(a) To what extent does the author communicate his approval of the current relationship between environmental history and ‘political commitment’? Referring only to the first paragraph, write a single, grammatical sentence in your own words.

Criteria assessed

The question is intended to assess the ability of candidates to read critically and sensitively, to extract the relevant information from the paragraph, and to distil these points into their own words with precision and clarity.

Summary

The purpose of this question is to encourage candidates to focus on nuances of language, and to reach a sensitive assessment of what the author is saying and how strongly he is saying it. It is also challenging them to see that there is no single ‘current relationship’, even if the focus of the author’s discussion is on the USA and Europe. Some candidates will stray into irrelevant discussion of the three causes of the change that the author identifies, but the best ones will mine these for the most pertinent evidence.

Key points:

1) The ‘current relationship’ in the USA and Europe is one of diminished ‘political commitment’, and the author broadly approves of this development. (NB: This is signalled by three references: the observation that some earlier work was ‘fanciful’; the claim that current scholars have ‘outgrown’ the particular concerns of the 1960s; the approving reference to Cronon.)

2) However, the author ‘communicates’ his view in language which is restrained and cautious.

3) He notes that the trend to depoliticisation is not universal, highlighting India as an exception.

9-10 marks: candidates must grasp points 1, 2, and 3 clearly; they should avoid anything other than glancing references to the reasons why the author adopts the position that he takes; the sentence should be compact, grammatical and accurate.
5-8 marks: To enter this band, candidates must grasp two of the key points. Towards the top of the range, candidates may well grasp all three points, but with some imprecision or without the necessary concision. Answers which capture two points well and succinctly while omitting the third should be given more credit than answers which badly mischaracterise one of the points while capturing the others accurately. Answers which touch on two of the points but become distracted by the reasons why the field has changed in direction belong at the bottom of the band, at best. Sentences which are excessively long, and answers that contain more than one sentence (or are in effect two sentences artificially constructed as one), belong at the bottom of the band, even if they contain no major errors. So too do answers that borrow excessively from the language of the extract, or which use any material from the second paragraph.

0-4 marks: Answers in this band may fundamentally misunderstand either the question or the author’s viewpoint, may be very long or vague, and will most likely capture one key point at most. Answers drawing very largely on the second paragraph, or on general knowledge, belong in this range, as do sentences that are incoherent or speculative. Answers which focus excessively on underlying reasons at the expense of the key factors are also likely to belong in this band.

(b) According to the author, what challenges does the field of environmental history face, and how should it respond? With reference to the passage as a whole, answer in your own words, in no more than 15 lines.

Criteria assessed

This question tests the candidate’s ability to summarise effectively the main ideas in the author’s argument, to present that argument faithfully, economically, and in the candidate’s own words.

Key points

The author’s assessment of how environmental history should respond to the challenges that it faces is nuanced. He neither says that the field should accept or reject everything that its critics suggest. He makes several points, some of which are quite ambivalent in their tone:

Challenge 1: Environmental history can tend to exclude human agency.

- Environmental history can keep people at the centre by choosing a small scale to work on. It is not clear, though, that the author is actually promoting this approach. Indeed, he freely acknowledges that this is not the sort of history that he writes himself.
- Neither, however, is the author arguing that human agency should be excluded in favour of larger structural forces. Perceptive candidates might make use of the reference to William Cronon to suggest that the author has considerable sympathy with the view that it is not possible to study the environment in isolation from human agency.

- However it is done, the purpose – or at least the effect – of environmental history should be to situate human beings in their appropriate wider context, and not to prioritise human activity artificially over that of other life forms and natural processes. This ‘dose of humility’ seems to be the unifying mission statement.

Challenge 2: Finding appropriate scales to replace automatic recourse to the nation-state as the organising unit of analysis.

- The author argues that ‘scale’ is key. He suggests that nation-state histories have advantages in terms of sources but are largely both old-fashioned and methodologically flawed. However, very perceptive candidates might notice that the author implicitly raises – but does not answer – the problem of locating appropriate evidence if the ‘good record keepers’ are bypassed.

- The author is particularly bullish in claiming that environmental history is well placed to ‘lead’ the way in approaching the problem of scale in a rigorous manner. His field has been innovative in working with geographers to challenge the assumption that the scale of the nation-state should be an axiomatic recourse.

Challenge 3: Interacting in a constructive way with other areas of scholarly study while carving out a distinctive identity for environmental history.

- Environmental history is a relatively new field of study, and clearly its identity and approach are not yet fixed. However, in different places the author suggests both that environmental history has come to mirror other types of history (as with the political commitment issue), and that it has the capacity to teach lessons to others (as with scale.) The reference to working with geographers suggests that environmental history has a distinctive cross-disciplinary focus which has much to offer.

- The author also indicates that the challenges which face environmental history are not peculiar to it. He makes explicit reference to global history, and talks more obliquely about types of history which emphasise ‘impersonal social forces.’ Able candidates could reasonably surmise that the author is making a pitch for environmental history to be accepted into the wider community of historical study while also stressing its cutting-edge character.

- While the author accepts that macro studies ‘inevitably’ take people out of the picture, he does not see this as a bad thing in itself. Here, he identifies the challenges faced by environmental history with standard methodological problems with which other types of
history also engage. Implicit is the view that environmental history is not a peculiarly problematic scholarly project.

*Awarding of marks*

Markers should not apply the delineation of challenges and responses in this marks scheme too schematically. There are areas of overlap, and the author does not pretend that his arguments work in isolation. Although candidates should generally be rewarded for seeing the extent of the author’s engagement and penalised for an excessively narrow focus, it is the candidate’s ability to identify nuance that is most important here.

**14-20 marks:** Candidates will, within fifteen lines, capture the main ideas of the author’s argument and the logic of his reasoning faithfully and accurately. Answers in this band should see that the author is making a case which is both clear and nuanced: he engages with and rejects or contextualises common criticisms of the field, and he seeks to map out an identity for environmental history which is both distinctive and relatable to other types of history. Answers in this band will tend to notice some of the subtler points. For instance, that the Cronon reference suggests that human agency needs to be built into environmental history, even if not as a central focus; that the multiple agency of human, animal and meteorological factors is actively embraced and is central to the discipline; that moving away from the nation-state is not an unproblematic enterprise; and that all historians face methodological challenges. Very strong answers may also make use of the author’s tone to interpret his true position. Stronger answers in this band will be thematically organised, evidence mental clarity, and be written in the candidate’s own words. Weaker answers in this band will be less well organised, may fail to identify all of the challenges, and may make less effective use of the nuances in the text.

**8-13 marks:** Candidates will see both that the author is responding to some preconceptions and that he has some ideas about how his field should respond. Answers toward the top end of this band should certainly see that there are several issues in play here, and that they can be understood in relatively thematic terms. However, answers in this band are likely to take a black-and-white view of the author’s response: either that he is accepting or rejecting everything that both the critics and earlier generations of environmental historians propose. Alternatively, they may have some sense of how the debate is quite complicated, but report this as though they were ‘thinking out loud.’ Stronger answers in this band may show some awareness of how the different sides of the argument interact, but may be imprecise, excessively narrative in approach, or rely too heavily on language from the text. Weaker answers may give disproportionate emphasis to one aspect of the author’s argument, or focus more (and perhaps repetitively) on relatively basic points. Some candidates may also rely too heavily on the first paragraph and talk about the past evolution of the field at the expense of the present and future implied by ‘respond.’ These will usually find their place toward the bottom of this band, at best. Answers in this band may also feature small misunderstandings or contradictions, or be quite unclear in their expression.
0-7 marks: Candidates will have failed to engage with the text perceptively. They will show little sense of the author’s argument, will make limited reference to the text, or will deploy outside knowledge or groundless speculation in lieu of evidence. They may fail to understand the question, or answer it with an excessive reliance on direct quotation or near-quotation. Answers in this band may also be so garbled that the examiner can have no confidence that the candidate understands the material.

N.B. All answers must be within the fifteen line limit, assuming that the candidate’s handwriting is of normal length (around ten words per line.) Deduct one mark for every additional line written.

QUESTION TWO (30 MARKS)

Write an essay in which you explore the relative importance of short-, medium-, and long-term causes for any process of historical change with which you are familiar.

Criteria Assessed

This question assesses the candidate’s ability to respond to a broad, open essay question in a relevant, coherent, and analytically sophisticated manner. It may be helpful to have in mind typical degree class boundaries in assessing this exercise. The relevant criteria are: 1) engagement with the question; 2) coherence of argument; 3) the effective use of evidence; 4) structural organisation and clarity of communication. N.B., candidates are not being tested here either on the style of their prose, or on the depth and accuracy of their knowledge: answers may therefore qualify for the top band if they are written clearly enough to indicate a high quality of thinking, and if they deploy such knowledge as they have precisely and effectively.

Marking guidelines

Markers must be prepared to show flexibility given that answers and approaches will vary widely depending upon what candidates have been taught or have learned about. Markers should also be aware that any given candidate may have few case studies available to them which they know enough about to deploy with confidence. The challenging aspect of this question lies in its tripartite division of factors. Weaker candidates will struggle to juggle all three balls at once, and may find it particularly difficult to erect a robust category of the ‘medium term.’ The strongest candidates are likely not only to show some mastery of the definition of categories, but may also problematise them – for instance, by showing that one type of cause may interact with or bleed into another. A further key test is for candidates to assess the ‘relative importance’ of each factor, and this demands prioritisation. Weaker
candidates may ignore this entirely, while middling ones will tend to make apparently arbitrary decisions. Even where errors or implausible claims are made, candidates should generally be rewarded for seeking to build prioritisation into their argumentative structure. Markers should be flexible when dealing with candidates who struggle to find a case study from their core syllabus that maximises the potential of the question, although clearly irrelevant case studies should be marked accordingly.

21-30 marks. Candidates will write a largely relevant, well-organised answer which shows clarity of thought, presents a prioritised argument, and engages clearly with the challenge of comparison. Answers cannot enter this band unless they compare short-, medium-, and long-term causes, however defined. Answers in this band also must seek to prioritise these factors in some way. The best answers will feature: 1) an awareness of how the causes interact, or can otherwise be problematised; 2) a sense of prioritisation of causes in the main body of the essay, and not simply in the conclusion. Answers in this band should prioritise analysis over description, and target their response consistently around the question as set, and ideally as explicitly understood by the candidate in their introduction. Markers should reward candidates who really engage with this challenge, even if they detect some inaccuracies or anachronisms. Markers might usefully think about the candidate’s handling of the notion of the ‘medium-term’ causation as a litmus test for entry into and placement within this band.

12-20 marks. Candidates will present relevant evidence, and apply it somewhat to the question, but less directly, consistently and forensically. Stronger answers in this band may fall short of higher marks because they are too episodic, disparate, or rely too much on routine description. Responses in this band will answer the question, but may suffer from one of two typical errors: 1) failing to prioritise, except perhaps in the most perfunctory and arbitrary manner; 2) failing to establish and focus on all three factors. However, in order to enter this band, answers must deal successfully with either the prioritisation or causation aspects of the question. Examiners should pay particular attention to how well candidates handle the concept of ‘medium-term’ causes: it might be anticipated that some candidates will attempt to rehearse school essays which deal with the short- and long-term, and that these will be fairly successful in their own terms. However, answers of this sort should generally be placed toward the lower end of this band if the marker has little confidence that the candidate is really focussing on this question. On the other hand, candidates who do try to engage constructively with the full potential of the question, even if they do not do it wholly convincingly or consistently, might belong toward the top end of this band. Candidates who seek to engage with the question but who use an unhelpful case study will also generally belong in this band.

0-11 marks. Answers in this band will usually fall into one of three types: either the candidate will completely or almost completely ignore the dual demands of the question; they will answer in a way that is so diffuse that the marker can have no confidence that the candidate is deploying any rigour in their approach at all; or their case study will be self-evidently inappropriate. Answers may fall into this band if they are exceptionally basic in the
quality of their analysis, so garbled that it is impossible to see an able mind at work, or otherwise demonstrate a manifest inability to respond to a structured challenge of this sort. So do answers which are too short to permit serious engagement with the question.

**QUESTION THREE (40 MARKS)**

What does this extract from the *Code Noir* tell us about the relationship between slaves and masters?

**Criteria assessed**

This question assesses the candidate’s ability to provide a thoughtful, judicious and empathetic understanding of the past. In order to achieve this, candidates must read the text carefully and critically, show attention to detail, deploy evidence in an effective and appropriate way, and exhibit historical imagination where necessary.

**Interpretation of the question**

The key to this question lies in the word ‘relationship.’ Clearly, the text suggests a range of aspects to this relationship between slaves and masters. On the easiest level, these are about how slaves should be subordinated, controlled and legitimately punished by their masters. On another, it is about how masters should take more responsibility, and treat their slaves in a more ‘humane’ manner. A third aspect is how the ‘relationship’ can be broken through the process of manumission. Strong candidates, though, should see that these elements add up to an analysis of a relationship which is both under pressure and capable of change. This leads to a fourth observation: that the ‘relationship’ also involves the French state, which is seeking to consolidate or challenge the status quo in some respects, while more generally emphasising that both masters and slaves are subjects in relation to the crown. Fifthly, therefore, the status of both masters and slaves is dependent on the will of the state. Slaves can be made free, and masters deprived of their slaves, and thus their mastery. There is no suggestion that there is any fundamental natural, racial or moral distinction between slaves and masters.

In order to access the full possibilities of the text, candidates need to see that the *Code* has been produced with the intention of changing some elements of the status quo. To do this, candidates will need to discern that the *Code* itself is clearly the product of the French state – or even church-state – and is written from a point of distance. Strong candidates might also see that this distance potentially limits the source’s utility when it comes to working out what was really going on in these slave-owning societies. The aim of the state is
to increase control over its colonial possessions, and to regulate both slaves and masters according to its own priorities and ideals. Strong candidates may see that the interests of the ‘author’ are not wholly consistent, because they are trying to weigh and represent a range of different interests. These interests, and the state’s mixed attitudes to the master-slave relationship, are manifested in several different ways.

**Summary of themes**

*Religion and the state*

- Religious homogeneity is a clear aim, but implicitly a present problem.

- It is important that slaves become good Catholics. However, the text makes clear that the problem here lies at least as much with the masters as with their slaves. In Article V, though, it is suggested that slaves have learned to use religious language to hide subversive practices.

- Religion is often understood in terms of the interests of the French state. The text sees a tension between the economic interests of masters and the religious ‘rights’ of slaves, and wishes the colonial state to regulate these.

- In general, it seems that the over-arching purpose of the *Code* is to regulate both masters and slaves according to a series of ethical and confessional frameworks which are often mediated through the language and institutions of Catholicism, but which are in fact guided and overseen by the priorities of the French state and its increasing colonial presence.

*Master / slave relations*

- The *Code* tends to assume that slaves will transgress when they can: far more focus is given to the decisions of the masters, who are clearly proving to be negligent in a variety of ways. Masters require regulation too. Indeed, the institution of slavery, as seen by the *Code*, can perhaps only exist meaningfully when masters behave as they should.

- The insistence that slaves are adequately provided for, together with legal recourse, suggests that the *Code* is targeting abuses. But this legal recourse, as hinted at in Article X, also suggests that slaves have limited legal rights. Nevertheless – and under the cover of some soaring rhetoric – this article haltingly tries to suggest lines of communication between slaves and the state, which bypasses masters.

Clearly master / slave relations can be rather close as well as abusive: the *Code* seeks to regulate both. (See below.)
**Economics**

- It is clear that the text is targeting some sort of an unregulated economy. The state is now interested in who is doing the selling. There are two implications here: that the masters need to be more involved to function properly as masters, and that the notion of ‘selling’ is peculiarly reserved for free men, (slaves are sold: they cannot sell.)

- Masters are not trusted: as with Sundays and holidays, it is clear that state ‘officials’ are needed to regulate their activity. The reference to ‘tokens’ also suggests that it is the authority of masters that is being regulated as well as the activity of their slaves.

- The text is silent about the fundamentally economic purpose of the institution of slavery. It is assumed. However, the text does not press for increased economic efficiency; rather it seeks to regulate economic exploitation, while also making master / slave roles more concrete. On the other hand, Article VII gives a strong indication that the production and sale of sugar cane is especially important to the colonial economy, and the punishments for this type of unregulated selling are relatively harsh.

**Manumission**

- Slavery is not portrayed as a state into which one is naturally born and from which there is no escape. Manumission can be granted gratuitously. However, it is noted in Article III that slaves can be confiscated as a form of punishment for masters. This might suggest that a legal provision is being made for something that carries a strong economic counter-imperative.

- Manumission can stem from an acknowledgement on the master’s part that the slave has become trusted. Indeed, the involvement of slaves in will-making and tutoring suggests that the roles can become distinctly blurred. Article XIII is also interesting for the phrase ‘will be deemed manumitted.’ Strong candidates might puzzle constructively about the circumstances that might necessitate this precise formulation.

- Former slaves must be grateful for their freedom. Their legal equality is even compromised by this sense of gratuitous gift, in Article XIV. The system of slavery is potentially legitimised by the attitudes of former slaves that the Code seeks to dictate.

- On the other hand, former masters also need to understand that their former slaves are now free. This suggests a continuing cultural assumption that former slaves are still, in some sense, indebted.

- Freedom is a route to virtue, and should be understood as such. Article XV says a lot about how the King wants his Code to be thought about in wider terms. On the other hand, the rhetoric of this final provision sits at odds with the more detailed clauses of the text itself.
Punishments

- Slaves are always punished physically or, ambiguously, are ‘confiscated’ (presumably by the state). The implication is that their body is their only possession. Masters are usually punished financially, but the text suggests that administrative and purely economic offences are punished less severely, and slave insurrection is also treated semi-sympathetically with regard to the masters, whereas crimes in religious matters are understood as rebellion against the French state and are punished much more severely.

Marking guidelines

This scheme is not based upon candidates answering in a particular type of way. They might equally well or badly organise their response around one central theme or make a range of different observations about the text. Candidates should be judged on what is included rather than what is left out. Examiners should award appropriate marks to any type of response, based upon the criteria that the candidate answers the question, uses evidence from the source appropriate to their interpretation, analyses intelligently and in sufficient depth, sees the importance of the source, links evidence well, and speculates within effective bounds where necessary. Please note that unlike in question 2 candidates are not expected to make an argument, but rather to explore the evidence in a sensitive and empathetic manner. The examples given within each band do not constitute necessary criteria, but are intended to reflect the sorts of insight which might be expected at this level. Finally, it is relatively common for candidates to run out of time and write a short-weight response to this question. If the marker feels that the answer is good in its own terms but lacks the depth of other answers then the limited level of analysis should be reflected in the mark given: in sum, it will be rare that short-weight answers are able to rise above the top of the third band.

Two points more specific to this text and question should be borne in mind:

First, slavery is an emotive issue, especially when it is seen through the lens of race. Candidates should be given some leeway for expressing disapproval of the institution, and even for making some passing anachronistic remarks. Some candidates may take the ‘Noir’ of the document’s title to refer to race. This is legitimate, but will not get the candidate far – there is no evidence in the text itself which helps to develop the racial angle, and the evidence relating to manumission shows that slavery was not seen to be a fixed or permanent state. Candidates who achieve good marks must be able to see the nuances in the text, and to engage with it in an empathetic and imaginative manner.

Second, this question does not suggest to the candidate that general comments about the limitations of the source are especially relevant. Stronger candidates will almost certainly find ways of connecting the assumptions and implications, and may make perceptive remarks about why a constitutional document is unlikely to give them the straightforward answers that we might otherwise like. More formulaic answers, though, may seek to observe a series of negatives (for instance that the text tells us nothing about people who don’t live in the French
colonies), and the weaker answers of this sort will tend to ignore the demands of the question and the positive evidence that is available.

33-40 marks. Answers in the top band will show that they have read the text closely and perceptively, and are able to talk in a concrete way about the themes that they have identified. They should also show some level of historical imagination and critical insight. It will be difficult for answers to enter this band unless they see that the Code Noir is trying to change the status quo, is seeking to regulate the behaviour of masters as well as slaves, and neither treats slavery as a fixed category nor assumes that masters are by nature superior beings. Answers in this band may see some of the following: that the importance of religious homogeneity is deeply related to state interests and institutions; that slaves are not only exploited, but also sometimes so trusted that the distinction between ‘slave’ and ‘owner’ effectively disintegrates; that the requirement that former slaves show particular respect for their former owners serves to place reform within a context which supports the system itself; that masters also need to be regulated, and that economic exploitation in particular has to be tempered by religious values and some sense of a duty of care toward the slaves themselves; that the text represents an attempt by the French state to intervene in colonial societies in which masters are seemingly guilty of both excessively severe and lax relationships with their slaves. Stronger answers in this band may also make some use of the differentiated punishments laid out in the text to probe the assumptions and priorities of the Code. Answers may also push into this band if they speculate intelligently about why the text may have been written in the first place, and show awareness that although a constitutional document is unlikely to provide a great deal of specific analysis it is possible to join the dots imaginatively to get a good sense of what is being reacted to and what is being prioritised.

23-32 marks. Upper-middle band answers engage actively with the text, connect evidence to interpretation clearly, and toward the higher end will tend to prioritise analysis over description. Stronger answers, here, may still fall short of the top band because they do not fully see: the differing priorities with which the text grapples, and often fails to resolve; the extent to which the Code mandates the state to regulate religious and economic life; the ways in which differentiated punishments indicate wider priorities and values; the extent to which close relationships between ‘owners’ and ‘slaves’ complicate the categories themselves. Answers which are perceptive in places, but which make too much use of the more obvious points about the oppression of slaves, are also likely to belong in this band. Conversely, some candidates may latch onto the manumission theme and see it as the ‘key’ to the text, drawing upon spurious abolitionist frames of reference: answers which make too much of this may even belong in the band below. Finally, otherwise strong answers which spend too long speculating fruitlessly about what the edited extract does not tell us may also be banded here. Answers in this band may see: that the Code Noir is trying to change something and is not uncritically pro-master; that the text has more than one aim, and that these aims are not always easy to reconcile (but probably with little clear sense of why); that relationships
between slaves and masters can become close; that manumission is an important part of the Code’s agenda; that the word ‘Noir’ may refer to race, but that the text itself does not develop the notion that slavery has a racial basis.

13-22 marks. Lower-middle band answers will engage with both the text and the question, but tend toward description or weakly grounded speculation. Better answers in this band may fall short of the higher range because although they see some of the important connections they elsewhere rely upon description more than analysis, and tend to list points rather than prioritise or thematise. Answers in this range may: feature an anachronistic commentary about the ills of slavery, dealing in only a cursory way with counter-evidence, and focussing consistently on some of the more obvious points about punitive treatment of slave criminality; take a black and white view that either manumission or punishment constitutes the core principle of the text; make little distinction between the implied status quo and what the Code Noir seeks to achieve; assume that slaves are always punished severely and that masters always get off lightly; make far too much of the word ‘Noir.’ Weaker responses might also speculate much more about what isn’t in the text than analyse the evidence that is available. Answers toward the bottom of this band may also feature significant misunderstandings or wholly ignore evidence which challenges their main points.

0-12 marks. Answers in this band may treat the source uncritically, make wild assumptions beyond the text, or focus remorselessly upon one feature of the text in a manner that is extremely basic. They may also try to introduce outside knowledge. Some candidates may try to apply a set of assumptions about how slavery functioned in other societies to this text: for instance by using the word ‘Noir’ to segue into unsupported speculation about racism or biological essentialism, to assume that all black people were slaves and that all masters were white and so forth. Answers which are dominated by this sort of commentary are likely to belong in the bottom band. So too are answers which largely ignore the question. Answers which merely paraphrase or quote sections from the text in a manner which implies limited independent thought or engagement should also be placed in this band.