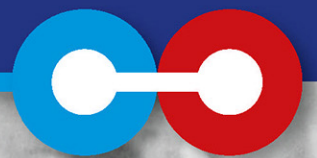


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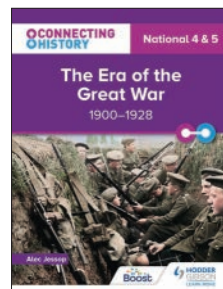
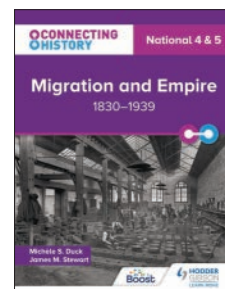
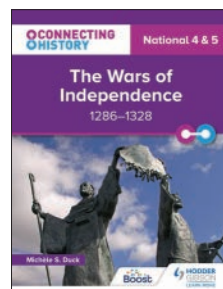
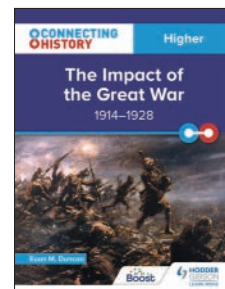
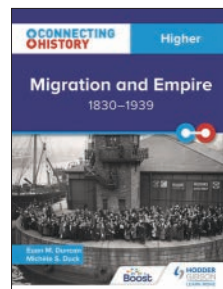
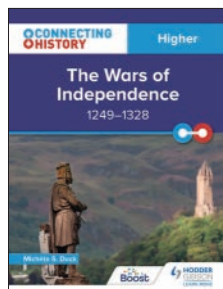
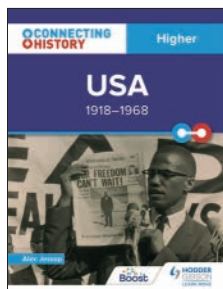
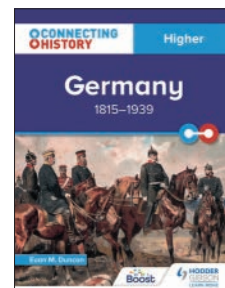
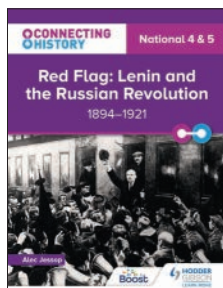
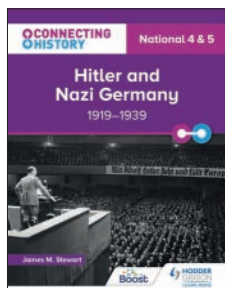
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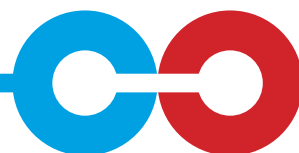
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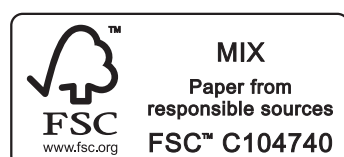
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Ewan Gibbs is a scholar of work, politics and protest in industrial and deindustrialising societies. His research focuses on employment and labour markets in the twentieth century Scottish coalfields, community protest movements and memories of work and industry as well as changes to society associated with transitions between energy systems.



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Introduction

The second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was a time of great change in Britain. While the country had avoided the revolutions seen in Europe and Russia, this was nevertheless a period of major reform. The British economy, society and political system all developed significantly. This had a lasting impact on Britain that, in many ways, laid the foundations of the political system that we recognise today.

Many of us take the principles of liberal democracy for granted. For us in Scotland, all people over 16 can vote in Scottish Parliament elections and select the Members of the Scottish Parliament who will represent us. We can also elect our local councillors and our Members of Parliament in Westminster. We enjoy extensive political freedoms. We have freedoms of speech, religion, assembly and political affiliation. We accept that our votes are equal, cast in secret, and free from fear and intimidation. Yet this system has evolved gradually, the result of incremental change.

Social security was also significantly reformed during this period. In 1850 poor people were blamed for their own poverty and the only 'support' that they received was a place in a humiliating workhouse. While these institutions did prevent some from dying of starvation, they were seen as punitive, and many would do anything to avoid seeking their help. A century later, the situation was notably different. Pensions, high-quality council housing, and comprehensive and universal healthcare all suggested remarkable progress.

But why did this all change? How democratic did Britain actually become by 1928? Why was it that some women were finally given the vote after the First World War? Why did the Liberal Party decide to improve state support for the poor, and how effective were these changes? How effective was the Labour Party in its attempt to improve the lives of British people?

The answers to these questions are discussed in the following pages. Note that there is not one simple, straightforward answer to each. Instead, we will be dealing with evidence-based arguments. You will use the straightforward and clear structure of the book to target its different sections. This will allow you to obtain the relevant, accurate and developed knowledge needed to support a convincing argument on a key issue. You will also find explanations and analysis of these arguments, helping you to integrate this information in your essay responses. Finally, activities at the end of each chapter will help improve your essay-writing skills and nurture the understanding needed to write clear and well-reasoned responses.

Whether revising for an examination, writing an assignment or deepening your understanding of a particular subject, this book will help you. Each chapter covers a specific issue that might appear as a Paper 1 essay question, and the information contained in the following pages will support you in writing a powerful response.

Good luck!



Chapter 1

An evaluation of the reasons why Britain became more democratic, 1851–1928

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the reasons why Britain became more democratic between 1851 and 1928.

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Key issue 1: this chapter will help the reader to understand why Britain became more democratic between 1851 and 1928. It will assist in evaluating the relative importance of the reasons that led to Britain becoming more democratic by 1928.

Background

Between 1851 and 1928, **Great Britain** experienced significant social, political and economic changes that ushered in a more democratic society by 1928.

To understand the reasons why **democracy** grew during this period, it is helpful to understand the nature of British politics, the economy and society before 1851.

After 1801 Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales were ruled by one **parliament** at Westminster Palace in London. The parliament consisted of three branches: the Crown, the **House of Lords** and the **House of Commons**. Elected **Members of Parliament (MPs)** made up the House of Commons, unelected **peers** made up the House of Lords and the monarchy was an inherited **birthright**. Parliament's focus was on international security, diplomacy, trade and, like other **Great Powers** during the nineteenth century, expanding empire. Before 1851, although the monarch's power was declining, they could still participate actively in politics. Legislation was made law by **royal assent**, but only once it had passed through both the Lords and Commons. Although the monarch could, in theory, form and dismiss **governments**, in reality it was understood that successful governance would be impossible without the consent of the Commons. The House of Commons and the House of Lords shared similar levels of real power, although by 1851 it was generally accepted that the Lords would not

undermine bills passed by the Commons. This was because the Commons was the elected house, and so was seen as having greater legitimacy.

Although Britain had no **codified constitution**, it was considered at the time to be a **constitutional monarchy** rather than an **absolutist monarchy** because the monarch, as head of state, had to act within established conventions. Unlike many other regimes during the mid-nineteenth century, such as France, Germany, China and Japan, the political institutions of Britain remained stable and there were no national **revolutions** seeking to overthrow traditional power or political institutions.

Economically, Britain had established itself as a Great Power alongside France, Russia and Austria by 1815. Victories at Trafalgar in 1805 and Waterloo in 1815 ended a period of warfare, expensive both in human lives and in monetary terms, which had begun with the French Revolution in 1789.



Figure 1.1 An artist's image of the Battle of Trafalgar. Trafalgar was the last major naval engagement between the French, British and Spanish, and saw the Royal Navy secure Britain from the threat of invasion

By 1815, Britain had already started to **industrialise**. Wartime production stimulated the economy as there was constant demand for ships, uniforms and munitions. Between 1815 and 1873 Britain's economy grew rapidly as the country became a centre for manufacturing, finance and trade. Britain was so productive during this period that it was said by the historian Tom Devine that Britain was 'the workshop of the world'. The country produced cotton textiles, iron and coal, and led the world in terms of shipbuilding, both merchant and military. To help finance these developments the City of London became a major financial centre for banking, insurance and share trading.

This was all possible for three reasons. First, Britain possessed a large and profitable empire in the Caribbean and North America. This empire had generated huge profits for Britain, through cruel and exploitative trades such as the slave trade, and these profits were reinvested into British industry, driving rapid industrialisation. Secondly, the 'agricultural revolution' and improvements in medicine resulted in significant population growth, creating a labour supply to help produce goods and markets in which to sell them. Lastly, technological innovation meant that production of goods increased rapidly.

Production moved from domestic ‘cottage industry’ to industrial factories that were near the power supplies needed to operate the new machinery. This resulted in a significant shift in population distribution, and the number of people living in urban centres grew considerably. This process is called **urbanisation**. **Specialisation** in towns meant that cities like Manchester, Leeds and Bradford grew and became well known for wool production. In Scotland, Coatbridge and Motherwell developed as centres for the coal and iron industries.

To transport raw materials and finished goods, Britain’s transport system developed. First, canal building grew rapidly in the late 1790s, though these were soon replaced with an ever-growing rail network. The ‘railway mania’ of the 1830s and 1840s saw 6220 miles of railways built that connected many parts of the country for the first time. This led to standardisation of concepts like time, currency and language.

Finally, a significant part of economic expansion was due to Britain’s empire. Between 1823 and 1863 Britain abolished taxes on imports and exports, which meant that businesses could find new markets for their goods in China, India, the Turkish Empire and continental Europe.

This is the background to Britain’s journey of becoming more democratic. It is in the context of these huge **socio-economic** changes that Britain also experienced significant political change and the development of its democracy. For the purposes of this chapter, we will define ‘democracy’ as a system of government where all citizens have the right to vote, without fear of intimidation, to select a government who will rule on their behalf. In 1851, Britain was a very limited democracy, yet by 1928 it was significantly more democratic.

This chapter will examine the reasons why Britain became more democratic between 1851 and 1928.

1.1 Why did Britain become more democratic between 1851 and 1928?

For the purposes of the examination, it is important to be able to evaluate the reasons why Britain became more democratic between 1851 and 1928.

This section will examine the following factors:

Effects of industrialisation and urbanisation
Pressure groups
Examples of developments abroad
Party advantage
Effects of the First World War

Understanding these issues will allow you to make a judgement about the main reasons why democracy grew in Britain.

1.1.1 Effects of industrialisation and urbanisation

There is an argument that the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation in the early nineteenth century led to democratic growth as they created a new social and economic structure in Britain that rendered the traditional landowner control of politics obsolete. To understand this, it is important to investigate changes in

demography, the spread of socialist ideas, the perceived growing ‘respectability’ of the working classes and the spread of education, railways and newspapers.



Figure 1.2 The opening ceremony of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. The ceremony depicted Britain moving from an agricultural to an industrial economy

Changing demography

One impact of the industrial revolution and urbanisation was a dramatic change in the **demography** of Britain. There were new jobs in industries such as textiles, shipping and coal mining and it was necessary to live near these jobs. By 1851, 25 per cent of the population lived in cities; by 1871, 33 per cent; and by 1901, 44 per cent in England and Wales, and 36 per cent in Scotland. By 1911, three-quarters of the population were living in an urban dwelling. This was the first time more people lived in cities than in rural areas.

This was coupled with a significant increase in population that was most visible in industrial cities. For example, eight out of the nine largest British cities in this period saw their populations double between 1851 and 1901. This resulted in high value of, and competition for, urban land, which increased rent prices and forced many people into shoddy, cheap and unsanitary housing. From the 1820s onwards, these areas of poor-quality housing were classified as slums. Sanitation in urban slums was a serious problem. Few houses had drainage, and several hundred people might share a single outdoor tap and one, at most two, **privies** (toilets in a shed outside). This was coupled with poor working conditions in cities. Ten-hour days, frequently in unsafe conditions, caused a feeling of resentment towards the middle-class factory owners.

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The anger at poor conditions meant that many contemporaries considered cities as hotbeds of social unrest. The **trade union** movement had increasingly been organising less-skilled workers from the 1880s onwards, and these groups were more politicised than previously. Industrial **strike** action was common, with millions of men participating in strike action to demonstrate their collective grievances. For example, in 1893 over 300,000 coal miners went on strike and in 1898, 15,257,000 working days were lost because of industrial action during the Welsh coal strikes. Violence was often sparked by troops who were sent in to restore order. For example, on 7 September 1893, during the miners' strike, the Featherstone Massacre occurred. The price of coal had fallen by 35 per cent and, in response, mine owners reduced miners' wages by 25 per cent. In response, around 300,000 workers across 253 pits went on strike. The strike became violent after it was rumoured that coal was being loaded into railway wagons, which were attacked by crowds of miners. Troops were sent to quell the strikers at Ackton Hall pit, but when the strikers refused to disperse, five warning shots were fired, some into the crowd. After more shooting, eight people were injured and two, James Gibb and James Duggan, died from their injuries. People in the crowd shouted, 'We would rather be shot than hungered to death!' Large-scale strike action resurfaced in 1910, with 1910–14 becoming known as the period of 'great unrest'.

How did this make Britain become more democratic?

Changing demography caused by industrialisation and urbanisation created poor living and working conditions. This helped cause democratic growth because the richer and more powerful members of society began to fear the so-called 'revolutionary mob' – namely, dissatisfied working-class citizens agitating for change. This encouraged the government to democratise in order to avoid revolution. It was thought that by giving the working class a legitimate political outlet for their grievances, they would be less likely to try to overthrow the government. By increasing the number of citizens who could vote, Britain was becoming more democratic.

Spread of socialism

Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organisation which argues that the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned by the community. Socialism gained increasing popularity across Europe after the French Revolution of 1789. The influential political theorists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, which inspired revolutions in Germany and across Europe. They advocated that the working class should seize the means of production through revolution and overthrow the upper and the middle classes.

Many working-class people in Britain were drawn to the values of socialism because it called for better working conditions and more equal pay. With a rapidly growing urban population in Britain, socialist ideas spread quickly and people were able to organise themselves into trade unions and protest groups demanding greater social justice. The **establishment** feared that the 'incendiary' ideas of socialism would spread across Britain and would encourage the British working class to challenge or even overthrow established rulers and institutions (see Figure 1.3). The Russian revolutions of 1917 were viewed by the British establishment as prime examples of the potential impact of revolutionary and socialist ideas.



Figure 1.3 A British Conservative Party poster, 1909. This propaganda poster demonstrates the British establishment's fear of socialism. Socialism was portrayed as a violent and destructive force

How did this make Britain become more democratic?

There is an argument that the government passed democratic reforms in order to limit the chance that socialist, revolutionary ideas would spread among the working class and threaten the established order in Britain. It was felt that if the working class were **enfranchised**, they would be able to voice their discontent within the framework of the existing political system, rather than pursuing revolution to create a new system.

On the other hand ...

This argument has limitations. Living and working conditions improved with better sanitation, a reduction in the number of slums, and the introduction of local facilities such as gas and water supplies that improved the lives of the working class. Also, as pay and conditions slowly improved for some workers through, for



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What does the cover photo show?

A picture of suffragettes campaigning in London before World War One. The suffragette campaign was divisive, though many historians highlight the importance that it played in gaining some women the vote in 1918.

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