

Evaluation and the use of Multiple Choice Item Questions in History Illustrated with Examples taken from the Standard 8 Syllabus*

1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is one of the most important components of being human. It is something which everyone puts into practice almost every day. The importance of evaluation in daily life is clearly evident from man's earliest history. In the book of Judges in the Bible, Chapter 12:5 and 6, we are treated to a wonderful example:

"The Gileadites scaptured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and wherever a survivor of Ephraim said, "Let me cross over, the men of Gilead asked him, 'Are you an Ephraimite?' If he replied, 'No', they said, 'All right, say Shibboleth.' If he said, 'Sibboleth' because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan".

Since everyone undergoes or has undergone some or other form of education, it is quite logical that evaluation should also play an important role in education. (A N Boyce: *Teaching History in South African Schools*, pp 10-14 and 44-46 and B J van der Merwe: *ABC vir Geskiedenisonderrig*, Tema VI)

As early as 2357 B.C. a system of written examination was in used in China. It formed the basis for admission to and promotion in the public service. During the Middle Ages and indeed long thereafter, oral examinations were applied in

Western European universities. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that this type of examining was replaced by written (particularly problematic essay-type) questions. Objective evaluation, however, continued to be a problem. (S J Esterhuizen et al.: *History Method*, pp. 108-149 and B J van der Merwe: *ABC vir Geskiedenisonderrig*, deel 2 en 3)

In consequence hereof, George Fisher, began in 1864 with his objective achievement measurement. However, it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that Dr. Edward L. Thorndike began doing pioneering work with the compilation of the first standardized tests for achievement testing. This work was succeeded by William A. McCall's, and particularly since the Second World War, has received exceptional attention. From this work came the concept of constructing an item-bank for each standard. (B J van der Merwe: *'n Psigologies-pedagogiese ondersoek na enkele aspekte van die taak van die Geskiedenis-onderrwyser*, pp. 1 tot 14 en B J van der Merwe: *A B C vir Geskiedenisonderrig*, Tema VI.)

2. EVALUATION

The terms "testing, measuring and evaluating" are frequently used without a clear comprehension of the meaning of the concepts. It is desirable, therefore, to make a clear distinction between the concepts. (B J van der Merwe: *Terme VI: Evaluering*, pp. 1-7 en J C Chamberlain: *Items Banks, yes or no.*)

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A test consists of a number of questions or assignments, formulated by the teacher, the purpose of which is to get the pupils to react in specific ways with reference to the learning content dealt with. If the questions and assignments involved – which are known as items – are constructed wisely and judiciously, they may be regarded as representative of all the possible items which can be formulated with reference to the learning content concerned.

Measurement can be identified as the collection and arrangement of relevant knowledge or data regarding the pupils.

Evaluation is the allocation of symbols in order to represent value or achievement gained in accordance with stipulated standards or norms. Evaluation thus comprises total value judgement, which exceeds the normal limits of measurement.

Thus the history teacher, with the help of various tests, “measures” the pupils’ knowledge and insight. At the moment the standard of the result derived herefrom is estimated, (or its value judged), by the teacher, evaluation occurs. (B J van der Merwe: Tema VI: Evaluering, pp. 1-7 em S J P du Plessis: *Die veelkeusige toets*).

3. THE VALUE OF EVALUATION

Dr Ben van der Merwe (Tema VI – Evaluering, p. 3) sums it up as follows:

- “Evaluation enables the teacher to determine the standard of scholastic progress of every individual pupil.
- It makes possible the comparison of performance. With the help of the results achieved, the performance of individuals or groups of pupils can be mutually compared in order to determine their standard.
- Through the medium of evaluation tentative data are obtained, from which it can be determined whether the pupil should be promoted.
- The connection between evaluation and the motivation of pupils is universally recognized. It is most clearly evident in achievement directed conduct, i.e. the realization by the pupil that he is judged by himself and others in accordance with a

standard of quality.

- It reflects the adaptability, practicability and the practical implications of the history syllabuses. In accordance with the results of the evaluation events it can be established, inter alia, which sub-divisions of the learning material prescribed to suit the comprehensive faculties of the pupils, and which sub-divisions should be re-adjusted or replaced.
- Evaluation has been recognized for a considerable time as one of the bases for the re-adjustment and improvement of teaching practice in general. On the basis of the results which it furnishes, the teacher can identify the gaps in the instruction he provides.
- As a result of the diagnostic value of evaluation techniques, both defaults in knowledge and learning problems, in the case of weaker pupils, can be established. As such evaluation forms the basis of initial after-care and, if necessary, of remediation.
- It also provides the teacher with an indication of how he has succeeded in realizing the goals to be aimed at in the teaching of history.”

4. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

These can be divided principally into two groups. (S J Esterhuizen et al: *History Method*, pp. 108-149)

- 4.1 Paragraph and/or essay type or free-reaction tests and
- 4.2 Short questions and/or objective multiple – choice type questions.

It is generally accepted that subjectivity may play a role in paragraph and essay-type question. Therefore one of the most useful aids which the teacher can use as a control in the measurements of his pupils’ knowledge is the application of objective multiple choice item tests. Note: In History (and in most, if not all subjects) the multiple choice item tests are only an aid and cannot replace the paragraph/essay type questions.

5. VALUE OF MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEM TESTS

The greatest value exists in the fact that the pupils’ knowledge about a topic(s) or part of the syllabus on the whole syllabus may be tested in a short time-spacing. Indeed the amount of work which can be tested in one attempt is not the determining factor in the compilation of the tests. (S J du Plessis: *Die veelkeurige toets*; J C Chamberlain: *Item Banks, yes or no* and N R Gunning e.a.: *Geskiedenis itembank – Gister en Vandag/Yesterday and Today*, No. 3 van April 1982, pp. 25-26).

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The evaluation work can be done in a relatively short time by the use of a separate answer page which can be marked through the utilization of:

- (i) An Optical reader of a computer or
- (ii) a mask

or some other kind of device.

At the same time the teacher can make an objective evaluation of his pupils':

- general background knowledge
- knowledge of subject matter
- comprehension of an insight into the learning content studied.

Also as a result of the objective multiple choice items, the teacher can evaluate his instructions. An improvement in instruction can consequently be achieved much more easily.

Where standardized tests for achievement measurement are used, evaluation of the pupils' work is so much the easier. The standardized tests, in addition to the advantages mentioned, also provide the benefit of being used as a norm for comparing pupils' achievements in a particular standard throughout the country. They can even be used as a control and an evaluating criterion for applying an objective rating to the teacher's instruction (Read also HSRC: *Manual for planning of objective achievement test, etc.*)

THE DRAFTING OF MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEM TESTS

Before a test(s) on the whole syllabus for a particular standard can be drafted, a thorough study of the syllabus must first be made. Only then can a test(s) be planned. This planning is effected by formulating a specification table with which the test(s) must comply.

In the table a certain weight-value is allocated to each topic (sometimes known as the number of questions per topic). The weight-value is calculated in accordance with the specified number of periods per year allocated to the syllabus.

In this connection note that the History syllabus for Standards 5-10 consists of two equivalent sections, namely, General and South African His-

tory, each of which is to receive the same number of periods of instruction per year. Since the General and South African History are to be dealt with at different times of the year, separate specification tables are draughted for each section. (N R Gunning e.a.: *Geskiedenisitembank – Gister en Vandag/Yesterday and Today* No. 3 van April 1982).

7. ITEM DIVISION

All items may be divided into three basic groups.

- 7.1 Knowledge
- 7.2 Comprehension
- 7.3 Insight

(HSRC: *Manual for planning objective achievement tests, etc* and J C Chamberlain: *Item banks, yes or no* and S J Esterhuizen et al: *History Method* pp. 108-109).

7.1 Knowledge

Knowledge or knowledge of facts concerns the particulars of subject knowledge, and consequently to a large extent, recall or recognition of what has been learnt is tested. (S J Esterhuizen: *Opleiding in die skryf van items*, pp. 1-2).

Knowledge item questions in History can be divided into:

- 7.1.1 Facts: Subject-particularised knowledge.
- 7.1.2 Terminology: Words, expressions and terms which are characteristic of the subject.
- 7.1.3 Chronology: This indicates the time restraint of an event which occurs at the same time as another event and/or the sequence of events through the years.

7.2 Comprehension

The understanding of what occurred in the past is realized in the pupil's ability to identify relationships. Relationship and interdependence of historical facts and events in their time-spatial context. This implies a comparison of historical events and facts. In a functional sense comprehension can be expressed in terms of:

- 7.2.1 Causes
- 7.2.2 Results
- 7.2.3 Identification of historical towns, rivers, etc. with the help of maps.
- 7.2.4 Identification of the historical events by means of photos, sketches and pictures.

7.3 Insight

This comprises the application of knowledge and insight in a contextual context.

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8. EXAMPLES OF MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEMS THAT CAN BE USED IN STANDARD 8

(Read: S J Esterhuizen and N R Gunning: *Multiple Choice Questions Objective Tests – History Std. 8*; S J Esterhuizen and N R Gunning: *Multiple Choice Questions Objective Tests – History Std 10*).

8.1 Testing factual knowledge

Draw a circle around the symbol next to the correct answer.

8.1.1 Facts:

The . . . family ruled France during the French Revolution.

- A. Windsor
- B. Hohenzollern
- C. Habsburg
- D. Bourbon
- E. Stuart

Which one of the following kings ruled France in 1789?

- A. Louis XIV
- B. Louis XV
- C. Louis XVI
- D. Louis XVIII
- E. Charles I

The “Persian Letters” were written by . . .

- A. Montesquieu.
- B. Rousseau.
- C. Voltaire.
- D. Diderot.
- E. Marat.

The ideal of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” was proclaimed by . . .

- A. Voltaire.
- B. Rousseau.
- C. Diderot.
- D. Montesquieu.
- E. Desmoulins.

The first military clash between Napoleon Bonaparte and the British took place at . . .

- A. Marseilles.
- B. Trafalgar.
- C. Toulon.

- D. Aboukir Bay.
- E. Gibraltar.

In 1813 Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated in the battle of . . .

- A. Trafalgar.
- B. Waterloo.
- C. Borodino.
- D. Leipzig.
- E. Aboukir Bay.

The congress of Vienna was held in . . .

- A. Austria.
- B. Britain.
- C. France.
- D. Prussia.
- E. Russia.

Which one of the following people first translated part of the Bible in Tswana?

- A. Read
- B. Philip
- C. Van der Kemp
- D. Moffat
- E. Livingstone

In 1802 the Cape was handed over to the Batavian rule after signing of the Treaty of . . .

- A. Versailles.
- B. Amiens.
- C. Vienna.
- D. Paris.
- E. Tilsit.

The first president of the Z A Republiek was . . .

- A. P Retief.
- B. A H Potgieter.
- C. S J P Kruger.
- D. G Maritz.
- E. M W Pretorius.

8.2 Terminology

A commune was . . . in France during 1789.

- A. a local government
- B. a general state tax
- C. the state prison
- D. a list of grievances
- E. a other name for a big city

A . . . is a document which indicates how a state must be ruled.

- A. regulation
- B. constitution
- C. ordinance
- D. referendum
- E. proclamation

The salt tax in France in 1789 was called the . . .

- A. cahiers.
- B. corvée.
- C. tithe.
- D. gabelle.
- E. intendante.

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A coalition is a(n) . . .

- A. financial agreement between two parties.
- B. annexation of land won by a country during the war.
- C. amalgamation of two parties.
- D. temporary alliance between two countries.
- E. constitution by which a country is governed.

Chauvinism is . . .

- A. the strive to progress.
- B. the ideology of government by the people.
- C. an excessive national feeling.
- D. excessive conservatism.
- E. a fanatical thirst for power.

What is a crown Colony? It is a country with a/an . . .

- A. general as leader.
- B. self governing system.
- C. secretary for colonies as the ruler.
- D. autocratic governor who presents the British Crown.
- E. autocratic governor.

The word "Mfecane" means . . . of people.

- A. voluntary migration
- B. compulsory migration
- C. compulsory integration
- D. voluntary integration
- E. gradual distribution

Migratory labour is work . . .

- A. that started after a need for White merchandise had developed.
- B. under pressure of the Mfecane.
- C. done under missionary influence.
- D. done during certain period of the year.
- E. only done after tribal war.

8.1.3 Chronology

Rearrange the following peace treaties in the correct chronological order.

1. Tilsit 2. Paris 3. Amiens 4. Campio formio.

Choose the correct combination.

- A. 1 2 4 3
- B. 2 4 3 1
- C. 3 2 4 1
- D. 4 3 1 2

Rearrange the following events in the correct chronological order.

1. The peace Treaty of Tilsit.
2. The Battle of Waterloo.
3. The storming of the Bastille.
4. The concordat with the Pope.

Choose the correct combination.

- A. 1 3 4 2
- B. 3 4 1 2
- C. 2 1 3 4
- D. 4 3 2 1

Rearrange the following governors' periods of rule in the correct chronological order.

1. Cradock
2. Somerset
3. Cole
4. D'urban
5. Caledon

Choose the correct combination.

- A. 1 2 3 5 4
- B. 3 4 5 1 2
- C. 5 1 2 4 3
- D. 2 3 1 5 4
- E. 4 5 2 3 1

Study the accompanying sketches



Reign of terror



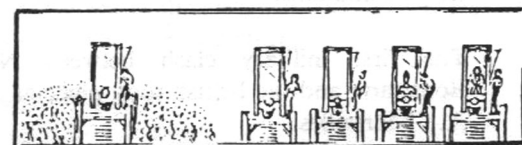
French Republic



Flight to Varennes



Declaration of Rights



Execution of the king

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Rearrange the sketches in the correct chronological order.

Choose the correct combination.

- A. 1 4 5 2 3
B. 4 3 1 4 5
C. 4 3 2 5 1
D. 2 1 3 4 5

the revolution in France started in . . .

- A. 1789.
B. 1790.
C. 1791.
D. 1792.
E. 1793.

On the 14 . . . the French national day is annual celebrated.

- A. June.
B. July
C. August
D. September
E. October

8.2 Testing comprehension

8.2.1 Causes

The French Revolution started with *the first act* of violence, when . . .

- A. Marie Antoinette was executed.
B. the storming of the Bastille took place.
C. the feudal rights of the privileged classes were renounced.
D. the meeting of the States General took place.
E. the tennis court oath was taken.

The French Revolution's *immediate* cause was the . . .

- A. economic deterioration and bankruptcy of the French state.
B. influence of the French philosophers on the French people.
C. storming of the Bastille by the Third Estate.
D. execution of Marie Antoinette:

Which one of the following people shouted: "To arms! To arms! Before it is too late!"?

- A. Marat
B. Danton
C. Robespierre

- D. Desmoulin
E. Necker

Which one of the following people said: "Why don't they eat cake?"

- A. Marie Antoinette
B. Louis XVI
C. Marat
D. Jean Rousseau
E. Louis XIV

The downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte was *mainly* caused by the . . .

- A. supremacy of the British fleet.
B. Napoleon's continental system.
C. rise of nationalism in Europe.
D. sovereignty of the French people.
E. death-toll of French soldiers.

The migration of the Blacks to Southern Africa was caused by . . .

- A. famine and the lack of water.
B. the desire for more living space.
C. unhealthy climatic conditions.
D. the striving for better living conditions.
E. a desire to extend their territory.

The reason why Lord Charles Somerset needed people from England was to . . .

- A. trade with the Xhosas.
B. defend the Xhosas against the Trekboers.
C. fight the San and Khoikhoi.
D. help to protect the frontier against invasions by the Xhosas.
E. increase the English-speaking population.

8.2.2 Consequences

The French national day is celebrated as commemoration of the . . .

- A. institution of a socialistic society.
B. beginning of the French Revolution.
C. abolishment of autocracy.
D. acknowledgement of French national independency.
E. French Bill of Rights.

One of the main reforms of the National Assembly was that . . .

- A. autocracy were abolished.
B. the nobility retained their privileges.
C. the State General were summoned to Paris.
D. all people were made equal before the law.
E. institution of a socialistic society.

Napoleon Bonaparte achieved his success as a result of . . .

- A. his exceptional military tactics.
B. the French Revolution.
C. his autocratic behaviour.
D. his diplomatic handling of affairs.
E. his continental system.

The 1791 French constitution stipulated that the

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king could . . .

- A. appoint judges.
- B. propose legislation.
- C. dissolve the National Assembly.
- D. appoint ministers.
- E. rule as an autocrat.

In France, Napoleon Bonaparte became the ruler by means of a . . .

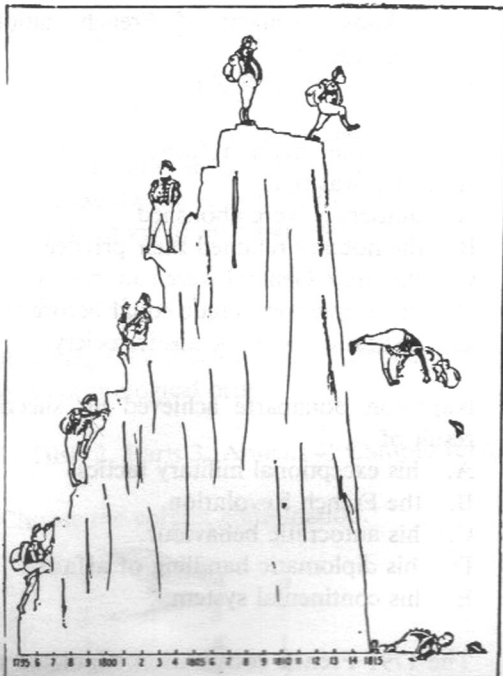
- A. revolution.
- B. referendum
- C. coup d'etat.
- D. rebellion.
- E. coalition.

Which one of the following was one of the main positive result of the Mfecane? The . . .

- A. increase of Black development.
- B. scattering of the dense Natal Black population.
- C. development of a strong Basuto nation.
- D. desertion of wide inland areas of South Africa.
- E. redistribution of the Black population in Southern Africa.

8.2.3 Historical comprehension by means of maps/sketches and/or pictures

- Study the accompanying sketch



- The sketch is associated with . . .
 - A. Danton.
 - B. Napoleon.
 - C. Robespierre.
 - D. Louis XVI.
 - E. Marat.

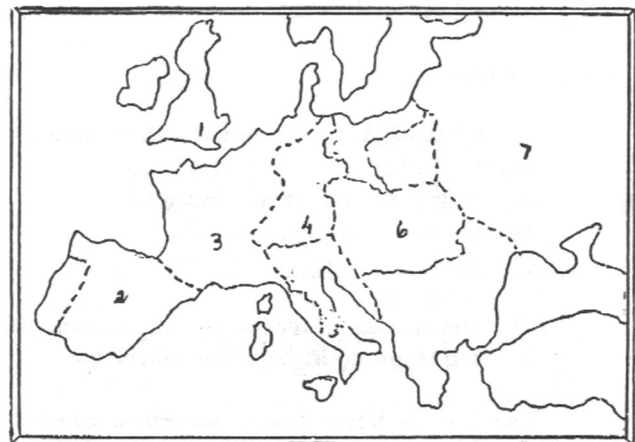
- Study the accompanying sketch.



The illustration is associated with the . . . before the Revolution.

- A. heavy burden that the Third estate had to carry
- B. lack of labour in France
- C. mutual support among the three estates
- D. strong position of the Third estate

- Study the accompanying map.



- Which one of the numbered areas was known as France?

- A. 4
- B. 5
- C. 1
- D. 3
- E. 2

- Which one of the numbered areas was known as Spain?

- A. 2
- B. 1

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- C. 5
- D. 4
- E. 3

● Which one of the areas numbered was known as Britain?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 7

● Which one of the areas numbered was known as Russia?

- A. 1
- B. 3
- C. 5
- D. 7
- E. 6

● Which one of the areas numbered was known as Italy?

- A. 7
- B. 1
- C. 3
- D. 5
- E. 6

● Study the accompanying map.



Number . . . is associated with the settlement area of the Basuto's.

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

Which number on the map indicates to the settlement area of the Nguni?

- A. 2
- B. 4
- C. 3
- D. 1

8.3 Testing Insight

● Which one of the following can be associated with the French Revolution as well as Communism?

- A. Democracy
- B. Fraternity
- C. Equality
- D. Liberty

● Study the following:

1. Austrian princess
2. Versailles
3. June 1791
4. Varennes

The above facts are associated with . . .

- A. Napoleon Bonaparte.
- B. Metternich.
- C. Louis XVI.
- D. Robespierre.
- E. Necker.

● Study the following:

1. The Pyramids
2. Rosetta Stone
3. Nelson
4. Trade with India

The information are associated with . . .

- A. Britain's success against Napoleon.
- B. the cultural awakening of the French.
- C. the French campaigns against Russia.
- D. Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.
- E. the battle of Waterloo.

● Study the following information:

1. Grahamstown
2. Gaika
3. Nguni
4. Stock farming

● Which population group is associated with the information supplied above?

- A. Zulus
- B. Afrikaners
- C. Coloureds
- D. Xhosas
- E. Sothos

● Study the following information:

1. Gaborone
2. Cattle forming
3. Grazing fields
4. Bechuanaland
5. Botswana

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- Which population group is associated with the information supplied above?
 - A. Sothos
 - B. Tswanas
 - C. Zulus
 - D. Xhosas
 - E. Shanganas

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