

Dunkirk And The Battle Of Britain

Question 2: Study Source A. Do you agree with this interpretation of Dunkirk? Use the source and your own knowledge from your studies to explain your answer.

The interpretation of Dunkirk depicted in Source A is accurate to a degree, although may contain some bias. An important fact to take into consideration is that the artist who painted that picture was not actually in Dunkirk at the time, it was painted from the descriptions of other people who were in Dunkirk at the time. Although it is not a secondary source as the artist was alive at the time, which makes it contemporary. Another factor that will affect the validity of the source is that it was painted by a government artist which instantly brings the word 'propaganda' to mind. Because of this, the painting will be glorified as keeping the morale of the British public at a high level was a vital government aim at this stage. This was imperative due to the German's considerably outnumbering the BEF in terms of weapons and equipment therefore the majority of the public needed to be strong willed and determined in order to overcome these odds. However, the contents of this painting are by no means entirely fictitious. It does show various aspects that were probably accurate, such as the numbers of men on the beaches, there were probably more or less that number of men there during the first few days of the evacuation. Also the destruction of the town of Dunkirk which can be seen in the background of the painting is accurate. However, elements of bias I managed to pick up on are; the lack of shelling that is occurring in and around the picture and the way the shells 'conveniently' land where there are no men. There would also probably have been more corpses on the beach. I can see only one image resembling a corpse, and I'm not even entirely sure that it is in fact that. There would also have probably been more panic amongst the soldiers, there is no sign of fighting for boats, soldiers can clearly be seen to be standing around casually in groups as if they were waiting for a bus! They also display no signs of fatigue. Another major detail that seems to be missing is abandoned equipment that was left on the beaches in order for soldiers to escape more quickly. Even the Minister of War himself admitted the large loss of equipment so this is a definite fact that the artist seemingly chose to ignore.

