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An innovative Maltese history textbook
based on history thinking skills and evidential work

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From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership ; an innovative Maltese history textbook based on history thinking skills and evidential work.

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Introduction

From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership is a new Maltese history textbook for 13 to 15-year olds choosing history as their special option subject in secondary school. This textbook was edited and part-authored by the author of this paper and published by the Maltese History Teachers' Association in October 2008. This textbook covers the main historical events that are proposed in the state secondary level history curriculum for history special option groups, referred to in Malta as the SEC Syllabus. The first school leaving national examination based on this curriculum was held in May 2009.

I have been working in history pedagogy for over 20 years, but up until now I have avoided writing history textbooks. For years there have been many complains about the lack of history textbooks in all levels in Maltese schools, however I have resisted the idea of being involved in the writing of one because I suspected that in some ways the absence of a book was a blessing in disguise. Throughout the years I have as a teacher educator been privileged to have watched some history lessons given by my B.Ed and P.G.C.E. student history teachers which have been absolutely brilliant. These wonderful history teachers involved their students in effective tasks and activities which truly engage historical thinking. I have often wondered would these history lessons have occurred had there been a textbook? The temptation to follow slavishly the official history textbook might have been too great to resist, and excellent history lessons might have been replaced by mediocre ones. The last thing our secondary school history students need is a textbook to be learnt off by heart. That is not how good history learning works. Students need to be bombarded with a variety of teaching approaches where the focus is on active learning involving understanding historical knowledge with a focus on primary history sources and analyses of different perspectives and interpretations. I am not the only one who believes that textbooks are not necessarily beneficial; this is what Christine Counsell has to say:

“Teachers who are learning to lead discussion, to devise activities that will support discussion with younger or weaker pupils, teachers who are thinking hard about their discipline (the fact that it is provisional and contested) need support They need nurture. They don't need fixed or single textbooks! This can only close down historical discussion in the lesson and inhibit challenging professional thinking among teachers.”

Counsell:2004:29

Contesting established norms in history textbook writing in Malta

However, with some caution it is possible to avoid the pitfalls of traditional history textbooks. Therefore as the editor/writer of this textbook I was very careful to make sure that the objective of *From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership* would not be to create an all encompassing coverage of the SEC syllabus, something to be regimentally followed by the class teacher. On the contrary this textbook is meant only to offer a supplement to the syllabus to be used in conjunction with various other activities. The practical examples found in this textbook purposely only touch a few of the sub-topics in the syllabus. I co-ordinated and edited this book however I wrote it together with nine other writers. All these writers are experienced secondary school history teachers and most of the exercises we contributed are tried and tested tasks we created and used with our own classes and which produced exciting results. These tasks are really meant to act as templates, on which teachers can build similar interactive activities. This textbook was purposely structured not to upstage the teachers who must continue to be the innovators of active history learning.

When I approached the History Teachers' Association with my proposal for the creation of a history textbook for history option classes, the Committee immediately welcomed the idea and gave me their full support. I explained that this was not going to be a normal history textbook based on narrative but rather a totally new approach in history textbook writing in Malta. This project, for indeed one can call it a project rather than a mere book, was going to be a team effort. I wanted the writers to be all practitioners in the classroom, history teachers who were interested in history thinking skills and working with sources.

The pedagogical principles behind the teaching approach in this textbook are not based on Maltese traditional history teaching approaches which rest on the assumption that history is a ready product; the writings of historians, and therefore should only involve transmission of information and facts. The emphasis of this book is on the 'what' to teach not the 'how' to teach. The teaching approach behind this textbook is different from traditional approaches in that besides the historical information the exercises involve source analysis and focus on specific history thinking skills, what R. Ben Jones outlined back in 1973 as a history teaching method that "lays less emphasis on content and more on the process of learning". (p.14)

Pedagogical principles behind learning objectives of textbook

The teaching approach adopted for this textbook has proved to be highly successful and effective in history teaching (Scott, 1978; Shemilt, 1987; Harnett, 1995; Lee, Peter, Dickinson, Alaric & Ashby, Rosalyn, 1996; Vella, 2004). It is an approach which challenges students' thinking and produces higher order thinking, all perfectly possible even with young pupils. Lee, Dickinson and Ashby (1996) showed that children's thinking in history is far more sophisticated than previously imagined. After analysing children's ideas on testing explanations in history, Lee, Dickinson and Ashby (1996) advise:

“From the point of view of day-to-day classroom history teaching, our analysis so far suggests that we need to recognise that quite young children can begin to make sophisticated distinctions and develop powerful intellectual tools. We may need both to match such ideas with greater precision in our teaching objectives, and to increase our awareness of assumptions which hold some children back.” (p.19)

For this to occur a history textbook should create a classroom environment which offers an active learning situation for the pupil, rather than one which presents the textbook as the giver of information. If we limit history to merely handing over one fact after the other, we would be missing the key objective of not just history teaching but of history itself. Kitson Clark (1967) says that good history produces people that think about rather than merely accept information:

“What is your authority for saying this? And, as a particular question: How do you know that this happened? They are questions which both historians, and men and women who are not historians, ought to learn to ask much more often than they do.”(p.55)

Therefore it is important to teach in history not just the factual knowledge, but what Bruner (1966) calls the 'structure' of the subject. Historical method involves historical thinking and it is the analyses of sources in particular, that provide the practice for a mode of thinking similar to what the historian goes through. This approach in history textbook writing is in fact based on constructivist teaching methods. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the role of the teacher as facilitator and this textbook emulates this role. Absorbing skills and concepts on your own is a slow process however under structured guidance a higher attainment level is reached. It is hoped that the key questions found in the activities of this book students' thinking will be supported and history skills and concepts in the learners start to emerge.

Evidence and Sources

Primary sources provide evidence from the past, but sources and evidence are not one and the same, Hinton (1990) explains the difference between them in the following way:

"The distinction between evidence and sources is an important one because sources are merely the raw material of an historian; only when they are appropriately interrogated will they yield evidence" (p.7)

The chapters in this textbook start with a brief background summary of each topic but then this is followed by wide range of history source work on the particular themes. This textbook targets three types of primary sources; written sources, pictorial sources and oral sources.

Written Evidence

Written sources are what academic historians mostly worked on and in this textbook such things as documents, manuscripts, letters, lyrics, statistical data, newspaper documents and books were used.

Written sources are generally recognised as important original sources which cannot be dismissed and ignored. As Fines & Nichol (1997) say "Through reading documents and working upon them, children come face to face with people from the past in their own words. A document forces the pupil to participate at first-hand in a dialogue with the past" (p.81). Jamieson (1971) quotes the authors of *Archives and Education* (HMSO, 1968) who describe the excitement and relevance of written documents:

‘the original letter or document is charged with an emotion, an urgency and an immediacy, to which the later printed record can never pretend. For a child to read of the torture of Guido Fawkes is one thing; it is another to see the firm signature to his examination of November 8th and the faltering half-completed effort of November 10th, written after the execution of the king’s warrant, to use ‘the gentler torture first, et sic per gradus ad ima tenditur.’ That Nelson really did lose an arm at Santa Cruz becomes emphatically clear when we see his right- and left-handed letters. At least for some – and probably for more than is generally imagined-the original document, letter or journal is the best door into the past". (p.28)

Similarly the activities involving written sources in this textbook tried to capture this ‘door to the past’. The following are just three examples of written source tasks taken from the textbook *From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership*:

7a.3 Lost in Action

Using sources 1, 2 and 3, taken from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's web site record the following details

- How many men died at the age of

19	22	23	24	27	29	30	34	40	43	51
----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
- How many of the men have their ages marked as unknown? _____
- Complete the following graph

6										
5										
4										
3										
2										
1										
- Using the data collected from sources 1 and 2, calculate the average age of the Maltese Royal Navy personnel who died.
- From the 2 sources, in which year was there the highest casualties?
- Why do you think was there such a high casualty rate that year?
- Why is the nationality of the Maltese men marked as United Kingdom?

8. Why do you think some of the Maltese men were buried abroad and weren't brought to Malta?

9. Take a look at source 3, which rank do you find unusual?

10. What do you think was this rank expected to do?

11. From the 3 sources, in which rank were the majority of the Maltese victims enrolled in?

12. Why do you think did the Maltese enroll with the British Services?

Example 1 : Statistical data 1914

5.4 Mintoff vs the Church - another serious politico-religious crisis in the 1960s

Two protagonists of 20th Century Malta were Archbishop Gouzi and the MLP leader Dom Mintoff; these two leaders were constantly at loggerheads, a fact which impacted strongly on the political situation in Malta.

Sources A and B are newspaper articles that appeared in the early 1960s. Read carefully then answer the questions.

source A Times of Malta - Tuesday, January 16, 1962

NEXT MONTH'S GENERAL ELECTION A Necessary Directive by 'Candidus'

The Diocesan Junta has taken a bold and necessary step in issuing the directives on voting. These directives should not only bring about a sense of awareness for the need of unity in front of the Socialist menace, but should also show every true Catholic his responsibilities in the present situation.

The Junta's directives clearly indicate that the Church in Malta today needs convinced Catholics, who are ready to contribute, through their vote, towards the moral and social welfare of our islands. What the Junta has done is not motivated by any partisan spirit, but is simply for the genuine welfare of Malta... Necessary Measure.

The most important part of the directive states: "Your duty is that after voting for one of the parties which are faithful to the Church, you continue to vote for all the candidates of the other parties faithful to the Church." This is a clear indication of how true Catholics should vote. The present conflict of the Labour Party with the Church shows that such a measure was absolutely necessary.

source B The Voice of Malta - Sunday, February 7, 1960

SLANDER CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

Sunday January 24 was Bishop's Day. On his way to the Birkirkara Basilica, the Parish Provost saw the Catholic Action noticeboard's glass broken. The board displayed notices on Bishop's Day. Inside the Church, the Provost walked to the microphone and with forceful oratory denounced and sanely thanked the 'culprit' for his noble sentiments. The incident was described as an act of willful vindication of the Archbishop, obviously implying that the Labour Party was to blame. At least, the unmistakable impression gained was that the culprit was a Labourist. AND THE PROVOST HAD NOT SEEN OR KNOWN THE 'CULPRIT'!

Things did not stop there. In the afternoon about 30 Catholic Action youths staged a silent protest march. They were accompanied by a Priest. Near the Labour Party Club a banner was turned facing the premises. The banner had words: "The youths will pray for the culprit who did the offence against the Archbishop."

After the March, a man informed the Provost: "I saw the incident, the glass was accidentally broken with a ladder carried by a half-witted youth." It is said that another man corroborated the statement.

On Wednesday, the mass-circulation newspaper *il-Helsien* published the truth about the incident. Again on Friday *il-Helsien* carried a letter requesting the Provost to withdraw the impression that the Labourites had committed the alleged offence. It was the Provost's duty to do this, especially in view of what had happened during the Catholic Action protest march.

Did the Provost oblige? Did he correct the impression? He did not! He remained silent! Strange! Surely this is not what the Church teaches us. We have been taught "the heart of a Priest must be filled with love, just as his mind must be shining truth and doctrine."

by J.A. Farr

- Both sources A and B are biased in favour of their cause. Both writers are trying to convince their readers in subtle and not so subtle ways that their point of view is the truth. Which source do you think supports Mintoff and the Labour Party? Which source do you think is against Mintoff and the Labour Party?
- One way of detecting bias is by looking at the adjectives being used by the writer. Look at source A. Write the adjectives used by the writer to describe the following nouns: *Step* (referring to ecclesiastical sanctions), *Catholic*, *Welfare*. There is more than one adjective for each noun.
- Another way to detect bias is to see how the writer uses sarcasm and how she ridicules his enemy. The writer of source B uses this tactic often. Pick phrases in source B to show when the writer does this.
- A way to draw attention to your written argument is to use fonts and punctuation marks that draw the attention and the emotions of your readers. For example capital letters, bold letters, question marks, inverted commas and exclamation marks. Look at source B and list down the places when he does this. Do you think this is effective?
- Source B mentions another newspaper, *il-Helsien*.
 - Look at the adjective the writer uses to describe this newspaper. What fonts does he use?
 - He also uses a noun to describe how *il-Helsien* described the incident. What is it?
 - Do you think *il-Helsien* was in favour of Mintoff and the Labour party or against?
 - And do you think the writer of source B and *il-Helsien* believe in the same cause?
- Source A clearly states a directive which was one of the ecclesiastical sanctions. The writer makes his/her position clear about this directive in one strong sentence. Which sentence do you think this is and write it down.
- These sources were written in the early 1960s the words of the writer of source A "the need of unity in front of the Socialist menace" also reveal the international political tension of the times. What was happening internationally at this time?
- The story reported in source B reveals the local political tension of the times. Would a broken noticeboard cause so much trouble today? Why do you think so much importance was given to this incident in 1960?

Example 2: Newspaper articles early 1960s

6.3 Emigration

Emigration is part of the history of Malta in the last 200 years. As early as 1830, Maltese people were emigrating to Tunisia and Morocco in search of work under the protection of the French. After the First World War emigration was more directed towards America and after the Second World War to the UK, Canada and Australia. It was only around 1975 that emigration decreased.

In this section you are presented with the lyrics of three songs that give the picture about emigration in the 1950s and 1960s. These are the photos of the original songs typed on a typewriter.

Gaetano Buttigieg better known as 'Gaetano Kanta' was a regular and popular singer on Maltese Broadcasting, the Rediffusion during the years 1950s and 1960s. He was also engaged by MTV (Malta's television station) to present a programme for children every Saturday. Gaetano wrote several lyrics some of which were published in small booklets but various lyrics were sung at the time but were never published. While researching his manuscripts, many lyrics with the subject 'Emigration' were found.

Read the lyrics and then answer the questions.

'Hej Gus' was published in the first of a set of seventeen song booklets.





Emigrant Jilib Request (Mamma) [An emigrant asking a request] This song was written on a special request from an emigrant. The song is dedicated to the latter's mum who was still living in Malta.



1. What are the lyrics, suggesting to the people listening to the Rediffusion at the time?

2. What impression do the lyrics suggest regarding the economic situation in Malta at the time?

3. What destinations of emigration are mentioned in this song?

Song Hej Gus.
This song was written on a special request from the authorities to encourage people to emigrate.



1. Find some information on the internet about the Suez War of 1956.

2. According to the lyrics of this song, how were the Maltese emigrants affected by this war?

Milittari tal-Egittu 1956.
[The Maltese in Egypt 1956]
This song describes the situation of the Maltese Emigrants in Egypt.



MALTESE JILIB REQUEST 1956 (MAMMO)

1. How do the lyrics of this song contrast with those of 'Hej Gus'?

2. Do you think a Maltese emigrant nowadays would feel the same as an emigrant in those days? Why?

Example 3: Early twentieth century song lyrics

Pictorial Evidence

Pictures as historical visual evidence can be anything that shows an image from the past in some format. They are useful for depicting an image of a particular moment in time and pictures have long been used by teachers to teach various subjects not just history, however, pedagogically their importance in history textbooks goes way beyond merely showing something to children in an interesting and motivating way. In history textbooks, pictures can be used not merely as illustrations but as sources in their own right.

Pictures appeal much more than text to our visual perception because less mental energy is needed and the way a person interprets pictures depends very much on his or her past experience, mood and interest. (Pettersson, 1989) They can be very exciting sources to use, for example with regards to portraits, Morris (1989) calls them "the gossip columns, newsflashes, party political broadcasts and family albums of the past" and says: "Portraits are therefore a bubbling mass of pent up emotions, events, comments and personalities" (p.3). In the case of historical political cartoons Harrison (1981) says that "the cartoon may help to secure attention because it is novel, because it promises fun". (p.110)

This textbook used portraits, paintings, maps, photos, posters and political cartoons to create activities and tasks where pupils can analyse primary sources. The following are a few examples to illustrate how primary visual sources were used in *From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership*:

Working with 16th century Maps of Malta

map 1

map 3

map 4

map 2

- 1 Look at map 2 and 4 - Find where Castello Sant Angelo has been drawn. These are mistakes. Where should they have been drawn?
- 2a Look at map 4 - Mention the three main towns shown on this map. How can you tell that this map was drawn after the order took over Malta?
- b Why is Valletta empty?
- c Was St Elmo built when this map was drawn?
- d Why do you think two windmills were drawn on Senglea?
- e Pip is an abbreviation for pepper. This comes from the Arabic word felfel. Give the modern name of this island.
- 3 Look at map 1 and 4 - Do you think Birgu was fortified?
- 4a Look at map 2 - Look at the top part of this map. Identify the Holy characters shown. Why do you think the cartographer drew them at the top of the map showing the events of the Great Siege?
- b Look carefully at the writing on the bottom of this map. Copy out the date of the Great Siege as given by the cartographer. Change the roman numbers to our form of numerals. Is this date correct?
- 5 Look at map 3 - This is a 16th century map of Malta drawn by the Turks. There are only a few places shown on it. Some of these are the entrance to the Grand Harbour, Marsaxlokk Harbour, St. Paul's Bay, Mdina and Citadella in Gozo. Why do you think the Turks gave importance only to these?

Example 4: Sixteenth Century Maps

3.1 Analysis of eighteenth century portraits

Look carefully at the following two 18th century portraits and then answer the questions below



1. Who is the historical figure on the left? Write 5 sentences about him.
2. Who is the historical figure on the right? Write 5 sentences about him.
3. How did their paths cross in 1798?
4. Are sources A and B primary or secondary sources of evidence? Give a reason for your answer.
5. Look carefully at Source A. The artist is trying to convey messages to the audience:-
 - a. Comment on the use of the mantle.
 - b. Comment on the decorative armour.
 - c. Comment on the posture (look at hands).
6. Look carefully at the Source B. The artist of this painting is also trying to convey messages to the audience:-
 - a. Comment on the decorations on his uniform.
 - b. Comment on the furniture in the room.
 - c. Comment on the posture (look at hands).
7. Did the character in Source A stand up to the character in source B or did he concede victory almost immediately? Why do you think he behaved in this way?
8. What did the person in Source A receive from the person in Source B in the final agreement?

Example 5 : Eighteenth century portraits



Analyse carefully this political cartoon by answering the questions below

1. Identify the political figure and country represented by the bull dog.
2. Why is the monkey dressed in that way?
3. Identify the historical figure represented by the monkey.
4. To what extent does Malta deserve the description of a bone?
5. What particular historical event is the cartoon depicting?
6. In which year do you think did the event depicted in this source take place?
7. Whom is the cartoon trying to ridicule? In the newspaper of which country do you expect it to be printed?
8. The cartoonist is biased against whom?
9. Name one advantage and one disadvantage on the use of political cartoons.
10. Why are political cartoons useful for the study of historical events?

Example 6: Eighteenth Century Political Cartoon

Oral Evidence

Conversations are an important activity in history learning and oral traditions are very much part of the historical process. Husbands (1996) refers to Jan Vansina when he explains the significance of oral tradition as a historical source. Husbands says it is the communication of messages from one generation to another, it is “neither simply about the transmission of news nor the interpretation of experience, ...it involves not only perception but also emotions... essential to a notion of personality and identity.” (Husbands, 1996, p.91) The ideal situation is for students to have opportunities to talk with people who can directly describe ‘what it was like’ however within the confines of a textbook interviews with people living today about their lives in the past were presented, albeit in written form. The Maltese History syllabus covered in this textbook spans a historic period of 500 years, including life in Malta in the last one hundred years and it was within this topic that an attempt was made to incorporate these interviews. Example 7 is part of one such interview.

6.2 Oral evidence - Life in Malta in the last 100 years

Read the interview with Dorothy Bezzina and then answer the questions.

Source A - An interview with Dorothy Bezzina - Age 78 - interviewed on 25th January 2008

Q. Your name is not a common one for your age. Why?

I was not born in Malta but in Detroit. My father was Maltese while my mother was Canadian. My father had emigrated to Australia before Canada because of lack of jobs in Malta, however, despite the arduous voyage, he didn't find work. He came back to Malta but soon decided to try his luck in Canada where he found a job and also met my mother, Florence, who was a salesgirl in a shop, and several years younger than him.

Q. How many brothers and sisters were you?


We were six and I am the fourth but the eldest died when still a baby and the youngest died a few months after we came back to Malta. His skin was covered with scabies pimples and died. They used to say that the change of climate had affected him badly.

Q. Why did you come to Malta?

My mother died and my grandmother, who lived in Qrendi, sent word to my father to return to Malta. I was four years old back then. Once, Kola the tailor told me that my father was unlucky because while in America, he invested his money in a bank that became bankrupt and lost all his money. We came to Malta. Our grandmother was very fond of us, unlike my uncle, Mundu, who considered us extra mouths to feed and used to reprimand grandma's kind treatment of us. In fact, when she died his attitude towards us aggravated and we became victims of his aggressiveness which included pinching, squeezing us between doors and making our childhood a difficult one. We suffered because of this uncle, who was a bachelor and bore a grudge against us. On the other hand, Aunt Julia, who was a spinster, loved us dearly and took great care of us.

Q. Did you help at home?

I was always very active. I was often sent to the parish priest in the sacristy and I used to tug at his cassock and request him to come and give the last sacraments to my grandmother or grandfather or a neighbour. I was always running barefoot either to fetch water from the spring or to go shopping. When I grew a little older I used to go, barefoot on the frost, to the quarnes known as tal-Midurbu to deliver lunch to my father and uncle Mundu. There were times when I used to go to a place known as Maghlaq in the vicinity of Ghar Lapsi to fetch salt and other commodities like dried carob leaves and branches which my aunt used as cooking fuel. I used to carry all this all the way home.



Q. Did you attend school?

I used to go, but then the war began. Then I used to help my father dig the shelter instead of going to school. I learnt to read from the small magazines. After the war I was already about fifteen years old, my aunt was very sick and I didn't attend anymore. She used to lie on the canapé and ask me to fetch the spirit cooking stove and instruct me to cook.

Q. What memories do you have of the war?

I remember the German airplanes that used to dive down on the buildings, dump their bombs and sore back up. I still remember very vividly a particular one. We went up to the shelter entrance and saw a plane intercepted in the searchlights. After a while the pilot jumped from the plane with a parachute and fell very close to where we were. He fell in the backyard room of tal-Tadama's house who happened to be away at the time. I still remember that German pilot, surrounded by chicks and looking afraid perceiving that we might pay him back. He was soon taken away in a car. Sometimes people used the parachute cloth to make shirts. During the war I used to make many pancakes with the flour which my father bought by black-market. Food was brought from the Victory kitchen. Everybody used to queue, pot in hand, to get his share. But this was never enough and we used to add on to this food by preparing pasta the day before. I used to do this pasta by mixing flour, water and salt into a pastry and cut it in strips after which I hung it over cane sticks, to dry. In the morning this pasta would have dried up and ready to be broken into small pieces to add to the soup that came from the Victory Kitchen. The first to eat were always the men who used to work. We ate what remained. My father bought, a box of meat by black-market, which he stored in a cupboard. Every morning he used to bring one can downstairs, cut it in pieces and give us a piece each. At that time I used to go barefoot to the airport to deliver food to my father who was working at the airport with a certain Nixu in the construction of the runway at il-Qasam. Nixu who was illiterate trusted my father blindly and respected him. As I used to go with my father's food I also used to deliver someone else's too. On the way hunger struck me several times, I used to stop take up the spoon and taste the food that I was carrying. Nothing ever tasted so delicious!

Q. What is your opinion about life in general at the time?

It was a time of poverty, where nearly everybody went round barefoot. People went to church barefoot. Sometimes I used to make my own shoes from rope but it did not last long. I remember the lack of hygiene. Water had to be brought up from the well and once the water finished, it had to be brought from the spring.

83
84

Example 7: Interview with a 78 year old

Analytical Thinking Skills

Apart from tasks involving primary and sometimes secondary sources for analysis, the textbook also contains exercises which help students’ investigate historical questions. Traditionally essay writing was an important activity in history lessons and even today it should be an important part of history learning however writing at length is not an easy task. This textbook acknowledges the fact that writing a lengthy response to a history question can be a challenging and difficult task for 13, 14 and 15- year olds. Therefore a number of activities were created which breakdown the thought processes involved into simple steps which eventually build up to writing an answer in essay form. The student is further helped in constructing his or her answer by a writing frame. “A writing frame consists of a skeleton outline to scaffold children’s non-fiction writing. Here the pupils are supported by material which guide their thinking and writing.” (Lewes and Wray, 1995 p.1) These writing frames are only found in the initial chapters of *From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership*, the idea is for students to gradually become familiar with the way essays are structured in history and then by the end of the textbook, once they are increasingly accustomed to the approach, they would be in a strong position to write history essays on their own.

1.5 Why did the Order win?

Do you think the Great Siege was won because the Maltese and the Order were fortunate (lucky) or because of good planning and good thinking?


Read each statement below and then place the statement number in the column where you think it belongs.

- The Turks decide to start the attack without waiting for Torghud Reis (Dragut).
- The Viceroy of Sicily Don Garcia de Toledo was contacted by La Vallette in the Autumn of 1564. La Vallette told him to pass on the message to all the other European powers that the Ottoman Armada was coming to Malta.
- The Turkish leaders Piali Pasha and Mustapha Pasha did not like each other and were constantly competing with each other. Very often they disagreed and did not get on well.
- Days before the arrival of the Turks La Vallette ordered that all the wells in the countryside were to be poisoned. When the Turks arrived and drank from them they became sick.
- In the days before the Siege the fortifications were strengthened and a new fort was quickly built on Mount Sciberras. This was St.Elmo.
- Mustapha Pasha thought that a big Christian army was attacking his camps in Marsa and so just as Senglea was about to fall he ordered his troops to retreat.
- Dragut the very able Turkish leader died. A great loss to the Turks.
- Dragut was not pleased that the Turks had started with St.Elmo but decided to continue the attack on the new fort.
- La Vallette ordered that all Turkish prisoners be killed as a sign to the enemy that the Christians will never surrender.
- On the 6th of September fresh Christian troops under La Corna arrived, they were met by the dispirited Turks.
- By 1561 La Vallette started to take command and to reorganise the Maltese militia. He put knights in every village in charge of the Maltese forces.
- La Vallette often used good strategic thinking for example when the Turks landed he told his troops to retreat into the forts rather than keep on fighting them.
- Life in Malta in the few years before the Siege was very hard with historical Carmel Cassar describing La Vallette’s efforts as ‘feverish preparations’.

Go through the statements really carefully. Copy out the table below. Fill the first column with the statements that you think show that the Maltese and the Order won because they were lucky. Fill the second column with the statements that show that the Maltese and the Order won because of good planning and good thinking.

Facts which show good fortune	Facts which show good planning

What is your verdict?

LUCKY?  **GOOD PLANNING**

Example 8: Analytical thinking task

Write 400 words to answer

Do you think the Great Siege was won because the Maltese and the Order were fortunate (lucky) or because of good planning and good thinking?

Use the previous exercise and the following framework to answer this question

It is true that in most circumstances in history there is often a strong element of good fortune however in my opinion there was also a lot of good planning and good strategic thinking on the part of the Order and the Maltese.

Undoubtedly it was good fortune that.....

Good fortune also favoured the Maltese and the Order when.....

The situation also favoured the Order and the Maltese when

It was also timely that.....

And it was by sheer chance that

On the other hand can hardly be attributed to good fortune but rather to very good thinking ahead strategy.

It was also first-rate thinking that.....

Undoubtedly it was excellent strategic planning when

It was also very good thinking to

As can be seen there are elements of both good fortune and clever thinking and very good planning however in my opinion I believe that outnumber Therefore it was more than ... that produced the success of the Great Siege. Indeed Malta did not follow Rhodes and Tripoli into enemy hands because.....

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Example 10: A Writing Frame found in the textbook and based on task shown in example 9

Conclusion

The writing of this textbook has been both challenging and simulating for everyone concerned. The team of nine dedicated history teachers and I, all voluntarily gave our time and energy to create this textbook. Together we painstakingly wrote and re-wrote chapters while meeting regularly to discuss the various materials as the book slowly took shape and at times this was a very steep learning curve for us. However, it was a great opportunity to see pedagogical approaches which we have been used successfully in real classroom situations put into print and made available to other Maltese history teachers by means of this textbook. It is hoped that this textbook will manage to act as a bridge between the theory and practice divide in history teaching and research.

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