

Top 25 UPSC Prelims Expected Questions from History Syllabus

History is an integral part of the curriculum as far as the curriculum of the Civil Services Examination is concerned. Prospective candidates must be familiar with the rich history of the country.

In fact, if the recent trend is anything to go by, history questions consist of about at least 15-20% of the questions asked in the IAS Exam. Which practically means that if the candidates play their cards right then they have a chance to get at least 15-20% of the exam questions right and given the nature of this exam, every chance is crucial to pass it.

Thus studying history is a crucial part of IAS Exam preparation. The question asked in the Prelims from this section is basically to ensure that aspirants have a basic understanding of historical events.

History questions are generally static in nature, but they can be asked in a myriad of ways in order to test the candidates knowledge in this subject

In order to help the candidates score higher in the subject, we are providing top 25 expected questions in history that can come in the exam again. Aspirants can use these topics for the last minute revision before the Prelims on June 5, 2022.

How to revise important topics of history for UPSC Prelims 2022?

History questions are a part and parcel of the IAS Syllabus. Although the number of questions keep fluctuating from time to time, one can be assured that at least more than 10 questions at a time will be asked during the UPSC Prelims exam.

In any case revising the subjects should be a priority, but since history in itself is a vast subject we bring to your attention some of the revision tips designed by the UPSC experts at BYJU'S. The revision tips are as follows:

1. Give a cursory glance at the index of any history book. Therefore, instead of jumping headlong into any chapter, this would give an insight on the type of topics in store for you.
2. If a certain topic increases your stress levels, then avoid for the time being and mark them for later, when the easy topics have been done
3. As you go on reading, you will start to understand the subsequent chapters in terms of difficult and even overall interest. You will also know the challenging aspects of some of these topics. Be sure to keep a small notebook in handy in order to make notes.

4. Upon further reading, you will get a clarity on certain concepts, events, political structure etc. Once this stage is reached it is time for you to go start solving previous years question papers and do a little bit of backtracking to revisit topics you have covered. Remember not to mug up or forcibly add things to the mix.
5. Even though there are multiple sources of ancient history, it is advisable to stick to a limited number of sources at a time. There are times when candidates waste time in shifting through multiple sources just to find the best one.
6. Make notes of important historical events and keep them close. They will be helpful during revision time.

Best 25 History Topics/Questions Expected in UPSC Prelims 2022

The UPSC Experts at BYJU'S have shortlisted the top 25 most important history topics for the UPSC Civil Services Prelims Exam. The questions below are framed as per the recurring trends from 2012-2020 UPSC Prelims exam.

Aspirants can study the associated topics from the below questions and conduct their own short research for important facts, or visit the linked articles to read more.

Do keep in mind that the questions below are not sure-shot questions but rather it's a game of probabilities given the dynamic nature of the UPSC Exam. Hence there is an actual possibility that some of the questions may not necessarily show up for the exam.

Candidates must do their own risk analysis and take that into account when they go about their preparation.

List of 25 Expected History Questions in IAS Prelims 2022:

1. As per Jain Philosophy, what is the force that created and binds the world together?

Jain Philosophy forms the core philosophical system of Jainism. It mainly deals with its dualistic metaphysics, which holds that there are two distinct categories of existence, the living, conscious or sentient being (jiva) and the non-living or material (ajiva).

From the Jain point of view, Jain philosophy is eternal and has been taught numerous times in the remote past by the great enlightened tirthankaras ("ford-makers"). Questions regarding religions especially with respect to ancient religions have been asked from time to time in the UPSC Prelims exam

2. With reference to Buddhism, Viharas and Chaityas are rock-cut caves. But there is a difference between the two. What is that difference?

In India caves have been regarded as a place of sanctity. Some of them were a result of natural formation while others were enlarged by man-made means. Even those created with man-made means had the same reverence to natural caves.

Followers of Buddhism in India had many rock cut caves with each holding different levels of importance in their act of worship. An example of Buddhist caves is the Ellora caves. Ellora caves form an important part of Indian rock-cut architecture, and are among the most prolific examples of rock-cut architecture around the world.

3. What was the primary objective behind the establishment of the Socialist wing of the Congress party?

The Congress Socialist Party was a caucus within the Indian National Congress with Socialist leanings. They advocated decentralized socialism in which co-operatives, trade unions, independent farmers, and local authorities would hold a substantial share of the economic power.

As secularists, they hoped to transcend communal divisions through class solidarity. Some, such as Narendra Deva or Basawon Singh (Sinha), advocated a democratic socialism distinct from both Marxism and reformist social democracy.

4. What were the primary factors responsible for the fall of the Gupta Empire?

The Gupta Empire was one of the largest pan-Indian empires which shaped ancient Indian history. Its legacy was great cultural developments which took place primarily during the reigns of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I.

Many Hindu epics and literary sources, such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, were canonised during this period.

5. What was the result of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms?

The Montagu Chelmsford Reforms were a series of reforms aimed at introducing a capacity for self-governance in British India.

Named after Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India from 1917 to 1922, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India between 1916 and 1921, the reforms were poorly received by Indian leaders as being too little in the scope of self-determination.

Time and again, question related to important British Legislations in India such as the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms have been a regular feature in the UPSC Prelims History Exam.

6. What aspect of British rule in India was Dadabhai Naoroji a voracious critic of?

Dadabhai Naoroji also known as the "Grand Old Man of India" and "Unofficial Ambassador of India", was an Indian political leader, merchant, scholar and writer who was a Liberal Party Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom House of Commons between 1892 and 1895 and the first Asian to be a British MP.

Dadabhai Naoroji is regarded as one of the most important Indians during the birth of the nascent Indian independence movement. In his writings, he came to the conclusion that the exertion of foreign rule over India was not favourable for the nation, and that independence (or at the very least, responsible government) would be the better path for India.

7. Analyse the key aspects of the rule of King Harshavardhana

A scion of the Vardhana dynasty, Harshavardhana was the ruler of the kingdom of Kannauj. Under his rule the kingdom of Kanauj extended from its boundaries near the river Ganga to the Narmada river in the south. His rule marked a period of relative stability.

Following his death, all the principalities that were under the Kanauj empire broke away and soon started fighting among themselves, leading to a period of anarchy, severely weakening the capacity of the Indian kingdoms to resist the Arab and Turkish invasions of India in the late 7th century AD.

8. How did the advent of civil disobedience movements during the Indian freedom struggle change the nature of British rule in India?

The Champaran satyagraha was the first instance of the Civil Disobedience movement in India. Though not exactly novel, the methods employed by the activists deployed nonviolent means to resist British rule. These methods were put to good use under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Salt Satyagraha was the nucleus of the civil disobedience movement which attracted worldwide attention to the Indian Independence movement and also the necessary political impetus that the British authorities had to take seriously.

9. Analyse the key significance of the Government of India Act, 1919 with regard to the Indian Independence movement.

The Government of India Act, 1919 was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the government of India. The Act embodied the reforms recommended in the report of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Chelmsford.

The Act provided a dual form of government (a "diarchy") for the major provinces. In each such province, control of some areas of government, the "transferred list", were given to a Government of ministers answerable to the Provincial Council.

10. Analyse the role of Indian troops in World War I. Also explain the impact that the participation of Indian troops had on the war and also have it changed the trajectory of the Indian Independence movement.

Although World War I was a largely European conflict, Other nations in Asia and Africa were also drawn into the war as most had little choice in the matter since they were colonies of European powers.

In the case of India however, most of the Indian leaders were in favour of fighting for the British as they felt that such a participation would soften the stance of the British towards the Indians, ultimately making them more susceptible to accepting reforms for self-governance. Future events would prove otherwise.

11. Critically examine the role of Annie Besant in the Indian Independence movement

Annie Besant was a British socialist, theosophist, women's rights activist, writer, orator, political party member, educationist, and philanthropist. She was an active participant of the Indian Independence movement and is known for her role in the foundation of the Banaras Hindu University.

12. The first battle of Panipat between Babur and Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 led to the establishment of the Mughal Empire in India. However this battle is also famous for another important development. What was this development?

The first battle of Panipat taking place on April 21, 1526 led to a decisive victory for the forces of Babur as it set up the foundation of the Mughal Empire. The tactics used by Babur at the time completely caught the Lodi forces completely by surprise leading to their annihilation on the field of Panipat despite outnumbering the Mughals by a large number.

13. Critically examine the battle of Plassey, with special reference to British Colonialism in India.

The Battle of Plassey in 1757 was a major turning point in the history of Indian history as it was the major stepping stone for the British conquest of India. Robert Clive, who led the British forces had little hope in defeating the Mughal forces of Bengal who outnumbered them vastly.

However, with a deployment of clever tactics and political backandling, the British were victorious. This also changed their perspective as they could become conquerors instead of being mere merchants in India.

Other Europeans such as the French were also interested in establishing themselves and tried to do so by attempting to set the local Indian kingdoms against the British but following the conclusion of Plassey, the British would become the premier colonial power in India, sidelining other European powers completely.

14. Which movement led to the rise of the Moderates and Extremist factions in the Indian National Congress?

The Indian National Congress saw a split among its members who identified themselves as extremists and moderates.

The key difference between the moderates and extremists was the nature of self-rule India. The moderates demanded limited self-rule while the extremists would not settle anything less than complete independence from British rule.

The extremists had adopted this stance following the apathetic nature of the British towards the local populace. Following key events such as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the extremist faction would soon dominate the Indian National Congress, ultimately changing the trajectory of the Indian independence movement itself.

15. Indigo cultivation in India was in its prime during the rule of the East India Company, but ultimately led to a terminal decline as time went on. What were the factors that led to the decline of Indigo cultivation in India.

Indigo was a key component in the creation of blue dyes, which was in great demand in Europe. The indigo planters would persuade the peasants to plant indigo crops instead of food.

They provided loans, called dadon, at a very high interest. Once a farmer took such loans he remained in debt for his whole life before passing it to his successors. The price paid by the planters was meagre, only 2.5% of the market price. The farmers could make no profit growing indigo and also starved during a food crisis.

16. The Sunga Empire came to prominence following the death of the last Mauryan Emperor at the hands of Pushyamitra Sunga. What was the significance of the Sunga Empire in terms of Indian history?

The Sunga Dynasty is known for patronising art, education, philosophy, and other forms of learning flowered during this period including small terracotta images, larger stone sculptures, and architectural monuments such as the stupa at Bharhut, and the renowned Great Stupa at Sanchi. Shunga rulers helped to establish the tradition of royal sponsorship of learning and art. The script used by the empire was a variant of Brahmi script and was used to write Sanskrit.

The Shunga Empire played an imperative role in patronising culture at a time when some of the most important developments in Hindu thought were taking place.

17. What describes best the tenets of Vedic civilization in India?

The Vedic Civilisation represents a period in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age of the history of India when the Vedic literature, including the Vedas, was composed in the northern Indian subcontinent, between the end of the Urban Indus Valley Civilisation and a second urbanisation which began in the central Indo-Gangetic Plain c. 600 BC. The Vedas are liturgical texts which formed the basis of modern day Hinduism.

18. What were the key factors of the revolt by Birsa Munda?

Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader, and folk hero who belonged to the Munda tribe. He spearheaded a tribal religious millenarian movement that arose in the Bengal Presidency (now Jharkhand) in the late 19th century, during the British Raj, thereby making him an important figure in the history of the Indian independence movement. The revolt mainly concentrated in the Munda belt of Khunti, Tamar, Sarwada and Bandgaon.

It is one of the most important tribal uprisings in India during the late 19th century.

19. The Industrial Revolution in the 19th century had a profound impact on the economy and social life of Europe. What was the direct impact of the Industrial revolution on India during this period.

The Industrial Revolution was the transition to new manufacturing processes in Great Britain, continental Europe, and the United States, in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840.

This transition included going from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing and iron production processes, the increasing use of steam power and water power, the development of machine tools and the rise of the mechanized factory system. The Industrial Revolution also led to an unprecedented rise in the rate of population growth.

20. What was the significance of the Gandhi-Irwin pact with reference to the Indian Independence movement?

The Gandhi–Irwin Pact was a political agreement signed by Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, on 5 March 1931 before the Second Round Table Conference in London. Before this, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, had announced in October 1929 a vague offer of 'dominion status' for British India in an unspecified future and a Round Table Conference to discuss a future constitution.

21. What were the major land-reforms in post-independent India?

The Land reforms carried in post-independent India were a crucial factor in the upward social mobility of the farmers in India. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Indian land reforms was the abolishment of the Zamindari system.

22. What was the impact of the Woods Dispatch with regards to the development of Indian education?

Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control of the British East India Company, sent a formal dispatch to Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India, suggesting a large shift to English language use within India.

Sir Charles recommended that primary schools adopt vernacular languages, high schools adopt Anglo-vernacular language and that English be the medium of education in colleges. This communiqué is informally known as Wood's dispatch

23. What was the impact of the formation of the Arya Samaj with respect to the socio-cultural factors in British India?

The Arya Samaj was established as a reform movement for Hinduism that promotes values and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Vedas. The organization has also worked towards the growth of the civil rights movement in India since the 1800s.

24. Which was the charter that led to the establishment of English Education in India?

English education in India was established with the objective of making the rule of the British a smooth affair for the colonial authorities. But for the Indians it would become a means to move up the social ladder in the colonial society of the time.

25. What factors were responsible for the terminal decline of the indigenous textile industry of India.

Before the advent of the European powers, the Indian textile industry was quite famous in the world for its quality products, but the arrival of the British led to its gradual decline.

Many factors contributed to its demise which led to the virtual decline of the textile industries in India. Only post-independence did the textile industry begin its gradual reformation.

Motivation for UPSC Prelims 2022 – Revision Tips

- If candidates want to study effectively then they divide their revision instead of stacking it. This may sound easier said than done but if one is organized enough then they can spend less revising and remember more.
- Candidates should take more mock tests as it will improve their memory and easy to retrieve information. Additionally it will also help in identifying their weak points and help in improving upon those points.

- Most of the students fail to clear the preliminary examination despite having put in a lot of hard work in preparation. This mostly happens because of the lack of faith in oneself and negative self-talk.
- Maintain your calm and confidence while you attempt the exam, any fall or increase in your confidence can wreak havoc.