

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY A ***(EXPLAINING THE*** ***MODERN WORLD)***

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/06 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Subject information update

We have amended the Study of the Historic Environment component of OCR GCSE History A (J410) to fix the site studied from June 2019 (Castles) and June 2020 (Urban Environments).

Following consultation with and feedback from teachers, we are changing the way the Study of the Historic Environment will be assessed on GCSE History A. At the moment, the site to be studied changes each year of the qualification. From now on, candidates will study either Kenilworth Castle or an urban environment (South Shields in 2019 and Spitalfields from 2020 onwards).

What this means is that teachers of the Castles option, who are already preparing candidates to be examined on Kenilworth Castle in 2019, will continue to prepare each cohort of candidates for an examination on Kenilworth Castle in all future examination series.

For teachers of the Urban Environments option, they should continue preparing candidates to be examined on South Shields in 2019. For the June 2020 examination, and in future series, teachers should prepare candidates for an examination on Spitalfields.

We hope these changes will make the Historic Environment component of the qualification more straightforward for teachers to plan and teach. The teachers' site packs for Kenilworth and South Shields are already available on the website here: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/gcse-history-a-explaining-the-modern-world-j410-from-2016/planning-and-teaching/> and a site pack for Spitalfields will be available in Spring 2019.

The OCR set site will be reviewed after three years and may be subject to change. Each OCR set site will remain on the specification for a minimum of three years, unless the review process identifies a necessary change. If an OCR set site is to be changed and replaced with a new set site, centres will be notified in September two years prior to the examination being sat.

If you have queries about any aspect of these changes, please contact the History Subject Advisors at history@ocr.org.uk

Paper J410/06 series overview

This was the first examination of the new Specification A Paper 1. The new paper was very different from what has gone before, with a longer time frame for International Relations and also a new section on Historical Controversies. There was also a slightly different focus to the Depth Studies, with the relationship between people and state being at the heart of this.

Section A overview

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this new challenge. The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions. The range and quality of responses was extremely impressive, particularly in the questions on the Historical Controversies.

Question 1

- 1 Outline the impact of the worldwide economic depression on international relations in Europe in the 1930s. [5]

The majority of candidates found this question accessible and were able to reach Levels 2 or 3, mostly at 3 or 4 marks. Candidates who provided a framing statement which correctly outlined the effects of the depression usually went on to score 4 or 5 marks. The framing statement need not be particularly sophisticated. For example 'overall, the worldwide depression caused international relations to get worse' would have been acceptable. The high scoring candidates mostly made some such comment and then supported this with a relevant example. The most common examples were the erection of international trade barriers which led to rivalry and tension; or the emergence of regimes such as the Nazis in Germany which then went on to disrupt international relations with aggressive policies such as rearmament or the remilitarisation of the Rhineland.

A significant number of candidates did not gain more than 3 marks because they didn't recognise that the question asked about the effects of the depression on international relations. The most common example of this type of answer was a response which described how the depression led to high unemployment in Germany (sometimes moving on to describe the emergence of the Nazis as a result). These responses were valid effects of the depression, but not outlining the effects of the depression on international relations.

One common misunderstanding was the inclusion of the Manchurian Crisis in many responses. Clearly this was not an example of worsening international relations in Europe.

Advice for Question 1

The key to this question is to construct a statement which effectively and correctly outlines the main trends or impacts asked about, and to support with one or two examples of this trend or impact.

Question 2

2 Explain why the USA got more involved in the war in Vietnam in the 1960s.

[10]

This question was generally tackled well and candidates scored highly, with a large proportion gaining Level 4 and Level 5 marks (7-10). However, in keeping with the introductory statement, many candidates achieved this by unexpected and in some cases slightly unorthodox routes.

The question was phrased specifically as why the USA got 'more' involved in Vietnam in the 1960s. It was anticipated that most candidates would focus on the situation in Vietnam in the 1960s and describe or explain the escalation in US involvement throughout that decade.

Some candidates did take this approach and were rewarded for explaining how the US was drawn in to Vietnam in the early 1960s to support the Diem regime. Another valid reason why the US got more involved was that the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese supporters used tactics which proved increasingly difficult to counter and as a result there was an escalation of ground troops and indeed of bombing.

Many candidates took an unexpected approach in that they explained the US involvement in more global terms as part of the wider context of the Cold War. Examiners saw this as a reasonable if unanticipated approach to the question and gave candidates credit. Typical approaches involved the Domino Theory and the US fear of Communism spreading through South Vietnam to Cambodia and Laos. Some candidates took an even wider approach, seeing the US involvement in Vietnam in the wider context of the Cold War as a whole and the policy of Containment in particular. This was also acceptable.

Advice for Question 2

Candidates tended to reach Levels 4 or 5 when two factors were clearly and distinctly separated and in each case candidates explained what was happening and how this led to increased US involvement. In short, where they identified an event which saw as a reason and explained how or why it caused US involvement. However, many responses simply produced a narrative of events and examiners sometimes found it difficult to see where factors were being identified or explained. Candidates should be advised to think in terms of identifying reasons or factors, describing those factors and then explaining specifically why those factors, as opposed to any others, led to increased involvement of the US in Vietnam.

Question 3

3 Study Interpretation A.

Do you think this interpretation is a fair comment on the policy of Appeasement? Use your knowledge and other interpretations of Appeasement to support your answer. [25]

The outstanding feature of responses to this question was the generally excellent level of knowledge of the historiography of the issue of Appeasement. The great majority of candidates were extremely well-informed about the various ideas and approaches which historians have brought to the subject. Teachers and candidates should be congratulated on the success with which they have got to grips with this extremely challenging concept.

The question produced a wide range of responses. Most candidates sensibly began their responses by explaining their understanding of Interpretation A. Most responses were able to make clear that they understood the main thrust of Interpretation A, that it was anti-Appeasement and critical of Chamberlain.

Once they had achieved this they usually had little difficulty in naming a school of thought or historian(s) which either agreed or disagreed and so conclude that the Interpretation was fair or not. However, many candidates opted to name several schools of thought in this fashion without developing their response by explaining which details of the arguments of the schools of thought would support or contradict the general premise of Interpretation A (that it was critical of Chamberlain and Appeasement). Such responses reached Level 3 and there was a significant proportion of the entry who reached this level. Responses that simply correctly named critical or supportive interpretations but did no more than this were marked at the bottom of Level 3. Responses which specified what particular interpretations were agreeing or disagreeing with in Interpretation A were credited higher in the level.

Another way to reach Level 3 was to base responses solely on candidates' own knowledge of the period. There were some examples of this approach and the use of knowledge was usually effective. However, it was more common for candidates to attempt to use other interpretations in the limited way described above, as well as their knowledge, to respond to the question. Such responses still received Level 3.

Candidates who did develop their responses to explain in detail what other interpretations or schools of thought argued as support for their argument were able to reach Level 4. Responses at Level 5 had to engage with the specific details of Interpretation A rather than the general premise of being critical of Appeasement. There were many excellent and imaginative approaches at this level. For example many candidates argued that the Orthodox view would not have supported the contention in Interpretation A that Chamberlain was a flawed character. They rightly pointed out that while the Orthodox view was critical of Appeasement generally, it was on the whole sympathetic to Chamberlain and applauded his motives.

Although most candidates show a good knowledge of the various interpretations of Appeasement, there were numerous candidates who simply recited a list of the various schools of thought and interpretations they had studied but did not relate this knowledge in any meaningful way to the question. Such responses were marked at Level 2 for the most part. Some candidates did not help themselves by referring to particular viewpoints as 'the first interpretation, the second interpretation etc'. Whilst this was presumably a reference to the textbook they had used it was often unclear to examiners exactly which view interpretation they were referring to. In some cases responses were so unclear that they were only given Level 1.

Advice for Question 3

The key advice to candidates is to make clear their understanding of Interpretation A and then make sure they explain the views of opposing or supporting interpretations in order to support their argument about whether they believe the argument(s) contained in Interpretation A to be fair or not. It is not necessary to include every single interpretation candidates have studied into this question and time is better spent on selecting and developing a smaller number of examples than in comprehensive coverage of all views. It is also worth taking time to clearly identify particular schools of thought, ideally by referring to the time period in which they emerged and developed.

Question 4

4 Study Interpretation B.

Explain why **not** all historians and commentators have agreed with this interpretation. Use other interpretations and your knowledge to support your answer. **[20]**

(✎) Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology **[5]**

As with Question 3, examiners commented on the impressive quality of candidates' knowledge of the historiography of the Cold War.

Many candidates took the sensible option, as they did with Question 3, to demonstrate their understanding of Interpretation B. Again, the majority of responses did so very clearly and effectively. The stronger responses tended to conclude this opening paragraph by then stating their intent to explain which aspects of the interpretation would then be challenged.

The strongest responses were able to explain how at least **two** different schools of thought **from different time periods** would have disagreed with Interpretation A, whilst also explaining the reasons why one of those schools disagreed. This proved very challenging and a relatively small number of candidates were able to reach Level 5.

By contrast, many candidates successfully reached Level 4 by correctly identifying two schools of thought and explaining what these schools of thought believed and how it disagreed with Interpretation B.

Similarly, many candidates were able to reach Level 3. This was usually by identifying several schools of thought but only properly explaining one of them to the required standard (two such explanations would have reached Level 4).

A substantial number of candidates were also able to reach Level 3 by explaining why some schools of thought believed what they did. At first sight such approaches might appear to be addressing the question but in fact this was not the case. For example, some candidates correctly pointed out that the US Orthodox Cold War historians would have disagreed with Interpretation B because of the influence of the Red Scare in the late 1940s. While this is a valid point, it merely explains why the Orthodox historians believed what they did. It does not explain why they would have disagreed with the specific views raised in Interpretation B (ie what they think which would have caused them to disagree with Interpretation B). In addition, this point could be raised in relation to any interpretation of the Cold War. Thus, in order to move beyond Level 3 candidates need to explain how particular interpretations would disagree, as a higher priority than why.

As with Question 3, many candidates who had clearly taken great pains to make sure they knew the various interpretations of the period sometimes struggle to manage their knowledge and use it effectively. Some responses simply listed, often in accurate detail, the various interpretations but these were not related to the question. Most responses of this sort reached Level 2. However, as with Question 3 some responses were so unclear about which interpretations they were referring to that they were only given Level 1.

Another notable type of response was where candidates attempted to set out their own critique of the view rather than addressing the question of why other historians would have disagreed. Such responses were generally given Level 1 as they did not address the question.

Advice for Question 4

As with Question 3, candidates should make clear their understanding of Interpretation B. As with Question 3, it is not necessary to include every single interpretation candidates have studied into this question and time is better spent on selecting and developing a smaller number of examples than in comprehensive coverage of all views. Candidates should select a small number of examples of interpretations which disagree and explain how they disagree (ie what aspects of the topic they disagree with Interpretation B about). Once they achieved this securely, they can then explain why particular schools of thought held these opposing views.

Section B overview

This section was generally tackled well with candidates showing impressive in-depth knowledge of the period. The source question was tackled well and on the whole most candidates were able to produce a supported argument for Question 8. Centres should be congratulated on the performance of their candidates in this section.

Question 5

5 Describe **one** example of racial tension in the USA in the 1940s.

[2]

Most candidates were to give either one developed example or list two examples of issues relevant to the USA in the 1940s that caused racial tension. Some candidates made direct and specific reference to issues of the 1940s - with good examples seen around Japanese internment and the Detroit race riots - but examples relevant to, if not directly 'set' in, the 1940s were also credited. Some candidates raised material that was clearly set in another decade (for example Sacco and Vanzetti) or outside of the specification completely (such as Rosa Parks) and these were not credited.

Almost all candidates understood that Question 5 should be a very short answer.

Question 6

6 Explain how prohibition affected the USA in the 1920s.

[10]

This question proved quite challenging and resulted in a wide range of responses. The strongest responses were able to identify two valid impacts of prohibition and developed these with reasoning around why they affected the US. Typically this involved explaining showing how prohibition turned previously honest citizens into criminals or how prohibition led to crime and corruption among civil government and law officials. These responses were given Level 4 or 5 depending on how many explained examples were used.

Many candidates succeeded in identifying effects of prohibition but only in general terms. While they were able to list effects such as rising crime, they were unable to explain how prohibition led to such effects. Responses of this kind usually reached Level 3.

Many responses simply listed events, or described them in varying degrees of detail without addressing how or why these were effects of prohibition. Responses of this kind usually reached Level 2.

There were issues with candidates who misunderstood the question and instead offered responses that merely considered reasons why prohibition was introduced.

Advice for Question 6

Candidates should be advised that Question 2 and Question 6 are structured and marked in similar ways and so they should adopt the same type of approach. In this question candidates tended to reach Levels 4 or 5 when they took two events and explained how prohibition caused these developments. Alternatively they could have identified two types of effects (e.g. political, social) and explained how prohibition led to these effects. Where candidates simply produced a narrative of events examiners found it difficult to see where reasons were being identified or explained. Candidates should be advised to think in terms of identifying events which resulted from prohibition and explaining how or identifying types of effects and explaining how prohibition caused these.

Question 7

- 7 Study Sources A and B. Is one source more reliable than the other as evidence about the impact of the Great Depression? **[10]**

Most candidates offered quite developed responses to Question 7, though many did not grasp the focus on reliability and instead offered answers based around the usefulness of the sources (for example that they showed the wealthy were less affected by the Depression) and these answers were credited in Level 1. Some candidates offered only stock commentary about reliability and these two were credited in Level 1.

Many candidates reached Level 2 and were usually focused on the provenance or typicality of the source. Some were correctly able to identify ways in which the sources might be unreliable in a general sense. This was done most commonly with Source A where many candidates suggested that A might not be reliable evidence because of the fact that it was a representation from the leader of the American communist party and he would have had a political agenda. Too many of these responses focused on reliability in this general sense, rather than on the value of the sources as evidence about the impact of the Depression.

Candidates who took this approach usually reached Level 3 by developing the issues concerning the provenance of Source A to suggest that because of his beliefs he was exaggerating the impact of the Depression on workers through use of emotive language. Other candidates argued the source was reliable and used their own knowledge to point out that the picture painted in A was representative of the experience of many workers. Candidates at Level 3 took similar approaches with Source B. They pointed out that the impression given in Source B was not a typical picture of the experience of the majority of Americans in the Depression and so regarded it as unreliable as evidence about this. A small number pointed out that not all Americans did suffer during the Depression and so it could be seen as reliable evidence of the experience of those Americans.

Advice for Question 7

Candidates should be advised a reliability question does not necessarily mean that the sources are unreliable. Candidates need to be encouraged to think about the very concept of reliability. They were given credit at Level 2 for generalised conceptions of reliability. However, a source can only really be truly reliable or unreliable as evidence about something. Thus, to reach the higher marks candidates need to go beyond considerations of simple reliability and address the question of whether the sources are reliable or not about particular issues. In the case of this question the most obvious was the impact of the Depression on the lives of Americans.

Question 8*

8* 'The New Deal's achievements were greater than its failings.' How far do you agree with this statement? **[18]**

Most candidates found this question accessible and were able to construct a range of responses although more candidates than expected struggled to put together a series of points in response to the question.

Many candidates were able to identify aspects of the New Deal's successes (and/or failings) but provided no further detail or explanation and so reached Level 2. The majority of these responses took the form of lengthy descriptions of Roosevelt's actions but with no consideration of whether particular actions succeeded or failed.

A substantial number of candidates were, however, able to put together a case either that the New Deal was a success or a failure. This usually took the form of describing particular measures, explaining their impacts and arguing that such measures were successes or otherwise. Candidates who successfully did this for at least one event were able to reach Level 3.

Fewer candidates were able to develop a balanced argument, but those who did usually reached Level 4 with some candidates reaching Level 5. There was an interesting range of approaches. Some candidates took a measure by measure approach and evaluated the success or otherwise of these measures. Other candidates looked at the impact of the New Deal on particular groups in US society. Either approach was valid but on the whole the latter approach tended to result in better organised responses.

Advice for Question 8

Candidates should be encouraged to take time to think through and plan their response. They should certainly engage with the key factor in the statement, in this case the New Deal, and establish criteria for measuring success or failure. Unemployment, poverty, discrimination, industrial production, wages, living conditions and rights at work could all have been used as ways to measure the impact of the New Deal.

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