Thatcher's Electoral Victories Interpretations Help Document
Important Hints, Tips and Information to Help!

Literacy: please remember that Labour and Conservative have capital letters!!!!

Make sure that you do not make "I" statements, such as "I know" or "I think". Also avoid "my" statements such as "in my own knowledge" or "in my opinion".

STRUCTURE
Remember: your introduction should set out your argument- not rehash the question or discuss the knowledge.

The main body of your work should not follow the interpretations one by one, but you should try to use the interpretations together to create your argument.

Your conclusion should deal with the interpretations as a set.

These questions will help you to get a good mark on your coursework

1) How convincing are these interpretations?
   This is based on your knowledge/ what you can research
   This is also based on the corroboration/ links between the sources;
   do they support or challenge the issue?

2) Which interpretations are more convincing than the others?
   This is your judgement based on what you know.

3) As a set, how adequate are they to discuss the issue in the question?
   Are there things they miss out? How does it fit with your opinion of this issue?
22b. Thatcher's Electoral victories

Using these four passages and your own knowledge, assess the view that Thatcher’s electoral success was a result of the weakness of the Labour party.

[40 marks]

Interpretation A: This historian argues that divisions within the Labour movement were crucial in explaining Conservative electoral dominance.

The schism on the Left gave the Conservatives their parliamentary victory in 1983. It can be argued that with more than three million unemployed Labour should have won, but it lost because of its defence policy and its spectacular disunity. Alternatively, it can be said that the continuance of the social and political trends which had contributed to Labour’s loss in 1979 virtually doomed it to lose again in 1983. That is not to suggest that Labour’s defeat was inevitable, although there is no doubt that most of the changes taking place in society were making it more difficult for it to win. Between 1979 and 1983 the working class, which had diminished in size, swung 3% to the Conservatives - in spite of ‘Thatcherism’, unemployment, the welfare spending cuts and the union laws - or, perhaps, not in spite of, but because of some of these things. Only 38% of manual workers and 39% of trade unionists voted Labour while 32% of trade unionists voted Conservative. The Tories led Labour by 12% among the skilled working class. In 1983 Labour became not ‘the party of the working class’ but rather the party of the underclass. In part this was due to continuing demographic change. However, there were new or special factors at work. In 1983 it did a good deal worse than socio-economic or demographic changes can explain. In 1983 Labour presented an unelectable face to the electorate, in terms of its leaders, many of its policies and in its general demeanour as a party aspiring to government, and this must explain a good deal of its unnaturally poor showing. Labour and the electorate made a poor ‘fit’. Labour had moved Left and the electorate to the Right; or rather the Labour party’s concerns and the electorate’s had grown increasingly apart.


Interpretation B: This historian argues that the Conservatives gained from the economic successes of the period.

Two factors made progress towards a third term irresistible. One was the state of the economy, particularly as felt and perceived by Conservative voters. Slow but steady growth had been registered each year since 1981. In the four years after the 1983 election average weekly earnings rose by 14% in real terms. No government had ever been defeated after presiding over real increases in personal disposable income for two years before an election, and this one had done so for longer. One promise the Government delivered as its highest priority was the steady cutting of personal taxation; by 1987 it was three-quarters of the way towards its stated target of a 25% standard rate. All employed people, therefore, felt better off. To this beneficence were added other material successes. The second Thatcher term coincided with a stock-market boom of unprecedented length. If successful politics consists of furthering the interests of your own supporters, the privatisation programme was another consummate exercise in vote-winning. There have been few more obviously potent seductions in the annals of electoral politics. The material advance of the individual, in fact, had begun to supplant the more traditional factors in determining the political verdict. One of the successes of the Thatcherite enterprise consisted in re-educating the electorate not seriously to care about unemployment. Slowly, and not incorrectly, burgeoning economic success became the headline story. By the time of the election, optimism had replaced pessimism in sample surveys of popular opinion.

Knowledge to help with Interpretation A

- 1983 manifesto:
  - Nuclear disarmament
  - Europe
  - Policies more left wing

- Late 1970s problems:
  - Inflation
  - Winter of discontent/radical trade unions

- Radical far left leader Michael Foot was not popular.

You will find some helpful information on the Gang of Four and their effect on the 1983/1987 election on page 24 and 40 of your textbook.

Knowledge to help with Interpretation B

- The Falklands
- Increase in wages.
- Decrease in taxation.
- Privatisation
- Economic success hid the unemployment statistics.

1983 election on page 23-24
Issues with the economy; possible contradiction to B on page 26.
Interpretation C: This historian argues that there were a number of factors that contributed to the Conservatives' electoral success.

Why were the Tories so successful? The so-called 'Falklands factor' played a huge part in the government's recovery of popularity in 1982-3. Many voters supported the Conservatives in 1983 because they saw in Thatcher a powerful leader who had stood up for Britain against a foreign power. The Conservatives had no compunction about unfurling the patriotic flag. It is worth remembering, however, that the tide of popular opinion was beginning to turn with the economic recovery under way at the beginning of 1982, before the war began. In 1987, the economy - enthusiastically stoked by Nigel Lawson - was roaring away, living standards were increasing rapidly and the great Stock Exchange crash of October was still four months off. The electorate voted for the promise of continued prosperity. Other factors also played a part. The election was fought on redrawn boundaries, which gave a small, but not insignificant, advantage to the Tories. As commentators have also pointed out, the Conservatives had the enormous fortune to be faced by a divided opposition. Labour's appalling disarray in 1980-1 led to both splits and deep unpopularity. The Alliance had enough popular support to come a good second in well over 100 constituencies, but in a first past the post system this is of no value. The Tory share of the popular vote under Thatcher never exceeded 43%. Yet this produced two landslides, largely because the anti-Tory vote was so evenly split. There is no doubt that the quirks of the British electoral system favoured the Tories and it is no surprise that Thatcher should be so vehement in her defence of its simple virtue of providing secure majority governments.


Interpretation D: This historian argues that Thatcher’s electoral victories were achieved because of Conservative strength in the south and east of England.

The victory for the Thatcherite ethic in 1983 seemed overwhelming. The evidence is less convincing. In 1983 the Conservative party won 42.9% of the popular vote, less than they had achieved in any election between 1945 and 1979. It won because of its residual strength in southern and eastern England, and also greater London, where most of the constituencies were located. Thatcherism triumphed because of its political and social roots. It had coincided with rising prosperity in the expanding towns of southern England and East Anglia. High-tech industries, based on computer software and the like, had meant near-boom conditions for places such as Cambridge, Basingstoke, Winchester and especially Swindon, the outstanding growth town of the decade. Along the so-called M4 corridor, as far west as Newport in Gwent, new technically sophisticated smaller industries were mushrooming. The legacy of four years of Thatcherism, therefore, was an intensification of social division and varied economic expectations in different parts of Britain. It went further than the much-discussed 'north-south divide'. Prosperity, too, had been the product of small enterprises and a lengthy consumer boom financed by credit. The decline in Britain’s manufacturing base was indisputable. For the clients of the Thatcher order in the south and east of the nation it was more than enough. The dispiriting memories of the seventies were fading. Mass unemployment had lost its old political potency. It was the suburban conquerors of southern Britain, not the decaying and dispirited north and west, who would pay the piper and call the tune.

"Divided opposition" = since 1979, the extreme left had tried to gain control of the Labour Party - the 1980 election saw Healy come to power, then the Labour moderates: "the Gang of Four", formed the social democrat party. This played into the hands of Thatcher because now her opposition was weakened.

Fails to acknowledge the divisions of Labour and the poor manifesto and shadow cabinet as well as the effect of the Falklands war and it's effect on Thatcher's popularity.
## Mark Scheme

### Unit F965: Historical Interpretations and Investigations – Part (a) Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>AO1a</th>
<th>AO1b</th>
<th>AO2b</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mark for each question = 40</strong></td>
<td>Recall, select and deploy historical knowledge appropriately, and communicate knowledge and understanding of history in a clear and effective manner.</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of the past through explanation, analysis and arriving at substantiated judgements of:</td>
<td>Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways.</td>
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Knowledge and literacy may only be worth 6 marks, but if you do not score highly in this section, you cannot score highly in AO2b.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level IA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Uses an appropriate range of accurate, detailed and relevant knowledge</td>
<td>• Very good level of understanding of key concepts in their historical context</td>
<td>• Answer is fully and consistently focused on the question set and provides a clear argument</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly</td>
<td>• Very good level of explanation / analysis, and provides valid judgements</td>
<td>• Excellent synthesis and synoptic judgement of historical interpretations</td>
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<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>May make unexpected but supported judgements linked to the question</td>
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<td>(24–28)</td>
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<th>Level IB</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses an appropriate range of accurate, detailed and relevant knowledge</td>
<td>• Very good level of understanding of key concepts in their historical context</td>
<td>• Answer is consistently focused on the question set and provides a clear argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly</td>
<td>• Very good level of explanation / analysis, and provides valid judgements.</td>
<td>• Very good synthesis of historical interpretations</td>
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<td>(6)</td>
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<td>(20–23)</td>
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<th>Level II</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses mostly accurate, detailed and relevant knowledge</td>
<td>• Good level of understanding of key concepts in their historical context</td>
<td>• Answer focuses on the issues in the question set and provides a judgement of different historical interpretations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Answer is structured and mostly coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear</td>
<td>• Good attempt at explanation / analysis but overall judgements may be uneven</td>
<td>• Good analysis and evaluation of an appropriate range of interpretations</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(18–19)</td>
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Knowledge and literacy may only be worth 6 marks, but if you do not score highly in this section, you cannot score highly in AO2b.

- Synthesis refers to your use of the knowledge/interpretations together to assess them.
- Synoptic judgement refers to your judgement of the interpretations overall.
| Level III | • Uses appropriate and relevant knowledge but there may be some inaccuracy  
• Most of the answer is structured and coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear | • Shows a sound understanding of key concepts in their historical context  
• May be a mixture of analysis and explanation but also description and narrative coupled with some uneven overall judgements; OR arguments may provide more consistent analysis but the quality will be uneven and its support often general or thin | • Most of the answer is focused on the question set and provides some judgement. There is some evidence of synthesis  
• Answer provides a sound analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations (16–17) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level IV | • There is deployment of relevant knowledge but level/ accuracy of detail will vary  
• Some unclear and/or underdeveloped and/or disorganised sections; mostly satisfactory level of communication | • Satisfactory understanding of key concepts  
• May be largely descriptive / narratives of events, and links between this and analytical comments will typically be weak or unexplained | • Satisfactory focus on the question and mostly satisfactory analysis / explanation  
• Makes limited synoptic judgements about historical interpretations (14–15) |
| Level V | • Deployment of basic and general historical knowledge but also some irrelevant and inaccurate material  
• Often unclear and disorganised sections; adequate level of communication but some weak prose passages | • General understanding of key concepts  
• Attempts an explanation / argument but often general coupled with assertion, description/narrative | • Adequate focus on the question but provides only a basic analysis / explanation  
• Makes no synoptic judgements about historical interpretations (12–13) |
| Level VI | • Use of relevant knowledge will be limited; there will be much irrelevance and inaccuracy  
• Answers may have little organisation or structure; weak use of English and poor organisation | • Very little understanding of key concepts  
• Explanation will be very brief / fragmentary; the answer will be characterised by generalised assertion and / or description/ narratives, often brief | • Some understanding of the topic but not the question’s requirements  
• Weak explanations and judgements about historical interpretations (6–11) |
| Level VII | • No relevant or accurate knowledge  
• Very poor use of English | • No understanding of key concepts  
• No explanation | • Weak understanding of the topic or of the question’s requirements  
• No explanation or judgements about historical interpretations (0–5) |

Notes:
(i) Allocate marks to the most appropriate level for each AO
(ii) If several marks are available in a box, work from the top mark down until the best fit has been found
(iii) Many answers will not fall at the same level for each AO
(iv) Candidates will demonstrate synopticity through the drawing together of knowledge and skills in order to demonstrate overall historical understanding. It involves the explicit assessment of understanding of the connections between the essential characteristics of historical study. (See section 4.5 of the specification.)