Learning Objective: 'To investigate the reasons why historical interpretations differ and begin to investigate the evidence used by historians in their interpretations.'
‘What is the difference between Historical Interpretations and Historical Evidence?’

**Interpretation:** Arguments and theories of other historians which have been formed using historical evidence.

**Historical Evidence:** Facts and sources that happened and were created during a specific time period.

---

**Task:** Read the following information and below and in two colours make a note of the evidence and the interpretation. (SEE NEXT SLIDE FOR ANSWERS)

Mr Smith caught Sumayyah pushing Abdul in the sixth-form corridor. This was witnessed by the rest of the Year 12 class. Sumayyah later admitted to this.

As a result Mr Smith when telling Ms Spencer what happened told her: ‘Sumayyah is such a nasty and horrible student’ 😊

Fatima and Simonida were late to Mr Smith’s lesson twice this week and refused to apologised for this. This was seen in front of all the History students.

As a result Mr Smith phoned home and informed both their parents of their lateness and said ‘they are being late due to them talking in the corridor and having bad manners.’ 😊
Interpretation: Arguments and theories of other historians which have been formed using historical evidence.

Historical Evidence: Facts and sources that happened and were created during a specific time period.

Task: SEE THE ANSWERS BELOW. Were you correct? (Green=Evidence) (Blue=Interpretation)

Mr Smith caught Sumayyah Ali pushing Abdul in the sixth-form corridor. This was witnessed by the rest of the Year 12 class. Sumayyah later admitted to this.

As a result Mr Smith when telling Ms Spencer what happened told her: 'Sumayyah is such a nasty and horrible student'

Fatima and Simonida were late to Mr Smith's lesson twice this week and refused to apologised for this. This was seen in front of all the History students.

As a result Mr Smith phoned home and informed both their parents of their lateness and said 'they are being late due to them talking in the corridor and having bad manners.'
‘What is the difference between Historical Interpretations and Historical Evidence?’

Task: Read the following extracts below and using two colours:
1) Identify which parts of the extract are the historian’s interpretation
2) Identify which parts are historical evidence

(From James Joll and Gordon Martel! in The Origins of the First World War, published 2007)
Throughout [July 1914] the German leaders repeated on several occasions their support for Austria-Hungary and pressed on the Austrians the advantages of rapid action. The Austrian ambassador in Berlin reported that government circles there believed that the moment was a favourable one even in the case of Russian intervention, since the Russians were not yet fully prepared militarily and not nearly as strong as they were likely to be in a few years. While the discussions about the precise terms of the ultimatum were going on in Vienna, the allies in Berlin were repeatedly urging the need for action and leaving their own willingness to risk war in no doubt; and they even showed some anxiety at the delay in dispatching the ultimatum.

(From Fritz Fischer in Germany’s Aims in the First World War, published 1967)
Given the tenseness of the world situation in 1914 – a condition for which Germany’s world policy, which had already led to three dangerous crises (those of 1905, 1908 and 1911), was in no small measure responsible – any limited or local war in Europe directly involving one great power must inevitably carry with it the imminent danger of a general war. As Germany willed and coveted the Austro-Serbian war and, in her confidence in her military superiority, deliberately faced the risk of a conflict with Russia and France, her leaders must bear a substantial share of the historical responsibility for the outbreak of general war in 1914.

(From J. Grenville, A World History of the Twentieth Century, published 1980)
Germany had really decided to force a war before Russia mobilised. Although the 15 war plans are important in understanding why the crisis unfolded in the way that it did, they provide only a partial answer to the question, ‘why did the war begin?’ Ultimately, the Germans’ decision to force a war with Russia was not determined so much by railway timetables as by their belief that they could not permit Austria-Hungary to be defeated and that, if a war for the future of the Balkans and the near east had to be fought some time, the best time was now.

(From Gordon Corrigan, Mud, Blood and Poppycock, published 2003)
1 Fischer, the German historian, is adamant that Germany’s foreign policy aims were focused on annexation, and that she went to war to achieve these aims. What is undeniable is that Germany, by offering unconditional support to Austria-Hungary in her dispute with Serbia, precipitated the series of events that led to war. Long before that, at least as early as 1906, Germany had in place a plan for an aggressive war based on the premise that Germany would have to fight Russia and France simultaneously, with Britain as a possible ally of France.
What is the difference between Historical Interpretations and Historical Evidence?

Task: Read the following extracts below and using two colours:
1) Identify which parts of the extract are the historian's interpretation
2) Identify which parts are historical evidence


The idea that this was a 'preventative war' to forestall the aggressive designs of the hostile powers surrounding Germany, was certainly a part of the thinking of men like Tirpitz and Moltke. Yet these defensive considerations, while often discussed, were inevitably overwhelmed by a grand sense of German power, whose time, it was felt, had come. The two aspects, the practical response to threat and the grand sense of national power, were not mutually exclusive, as so many historians who have debated the war aims have implied: both were essential ingredients of the German personality on the eve of the war.

(Extract 2: From Lynn Abrams, Bismarck and the German Empire, published 1995)

Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of war has been debated at length. In 1961 Fritz Fischer controversially argued that Germany bore full responsibility for the war and furthermore, that under Wilhelm II she had planned a war in order to achieve great power status. In the 1970s, Hans-Ulrich Wehler developed a parallel argument to the Fischer thesis. Wehler emphasised the primacy of domestic policy in the development of foreign policy and proposed that the out-dated character of the Second Empire was to blame for the descent into war. By 1914, war was the only final means by which the ruling elites could seek to maintain their power against the threat of new social forces, 'an escape forwards'. Both of these views have much to recommend them.

(Extract 3: From Steven Ozment, A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People, published 2004)

A deliberate German programme to occupy Central Europe came after, not before, the outbreak of the war in 1914, which at its beginning was to be a defensive war, despite an offensive strategy to that end. Many in states beyond Germany had been willing to risk war as a solution to the problems they faced. However, neither the Germans, nor anyone else at the time, had a special plan to dominate Europe.
Why do Historical Interpretations differ in History?

**Task:** Read and make a note of the different reasons why historical interpretation differ in History.

- The authors have given weight to different source material.
  
  For example: This historian has used the extract of the Daily Telegraph highlighting the Kaiser’s ‘mad as hares’ comment to form their argument whilst another historian has used statistics and figures given during the arms and naval race between Britain and Germany in the early 20th century.

- Their own historical focus may be different.
  
  For example: This historian has focused on the importance of the alliance system as it dragged... whilst this historian has highlighted Serbian Nationalism due the growth of pan-slavism.

- They might be studying different chronologies or time periods.
  
  For example: This historian has focused on the importance of the Blank Cheque during the July crisis which lead to countries later declaring war on each other due to the aggression of Austria-Hungary... whilst this historian has highlighted Serbian Nationalism due the growth of pan-slavism since the 18th century.

- They might have used different criteria when assessing the importance of an event or individual.
  
  For example: This historian argues that the assassination was only the ‘spark’ or ‘trigger’ whilst this historian argues German Imperial Ambitions since this occurred when Germany formed as a new country in 1861.

- They might be writing under different intellectual framework; the time they were writing in and the sources available to them at the time might influence their interpretation.
  
  For example: Fischer was writing at a time whereby both the fault and cause of WW1/+WW2 was Germany. However, Hastings who is more contemporary has greater access to revisionist works that do not just blame Germany.
Why do Historical Interpretations differ in History?

Task: Reading the following interpretations below answer the following GCSE question you did for Paper 3 last year; using the PREVIOUS slide to help you.

‘Suggest one reason why Fischer’s interpretation differ’s to Harris’? (4 Marks)

Interpretation A: Fritz Fischer

‘The German government did bear the decisive share of responsibility for starting World War One, as they were motivated by the desire to achieve German dominance throughout Europe.’

‘Also from the time of the Second Moroccan Crisis (1911) German leadership consistently pursued a policy aimed at fighting a European war as a means of achieving world-power status for Germany.’

Interpretation B: Ruben Harris

One would argue that World War One started because of German nationalism. Evidence for this was the Kaiser who clearly wanted Germany to be the best and not fall behind other countries. The Kaiser wanted Germany to be the strongest and keep the German people onside with his regime, especially after the removal of the successful Bismarck he had to justify his decision in doing so, for Germany’s benefit instead of his own personal issues he had with Bismarck. Through the policy of Weltpolitik, his objectives in this policy he aimed to rally public opinion to stabilise the Kaiserreich through nationalist actions. By sticking to a policy of nationalism, the Kaiser would stabilise the Kaiserreich as mentioned and consequently as Fischer argues the Kaiser ‘embarked on a course of aiming at nothing less than with the British empire, if not more.’ This emphasises the Kaiser’s want for German to be the best, have the strongest empire and have the strongest army, which at the time Britain had.
Task: Reading the following interpretations below answer the following GCSE question you did for Paper 3 last year; using the PREVIOUS slide to help you.

'Suggest one reason why Fischer’s interpretation differ’s to Chergui’s?' (4 Marks)

Interpretation A: Fritz Fischer

'The German government did bear the decisive share of responsibility for starting World War One, as they were motivated by the desire to achieve German dominance throughout Europe.'

'Also from the time of the Second Moroccan Crisis (1911) German leadership consistently pursed a policy aimed at fighting a European war as a means of achieving world-power status for Germany.'