WAYS OF APPROACHING
LENI RIEFENSTAHLL AND THE HSC

Students can access this presentation via
1 Historical context
- growth of German cinema in Weimar Germany
- rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party
- the Berlin Olympics
- post-war de-Nazification

2 Background
- family background and education
- early career as dancer and film actor

3 Rise to prominence
- direction of ‘The Blue Light’ 1932
- 1933 meeting with Hitler at Wilmershaven
- ban on Jews working in the film industry
- commission for ‘Victory of Faith’ (Nazi Party rally 1933)

4 Significance and evaluation
- relationship with Hitler
- ‘Triumph of the Will’ and ‘Berlin Olympiad’
- international honours and criticism
- post-war arrest
- 1960s Nuba photography
- controversies in later life
- evaluation: for example Nazi propagandist, feminist pioneer?
Know her story
What was she like?

A loner

Egotistical, highly strung, Nervous breakdown

“in your face”

LENI

apological

independent

Her sex life

manipulative

A genuine risk-taker
In 1934 she met Adolf Hitler, who had long admired her work on the screen. He perceived in her a personification of those qualities of health, energy, ambition, good-looks, youth and love of sport which are the German equivalent of female glamour, promptly amazed the German cinema industry by commissioning her to make the official film of last summer's Nurnberg Party Congress in which she directed 800,000 men. When Herr Hitler's crony, Air Minister Göring, married Cinemactress Riefenstahl's crony, Actress Emmy Sonnemann, last year, Hitler was best man. That Realmleader Hitler, a confirmed celibate, has any such intentions concerning Cinemactress Leni Riefenstahl no one suspects for a moment, but that he holds her in high esteem, entertains romantic admiration for her achievements and her character as a prime example of German womanhood, is apparent to everyone.

Read more:
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,883538,00.html#ixzz1RmMMDoRq
Part (a) style questions:

• **2010:**
  Describe the life of the personality you have studied.

• **2009:**
  Outline the life of the personality you have studied.

• **2008:**
  Describe the personal background and the historical context of the personality you have studied.
General advice for 13 (a)

- Descriptive/narrative response
- Factual detail
- Responding to (a)
  - 10 marks/18 minutes
  - Note any possible slant
  - The issue of background and prominence and how far do I go?
Leni and Hitler

- Berlin Sportspalast
- Wilhelmshaven
  - ‘so normal’
  - Liked an uninhibited woman
  - ‘the pass’
- SOS Iceberg
- Soon part of the inner circle
Part (b) style questions:

• **2010:**
  ‘People are swept along by events. Some individuals use events to advantage.’
  How accurate is this statement in relation to the personality you have studied?

• **2009:**
  ‘Individuals are products of their times.’
  How accurate is this statement in relation to the personality you have studied?

• **2008:**
  ‘History is about winners.’
  How accurate is this statement in relation to the personality you have studied?
Answering the second question

Timing
15 marks/27 mins

Establish the argument

THE RESPONSE

Acknowledge
The quotation

Specific factual detail

The views of historians
Her memoirs

- Riefenstahl recounts her life as the foremost film director of the Third Reich who directed films such as *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*.
- She also deals with her post-war life, and the stigma of her past that thwarted future productions.
- She accounts for her acclaimed career as a photographer, notably that of Sudan's Nuba tribe recounted in *The Last of the Nuba* and other publications.
- The book also includes memoirs of her underwater marine explorations and her photography which had been published as *Coral Gardens*.
‘I held total artistic and financial control. It was only after Hitler told me I could produce *Triumph of the Will* and later *Olympia*, without fear of interference from the Nazi Party and the government agencies, that I agreed to do so. Unless I had been given this full freedom to create, I would have never consented to make the films. Hitler esteemed me very greatly as an artist and so he wanted to avoid my refusal at any cost. It is only in this light that one can understand why I was not required to show one single scene of either film to Hitler or to Dr. Goebbels or to any other individual of the party or government before they were shown at their premier performances.’
Riefenstahl and Goebbels
‘Fascinating Fascism’ *New York Review of Books*  
(Feb 6, 1975)

www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/3dTexts/SontagFascinFascism75.htm

- ...if the photographs are examined carefully, in conjunction with the lengthy text written by Riefenstahl, it becomes clear that they are continuous with her Nazi work.

- ...her portrait of the Nuba goes further than her films in evoking one aspect of the fascist ideal: a society in which women are merely breeders and helpers, excluded from all ceremonial functions, and represent a threat to the integrity and strength of men.
Nazi art is both prurient and idealizing. A utopian aesthetics (physical perfection; identity as a biological given) implies an ideal eroticism: sexuality converted into the magnetism of leaders and the joy of followers. The fascist ideal is to transform sexual energy into a "spiritual" force...

A Nuba man's greatest desire is not union with a woman but to be a good wrestler, thereby affirming the principle of abstemiousness. The Nuba dance ceremonies are not sensual occasions but rather "festivals of chastity"—of containment of the life force.
It is hardly accurate to describe Riefenstahl's professional relationship to and intimacy with Hitler and Goebbels as "her acquaintance with the Nazi leadership." Riefenstahl was a close friend and companion of Hitler's well before 1932; she was a friend of Goebbels, too: no evidence supports Riefenstahl's persistent claim since the 1950s that Goebbels hated her, or even that he had the power to interfere with her work. Because of her unlimited personal access to Hitler, Riefenstahl was precisely the only German filmmaker who was not responsible to the Film Office (Reichsfilmkammer) of Goebbels's ministry of propaganda. Last, it is misleading to say that Riefenstahl was "tried twice, and acquitted twice" after the war. What happened is that she was briefly arrested by the Allies in 1945 and two of her houses (in Berlin and Munich) were seized. Examinations and court appearances started in 1948, continuing intermittently until 1952, when she was finally "de-Nazified" with the verdict: "No political activity in support of the Nazi regime which would warrant punishment." More important: whether or not Riefenstahl deserved a prison sentence, it was not her "acquaintance" with the Nazi leadership but her activities as a leading propagandist for the Third Reich that were at issue.
Die Macht der Bilder ("The Power of Images")
Feminist critique
Victory of Faith
Kronschi, Poland 1939
Exam essential

Part (a)

- DESCRIPTIVE
- NARRATIVE
- DETAIL
- NO HISTORIOGRAPHY.

- ANSWER THE QUESTION
### 19(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a detailed, ordered description of the life of the personality</td>
<td>9–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides relevant and accurate historical knowledge using a range of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate historical terms and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents an ordered description of the life of the personality</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides relevant and accurate historical knowledge using</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate historical terms and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a general description of the life of the personality with</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some relevant detail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides adequate and accurate historical knowledge incorporating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some historical terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a limited description of the life of the personality with</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple use of historical knowledge incorporating some historical terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents ONE or TWO relevant facts about the twentieth century</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exam essential

Part (b)

• ARGUMENT
• ASSESS
• EVALUATE
• HISTORIOGRAPHY?

• ASSESS QUOTE & QUESTION
### 19(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Makes a clear judgement about the statement in relation to the chosen personality, supported by detailed, relevant and accurate historical knowledge</td>
<td>13-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a sustained, logical and cohesive argument which effectively integrates the issues raised in the statement using a range of appropriate terms and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Makes a sound attempt at a judgement about the statement in relation to the chosen personality supported by detailed, relevant and accurate historical information</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a structured, logical argument which integrates the issues raised in the statement using appropriate historical terms and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Addresses the question with a relevant but largely narrative, descriptive response supported by adequate and largely accurate historical knowledge</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a structured response which refers to the issues raised in the statement (may be implied) incorporating some historical terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents a limited description of historical events related to the chosen personality</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicates using a descriptive narration which may refer to the statement incorporating some historical terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lists some historical events in the life/period of the chosen personality</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part (a)

• CONTENT
• DETAIL
• RELEVANCE
• TERMS
• SPELLING
• STRUCTURE

• Presents a detailed, well-structured description of the role played by the personality in national AND/OR international history.

• Provides relevant and accurate historical information using a range of appropriate terms and concepts.
Sample answer

- RIEFENSTAHL NOT LENI
- TERMS
- SPELLING
- HISTORIOGRAPHY
- STRUCTURE
- BIG PICTURE
- LINKS

- Makes a clear judgement about the accuracy of the statement in relationship to the chosen personality, supported by detailed, relevant and accurate historical information.

- Presents a sustained, logical and well-structured argument which effectively integrates the issues related in the statement.
What next?

• USE THE BOOK  • PAST QUESTIONS
Bottom line

PRACTICE
PRACTICE
PRACTICE
PRACTICE
PRACTICE
PRACTICE
Part (b) style questions:

No 1:

“Great people in history attract their critics as well as their admirers.”
To what extent does this statement accurately reflect your personality?

No 2:

“People shape the events of their time more than the events shape them.”
How accurate is this statement as it applies to the personality you have studied?

No 3:

“The importance of the role of the individual is often greatly exaggerated.”
How accurate is this statement as it applies to the personality you have studied?

No 4:

“History is all about winners.”
To what extent does this statement apply to the personality you have studied?

No 5:

“Historians have found it impossible to come to any sort of agreement.”
How far does this statement apply to the personality that you have studied?

No 6:

“Greatness and goodness do not always go hand in hand.”
In what ways could it be argued that this statement applies to the personality that you have studied?

No 7:

“The major figures of the past will always invariably do as much harm as good.”
To what extent does this statement apply to the personality that you have studied?
Just do it

START NOW

It is not too late

4 x 50 minutes per week = 3 hours per week

10 weeks x 4 responses =

40 PRACTICE ANSWERS