 marks are available – this means the question requires an extended answer. It is definitely worth planning this answer!

The content focus is more than just Jenner. It is exploring a wider theme – the prevention of disease in Britain.

The phrase 'How far do you agree?' means that this question requires you to reach a judgement about the statement in quotation marks. This means analysing the impact of Jenner's work and its limitations. It also means weighing its significance against other important breakthroughs (such as Snow's work on preventing cholera).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Look at the other questions in Section B of the exam paper on page 149.

Break each question down into the five steps and check you have de-coded the question effectively.

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Describing the key features of a period

The examiners are not trying to catch you out: they are giving you a chance to show what you know – **and what you can do with what you know**. If you work out what the question is getting at, you will be able to answer it from what you have learned.



To stay relevant to the questions you will need to practise how to 'decode' questions.

Decoding exam questions

Step 1: Read the question a couple of times.

Step 2: Highlight each of the following. You could use a different colour for each.

Date boundaries – What time period should you cover in your answer? Stick to this carefully, otherwise you will waste time writing about events that are not relevant to the question.

Content focus – The topic the examiner wants you to focus on.

Question type – Different question types require different approaches. Look for key words, 'What', 'Why', or 'How far', that will help you work out what type of approach is needed.

Marks available – Look at how many marks the question is worth. This gives you a guide as to how much you are expected to write. Do not spend too long on questions that are only worth a few marks.

Look at the exam question below.

The question asks you to **describe** the key features of public health in England during the Roman period. You do not need to evaluate how effective they were.

The content focus for this question is on public health in England. There is no need to explore other areas of Roman medicine such as surgery or the way they treated disease.

2 The boxes below show two different periods. Choose **one** and describe the key features of public health in England during that period. [6 marks]

The Roman period

The Middle Ages

You must stick to the date boundaries of the question. In this case it is the Roman period. Comparisons to public health facilities in the Middle Ages will not gain you extra marks as the question says that you must stick to **one** period.

6 marks are available. Do not write too much! Stick to the focus of the question.

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Questions that ask you to explain or evaluate carry more marks and need longer answers. We will provide advice on tackling these types of questions later. Describe questions carry fewer marks and it is important that you stay relevant to the question. If you write too much you could run out of time later in the exam paper.

Activity



Read the answer below. The student has written too much because they have not stayed relevant to the question. On your own copy, cross out the sentences that are irrelevant to the question. You should be left with the makings of a good answer!

The Romans tried to prevent disease by improving public health in their towns. This is because they needed fit and healthy people to serve in the army and keep the Empire strong. The Romans thought that dirt was somehow linked to disease although they did not know exactly how because they did not know about bacteria. Roman towns were built in healthy places, away from marshes and polluted water. In towns in England aqueducts were built that brought in fresh water. Public fountains provided water for drinking and washing. Even small towns had bath-houses which were cheap to use. In large towns such as Lincoln 5000 people used the baths every week. Sewers carried away waste from baths, latrines and houses. The Roman public health schemes were the best the world had seen. They were more advanced than those of the Greeks or Egyptians but they were not perfect. There were still outbreaks of epidemic disease. For example, in AD165, an epidemic killed five million people.

Tip 2: Stay relevant to the question.

One of the main problems with 'Describe' questions is that students write too much! They include details that are not relevant to the question.

Make sure you stick to the question – describe the key features of public health.

You DO NOT need to:

- explain why they did it, or
- evaluate how successful their methods were.

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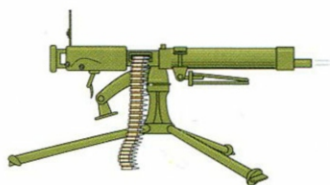
◆ Testing evidence, Part 2: how is the source written?



The quality control checks that you have carried out are very important. However, there are two further checks. The way that language is used in a source can give us important clues about the author and how much we should trust what has been written.

LOOKING OUT FOR LOADED LANGUAGE

It is very important to learn how to spot loaded language. Newspapers, speeches and even school reports can contain loaded words that change the meaning of a whole sentence. The language used can tell us a great deal about the author's views, or what the author is trying to make the reader think. Look at the example below (it is caption 33 from the film). Three words have been fired deliberately into the second sentence. Like bullets, they certainly make an explosive impact!



entire

The attack. At a signal, along the trench parapets and advanced towards the German trenches under heavy fire from the enemy.

16-mile front,

leaped

heavy

ACTIVITY C

1 Look at caption 9 below. Key words or phrases have been highlighted.

HIDDEN BATTERIES WERE **POUNDRING** THE GERMAN TRENCHES **FOR FIVE DAYS** BEFORE THE **ATTACK OF JULY 1ST**. 9

- a) Why are the British batteries **hidden**?
 - b) What effect does the word **pounding** have?
 - c) Why do the authors include the detail that the bombardment had been taking place **for five days**?
- 2 Copy captions 17, 29, 37, 42, 51, 59, 61 (see pages 8–10).
- a) Highlight loaded words that have been fired into the sentence.
 - b) Explain what the producers of the film were hoping to achieve by using these words.
- 3 Do you now want to change the reliability rating you gave the film? Explain your decision.

ACTIVITY D

This scene was filmed just before the attack. 'Willie' is a nickname for the German Kaiser.

- a) Does it's caption use loaded language?
- b) Rewrite the caption in the same style as the other captions you have looked at. Add some loaded language to get across an important message to your audience. Do not state the obvious!



A soldier poses by a shell with the words 'To Willie With Compliments' on it.

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2.2 Your Enquiry Question

Like you, we thought of lots of questions about medieval medicine. Did you think of these?

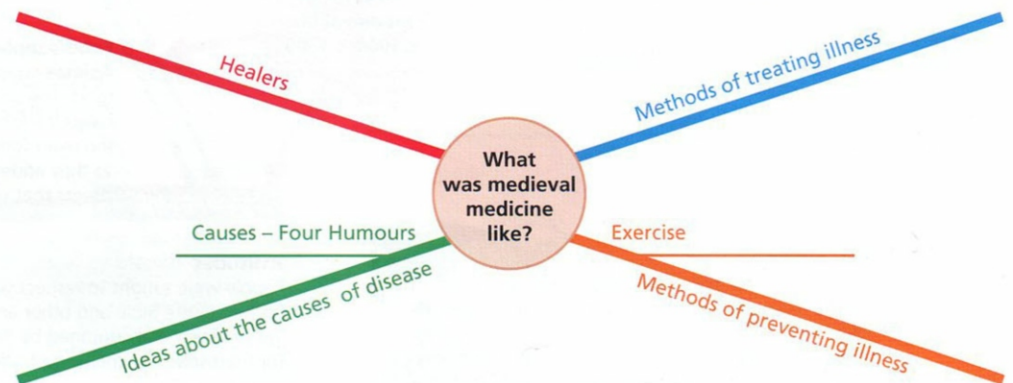


These are all good questions, but we have chosen the question in the pink bubble as our Enquiry Question, the question to investigate in this chapter. We chose it for three reasons:

- 1 It's the 'biggest' question in the list because the answer helps you understand medicine throughout this period.
- 2 It's a puzzling question. Medieval people were just as intelligent as us and they did want to be healthier and stop diseases spreading – but medicine did not improve. Why not?
- 3 Change and continuity are important ideas in your exam course.

Beginning your enquiry

Before you begin to investigate why medicine changed so little, you need to find out what medicine was like in the Middle Ages. You are going to research this on pages 15–21 and record a summary of your findings on a memory map like the one below.



The memory map is the first Knowledge Organiser in this book. On page 4 we said we would help you to avoid common mistakes. One mistake is to make notes so full of detail that you cannot see the key points you need. Memory maps are excellent for recording key points. They help with revision too. This is how to build up your memory map.

Step 1: Use A3 paper. Space is important. The final version should not be cramped.

Step 2: Add information to the map as you read pages 15–21. Use pencil so you can make corrections later. Remember:

- Use key words or phrases. Do not write full sentences.
- Use pictures/images/diagrams to replace or emphasise words. Some of you will find it easier to remember visual images than words.
- PRINT words to make them stand out.

Step 3: When you have finished, redraft your map to make sure everything is clear.

Use the information on pages 12 and 13 to begin filling in your memory map.

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Smarter Revision: Living graph

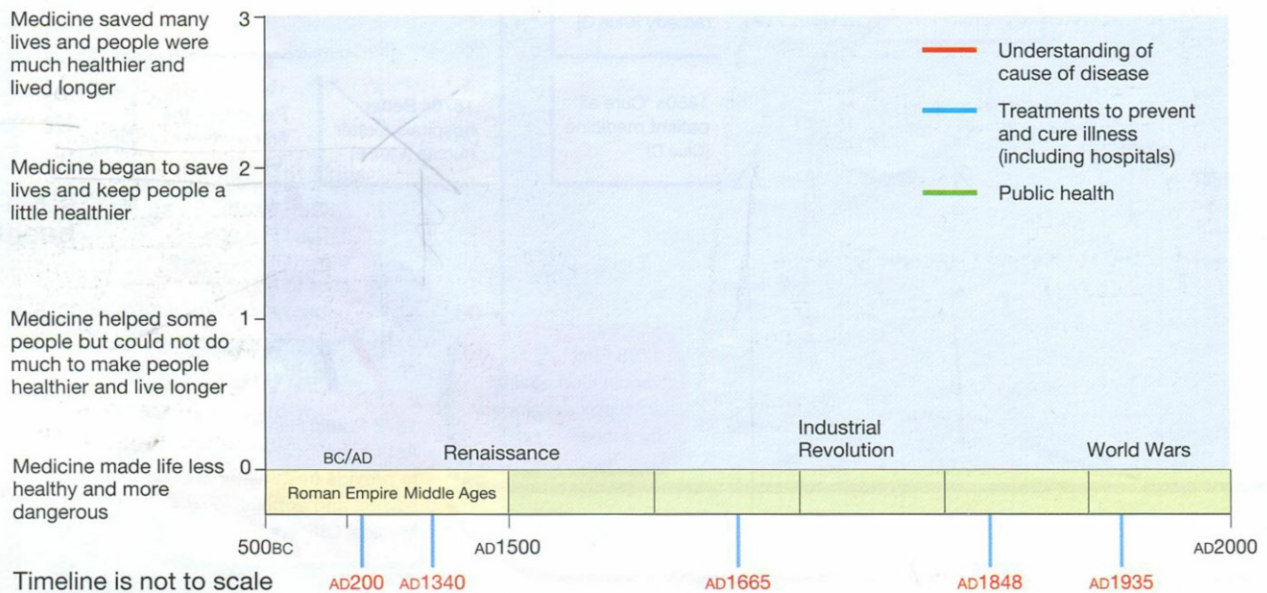
On the last two pages you saw the story of life expectancy right across time – all in one graph. Graphs are really helpful for following the story of medicine across time so it's important to start early – NOW!

Information

What is public health?

Governments organise public health systems to protect their people from disease. This, for example, includes providing fresh water, sewers and hospitals, and making laws to force towns and people to try to prevent diseases spreading.

Activities



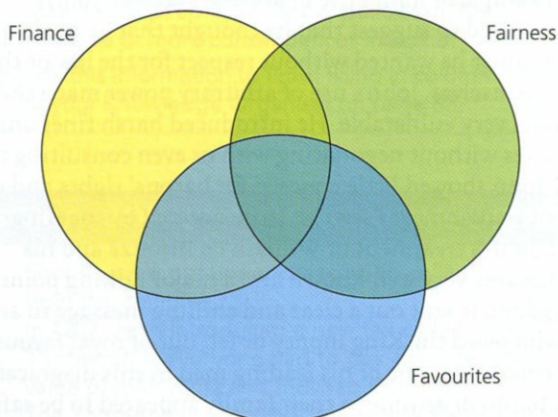
Living graph: You are going on an evidence hunt through the book to create three lines on your graph.

- Work in a small group. Choose one theme:
 - Understanding of the cause of disease
 - Treatments to prevent and cure illness (including hospitals)
 - Public health
- Use the Medical Moments on pages 16, 18, 66, 86 and 88.
 - Pick out from each picture the evidence about your theme. Decide for each date where to place your theme on the graph. (For example if you think public health in AD200 made life less healthy and more dangerous put a cross at level 0 above AD200.)
- Use sticky notes to list the evidence for your choice of level. Stick these on your graph.
- When your outline graph is complete you have one minute to explain it aloud to your class. You must include each of these words:
 - continuity
 - change
 - turning point
 - progress.
- Compare the lines for each theme. What similarities and differences can you see between the shapes of the three lines?
- Look back at the life-expectancy graph on pages 6–7. What have you learned from your new graphs that helps to explain the shape of the life-expectancy graph?

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THE BARONS' MOTIVES

Read the case studies on these two pages. Which factors may have influenced each baron's decision to rebel? Place each baron in a copy of the Venn diagram below. Remember that they may have had more than one reason to rebel, so think carefully about where you place them.

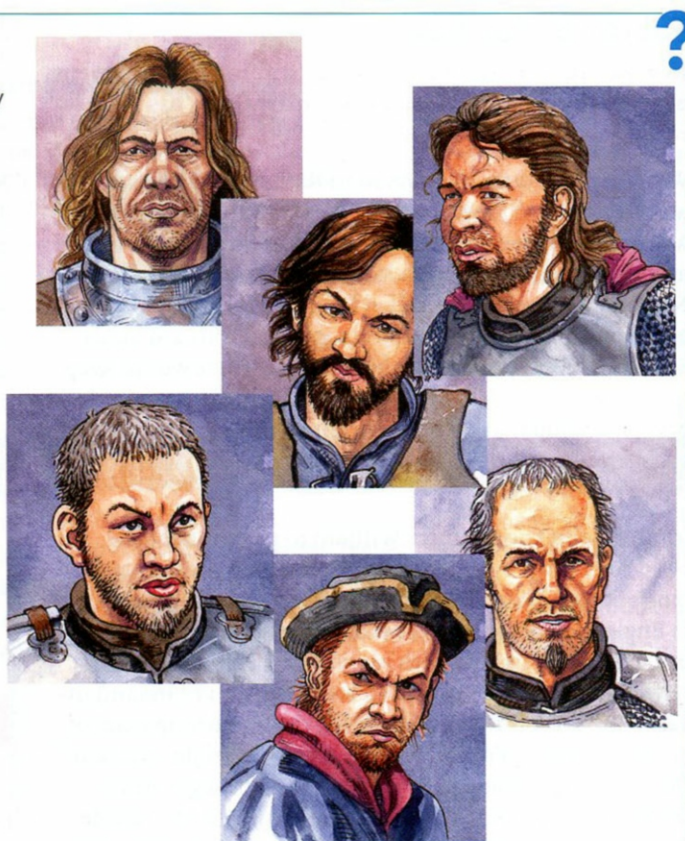


Key

Finance – Barons affected by John's financial policies.

Favourites – Barons who may have expected John to favour them but were instead ignored.

Fairness – Barons who felt that John had treated them cruelly or shown them a lack of respect.



▲ We do not know what the individual barons looked like as there are no recorded descriptions or portraits.

Case studies: What turned individual barons against King John?

Eustace de Vesci

- In his forties.
- Lord of Alnwick in Northumberland.
- Married an illegitimate daughter of William the Lion, King of Scotland.
- Used by John to help negotiations with the Scots.
- Rumoured at the time that John had made advances on his wife.
- Owed money to Jewish moneylenders.

Gilbert de Gant

- In his mid-thirties.
- Owned land in south Lincolnshire.
- John had failed to support his claim to the **earldom** of Lincolnshire.
- Owed £800 to Jewish moneylenders. The debt was taken over by the King and he has given just two years to pay it off.

Richard de Percy

- In his forties.
- Held land in Yorkshire.
- Owed money to the Crown; pressure was put on him to pay back his debts and the rate was set at £400 per year.

Roger de Montbegon

- In his fifties.
- Held land in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.
- He had supported John's rebellion in 1194 (and was one of the leading defenders of Nottingham castle – see page 62).
- When John became king, Roger may have been hoping to prosper, but this did not happen. In 1204, John seized control of Roger's land as a punishment for failing to come to Court.

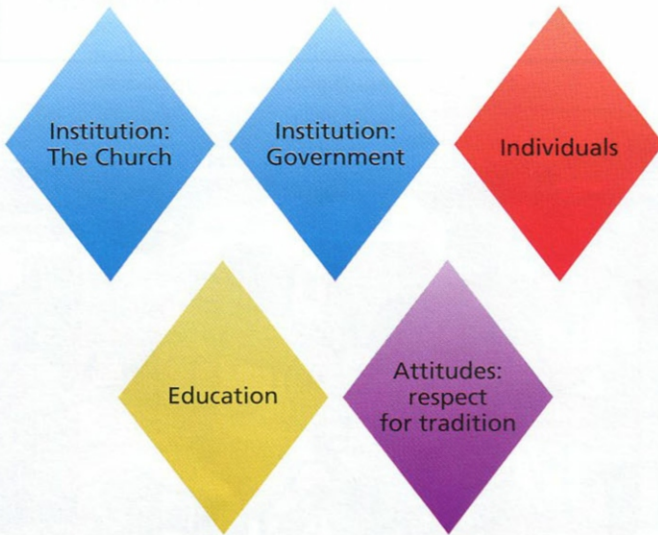
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2.5 Your enquiry: why was there so little change in medicine in the Middle Ages?

Your completed memory map will continue to be useful later when you compare medicine in the Middle Ages with medicine in later periods. However, now it's time to work out your answer to the Enquiry Question above.

Creating your hypothesis

To create a hypothesis – the first draft answer to our question – you can use the Factor Diamonds. We have picked out the factors that were most important in preventing medical change in the Middle Ages (therefore omitting Science and Technology). Here they are:



- Now use the diamonds to create your hypothesis. Arrange them in a pattern like the examples below. You do not have to copy one of these patterns, but do not just guess. Use your knowledge to decide on the most likely pattern. The information on page 13 will act as a reminder.

Preventing change	Hypothesis A	Hypothesis B
THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS		
VERY IMPORTANT FACTORS		
QUITE IMPORTANT FACTORS		

- Now use your pattern to write a short paragraph answering the Enquiry Question. You can use these sentence starters and links as a guide:

One of the most important reasons why there was little change in medicine in the Middle Ages was ...

Another vital reason was

Other factors also played a part in hindering medical developments

Researching the impact of the factors

Use pages 26–28 to research the effects of each factor. Take one factor at a time:

- Read the section about the factor quickly to get an overall sense of its content. The questions on each page will help you think about the factor's influence.
- Use a table like the one below as a Knowledge Organiser. After your first reading fill in column 2 in pencil.
- Now read the section again. Make separate notes explaining how the factor explains continuity. Then finalise your entry in column 2. Prove the link by using connectives (see page 25).
- Fill in column 3. Revise your hypothesis if you can improve it. Use language such as 'most important', 'very important', 'quite important'.

1. Factors	2. How does the factor explain continuity in medicine?	3. How important is the factor in explaining continuity?
The Church		
Education		
Attitudes (respect for tradition)		
Individuals		
Government		

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3.8 Visible learning: Revise and remember



Recording and assessing the role of an individual

During your course you will need to record and assess the achievements of a number of key individuals – Pasteur, Lister and others. It will be much easier to revise their achievements and write about them in exams if you use the same kind of chart for each of them. This means the pattern of the chart will be clear in your mind when you need it. The questions included below will help you create charts for other individuals, but don't be afraid to think for yourself about what needs to be included.

1. Complete this 'Role of the Individual' chart for William Harvey in order to establish the pattern of the chart.
2. Complete a similar chart for Andreas Vesalius.

▼ 'Role of the Individual' chart

William Harvey (1578–1657)

Area of Medicine: Physiology

Career: studied medicine in Cambridge and Padua in Italy and worked as a doctor in London

Discovery: Circulation of the blood

BEFORE this breakthrough

What kinds of ideas or methods did doctors have before this breakthrough?

<p>What was the breakthrough? <i>Explain the key aspects of this breakthrough.</i></p>	<p>Short-term impact <i>What was the immediate impact on medical ideas or treatments?</i></p> <p><i>Did this discovery improve health in the short-term?</i></p> <p><i>Did other discoveries need to be made to make full use of this breakthrough?</i></p>	<p>Long-term impact <i>Why did this breakthrough lead to others?</i></p> <p><i>How did this change thinking about medicine?</i></p> <p><i>What other aspects of medicine changed as a result?</i></p>
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Why did this breakthrough happen?

Explain the reasons for the breakthrough. Remember to refer to the factors on page 8.