Examiners’ report

HISTORY B
(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411
For first teaching in 2016

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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.
Paper J411/11 series overview

This was the first year of the new 9-1 specification and centres should be congratulated for their work in supporting candidates. It was clear from the majority of answers that candidates had been well prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately especially on the essay-style questions.

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The most effective approach to improving candidate performance is to consider the types of questions historians ask about important events and to encourage candidates how to plan and write focused arguments which address the question and support the arguments being made as clearly as possible.
Section A overview

It was clear to examiners that the majority of candidates had a good depth of knowledge on this thematic study. Centres have clearly worked hard to deliver this new specification and should be congratulated on their efforts. We would note that some candidates did refer to improvements in surgery on Question 4 about Public health – both surgery and the development of Penicillin are not topics on this new specification.

Question 1(a)

1 (a) Give one example of what medieval people thought caused the Black Death.[1]

Nearly every candidate wrote either Miasma/God/planets and therefore scored the available mark on this question.

Question 1(b)

(b) Name one response of the government to the gin craze in the period 1660–1751.[1]

This question did need a specific example such as ‘The Gin Act’ or ‘Transportation for third offence’. Answers that were in general terms such as ‘They put the price up’ or ‘They banned it’ were not credited.

Question 1(c)

(c) Name one individual who had a positive impact on public health in the nineteenth century.[1]

John Snow, Joseph Bazalgette (spelt in a number of ways) and Edwin Chadwick were the most popular answers here, all of which were creditable.

Advice for Question 1

Question 1 is set as a ‘gateway’ question in to this paper and the vast majority of candidates scored at least 2 marks and many 3 marks. There is no need to write a full sentence in a response: simply naming Miasma (1a) or John Snow (1c) is enough to score the relevant mark.
Question 2

2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses people’s lifestyles since 1900. Support your summary with examples. [9]

Marks were credited for clear (and valid) points about changes that helped/hindered people’s lifestyles. To achieve Levels 2 and 3, candidates needed to give a summary based on a second order concept such as continuity/change/diversity/significance with two valid supporting example (Level 2) or three valid examples (Level 3).

The candidates who scored most highly at Level 2 and Level 3 were able to remain tightly focused on the issue of ‘lifestyles’ as identified in the question. Stronger candidates were able to organise their responses around a second order concept, most frequently change and causation/consequence. They used detail linked to things such as food, technology, inactivity, smoking and air quality to support their answers.

Exemplar 1

Since the beginning of the 1900’s people’s lifestyles have improved massively. Firstly, housing became a lot more comfortable. In the industrial revolution, back to back housing and slum housing were demolished; which has caused better housing (made of stone and brick) to be built. Modern day (1900 onwards) housing is also heated by gas and heating, which helps to prevent damp and therefore some diseases. Food...
Question 3

3 Why were the authorities slow in reforming public health in Industrial Britain? Explain your answer. [10]

This is an explanation question. It is important that candidates are guided to ensure that each part of the explanation in their answers is linked to give a clear, coherent and sustained response to the question – it needs more than just a list of points. One way to help candidates is to set out each part of the explanation in separate paragraphs. There is, on this question, no need for a conclusion. What is needed is a clear structure and precise knowledge.

On this question, it was the case that many candidates were able to fully explain one or more reasons why the authorities were slow to act, and these were credited at Level 2 and upwards. Most commonly, these were: why a laissez-faire attitude hindered progress; lack of understanding about causes of disease; rate-payers being reluctant to pay; the poor conditions not affecting law-makers (this was often linked to The ‘Great Stink’ to show how action was very swiftly taken once they themselves were directly affected); and the working class not having the vote. They supported these reasons with evidence and explanation of how/when/where it had stopped authorities from acting.

Advice for Question 3

The key to this question is supporting identified points with explanation: each point and explanation mostly commonly done in a separate paragraph.
Exemplar 2

People in Industrial Britain at first benefitted in a laissez-faire government, when the national government didn’t intervene in Public Health issues, leaving it to people locally. This remained in effect for the first half of the 19th century. Because of this, public health suffered as no improvements were being made, allowing outbreaks such as Cholera to spread. It was only when Chadwick offered his report that the government had to take action with the Public Health Act 1848.

Another reason why the authorities were slow was because it was unclear what actually caused disease. Ideas such as punishment from God and measles had been tossed around since the medieval times. These beliefs were still influential in the Industrial era. It wasn’t until the latter half of the century that John Snow and Louis Pasteur found the causes of disease; but even then they were ignored until the 1880s, meaning the more lives were needlessly lost.

The lack of votes voting in the working-class also prevented reform in the first half of the century. The laissez-faire style of government was about because only wealthy male landowners could vote, so MPs were guaranteed to stay in Parliament. When workers got the vote in 1866, the late 1860s, though, MPs had to listen to their demands. As the following reforms were more effective, it is safe to say that if workers had the vote earlier, public health would have improved sooner.
The answer starts by mentioning Laissez-faire, as underlined which is Level 1. The wavy line is then used to show the explanation - not their role to provide public health which is the explanation for Laissez-faire so it is now credited at Level 2. This response is rewarded at Level 4 as it explains how money then raising tax was a reason for slow progress (because this reason is explained it is Level 4 and not Level 3). Finally, the health of the poor was not an issue for the rich is explained so it overall this answer was credited Level 5/10 marks.

Question 4

4* ‘The creation of the NHS was the most significant improvement in public health in the twentieth century.’ How far do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Question 4 was the more popular of the two choices. The vast majority of candidates were able to identify that the NHS brought a free healthcare system to the country and scored at least at Level 1. Better candidates went on to develop this by comparing the NHS to what was in place before; relating to its impact on life expectancy; or explaining the range of service that the NHS offers.

There were some irrelevant answers about the NHS’ role in the AIDS epidemic, which should have been attributed to the role of government more generally rather than the NHS specifically. It was also apparent that some candidates or centres were too reliant on the old Medicine course and tried to describe advances in medicine in this period, which could not be rewarded in a question about public health.

Most candidates went on to identifying other improvements in public health since 1900, such as changes in housing and slum clearance; the Clean Air Act; the Liberal Welfare Reforms; and AIDS and anti-smoking awareness campaigns. The very best responses had a ‘clinching argument’ and provided a level of analysis beyond a summary in their conclusion.
**Question 5**

5* How far do you agree that living conditions in towns during the Early Modern period (1500–1750) were no better than during the Middle Ages? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

This was the least popular option of Questions 4 and 5. Centres need to note that both periods need to be covered on these types of questions in order to access the highest levels. For example, a response which gives details of poor living conditions in the Early Modern period but then also discusses improvements that were made in that period would not be considered to have examined both sides of the debate.

Some candidates were able to provide strong responses to this by drawing upon precise contextual knowledge; for example, by describing different aspects of living conditions in towns such as how water was obtained from water sellers or conduits; what food was eaten and hazards associated with this; pollution from butchers and other industries; the use of cesspits, latrines and how these might pollute the water supply despite the gongfermers. They then provided a description of improvements or otherwise in the Early Modern period, for example new foods from trade which enriched the diets of the rich (but rotted teeth!); the improvements made by many towns by 1750 such as lighting and paving; and the supply of piped water to some people’s homes. Alternatively, they emphasised the continued problems such as overcrowded housing, animals in the streets and smoke in the air.

However, a large proportion of candidates strayed into general (and often inaccurate) assertions, such as medieval people not having toilets and all throwing waste out into the streets. There were also lots of candidates who struggled to move to the higher levels because they described medieval conditions but then simply asserted ‘and this stayed the same in Early Modern period’ at the end of their point, with no further development. On the whole, weaker answers were characterised by very vague and unspecific descriptions.

**Advice for Questions 4 and 5**

For these longer-style questions, examiners are looking for a judgement on the given issue that directly addresses the question in a clear, sustained and that is well supported. It is definitely a feature of stronger candidates that there is a clear ‘direction of travel’ from the beginning – that they know their judgement before they start to write. Centres should encourage candidates to start with a clear statement of the overall judgement and then this should be continued with well substantiated paragraphs.

For the top levels of marks, reasons for both agreeing and disagreeing are covered however there is not the expectation that both sides need to be covered equally. Three supported points on one side, against one of the other side is as creditable as two supported points on each side. The final paragraph should clearly drive home the strongest reason for the judgement.

Centres should practise these longer-style essay questions with their candidates ensuring that each point is supported with at least one example with a clear reason for their judgement.
Section B

Section B was well done by many candidates, in particular Question 6. The essay questions saw a strong range of knowledge deployed, especially on Question 9.

Question 6(a)

6 (a) In Interpretation A the artist portrays early Norman castles as a means of control. Identify and explain one way in which he does this. [3]

This question is again meant as a gateway in to the topic and should be seen in the same light as Question 1.

Candidates are being asked In Interpretation A the artist portrays early Norman castles as a means of control. Identify and explain one way in which he does this. Please note that it is only necessary to identify and explain one way as stated in the question. Marks were credited as follows:

- 1 mark is for correct identification of a feature in the interpretation that relates to the question.
- For the second 2 marks, the candidate must either: pick out a specific feature in the image and develop the explanation by making two points about it;
- or give two examples relating to a more general feature.

Below is an example of a 3 mark answer.

Exemplar 3

[Handwritten answer]

The artist points the tower on the moat at the highest point in the wall. This shows how oppressive the Norman Castles were to an English villages as they seem to tower over them. In real life, the moat were three or a large height to prevent attackers from pillaging the towers, thus preserving the building and their wealth.]
Question 6(b)

(b) If you were asked to do further research on one aspect of Interpretation A, what would you choose to investigate? Explain how this would help us to analyse and understand the first motte and bailey castles built by the Normans.

Candidates responded well and with enthusiasm to this new kind of question and seemed to have been well prepared for it. Where candidates did not advance beyond Level 1 it was typically because they did not frame an enquiry around a historical concept, but merely wanted to find out more about the people or objects within the image – they were seeing it as a real scene. Further, some candidates explained what the answer to the question would be but this is not rewardable.

Higher level responses were able to think historically, framing wider enquiry questions around causation, diversity, change or impact. The most common one was centred on the purpose of castles and why they were built. If candidates were able to indicate how it would help further historians’ understanding, they moved into Level 2.

At the top level, candidates were able to use Interpretation A as part of their enquiry, most typically comparing the impression given by A of castles as a means of control, to finding out whether all castles were used for control, or whether some were built as status symbols or homes, and whether this changed over time.

Exemplar 4

If I were to do further research on this interpretation, I would choose to find out the purpose for the castles. We know they were defensive structures to deter any enemies that would occur in Norman England and were used to intimidate and oppressed the English who lived and worked around this castle. Or if the castle was built by a wealthy nobleman, how many taxes would have come through land and wealth for building and maintaining the castle. This would be very controversial, but the key to the interpretation for Norman castles would allow us to find information on whether certain castles were built in certain places and if these castles had any military purpose which seems like the primary suggestions.
In short, B was positive about the role of women in Anglo Saxon society, arguing that they had lots of rights and freedoms which were ended with the Norman Conquest. C, meanwhile, claimed that these ideas have been discredited and are just ‘a myth’. However, a large minority of candidates thought that Interpretation C was also arguing the same thing as B. This led to confusion and a low mark.

However, most candidates were able to point out how each portrayed the role of women differently and achieved Level 2, or Level 3 where supported. Stronger candidates achieved Level 4 by explaining the difference in terms of the purpose of one or both interpretations. In the case of B, the author was trying to justify the character she created for her book, and with C, Morris was trying to debunk the popular view/dispel the myth of the Anglo Saxons/Normans would be credited at Level 4.

Candidates need to ensure that they are interpretation-specific when discussing purpose, audience, context, etc. in these questions. If their comment can apply to any similar source then the likelihood is it won’t be rewarded at a high level. For example, comments such as ‘Morris is an academic historian so his purpose is to educate’ or ‘Randolph writes fiction so her purpose is to entertain’ are usually rewarded at Level 1 only.

This candidate reaches Level 4 where there is a valid purpose of Interpretation B, ie positive view of women’s freedoms to promote a feminist view in reader base – developed with comments on creating a world for the reader.
Exemplar 5

In Source B, the writer has a good time on the position of women in Anglo-Saxon society. She wonders if her characters have not got enough freedom, which implies that her writer believes that women were unable to express their rights due to "broader laws".

The writer in C completely overlooks this view by giving a negative interpretation of women, describing them as "bad" and after normal rules. This implies that the writer thinks that women were treated badly in this period. Source C focuses on the fictional Anglo-Saxon women and how they are affected by inequality. Source C writes about Anglo-Saxon women in general.

The reasons why these sources differ is due to the writers' different ambitions. As a writer, Randolf should be able to write about better equality for women, in order to promote a feminist view in her reality. As a fiction writer, many of the facts she writes may be stretched to enhance her writing for the reader. This also means...
Question 8*

8* In her blog *The death of Edward the Confessor and the conflicting claims to the English Crown*, Dr Jessica Nelson argues that ‘Edward himself should shoulder some of the blame for the succession crisis.’ How far do you agree with this view? [20]

Question 8 was the least popular choice of the two essay questions but still answered by a large number of candidates. Candidates knew the narrative of the succession crisis fairly well and most were able to direct their knowledge at the question, which was pleasing to see. Much was made of Edward’s liberal use of promises of the throne, his Norman links causing confusion, and his lack of heir. On the other side of the debate, candidates were able to point out that claimants such as Hardrada were beyond his control, and/or that William’s or Harold’s claims were not legitimate.

Weaker answers repeated the narrative but were unable to successfully link it to the question of whether or not Edward was to blame. There were some but not many clinching arguments in this question, but this only stopped access to the top mark.
Question 9*

According to historian David Howarth in his book *1066 the Year of the Conquest*, ‘It took William five years of ruthless oppression to bring the country under his power’. How far do you agree with this view?

On the whole this question was answered as well as Question 8, if not better. There were some full mark responses where candidates answered the question and finished with a clinching argument, often re-writing the question to provide their own take on the topic.

Candidates skilfully deployed evidence related to the Exeter rebellion; the Harrying of the North; the response to the Ely rebellion; the use of castles; and the treatment of rebels such as Edgar, Gytha, Edwin and Morcar to argue for and against William’s use of ‘brutal oppression’ in taking control of the country.

Other candidates took a slightly different approach and debated whether or not William had the country under his control within or before five years, or whether it took him longer, which was valid and also rewarded.

There were some excellent clinching arguments as described above to this question. For example, some candidates challenged the idea of ‘five years’ of ‘brutal oppression’ and argued, referring back to their evidence, that William had started off relatively patient and lenient (for the 11th century), and only turned to brutality when forced to do so.

Advice for Questions 8 and 9

These questions should be seen alongside the advice given for Questions 4 and 5. Examiners are looking for a judgement on the given issue that directly addresses the question in a clear, sustained and that is well supported. It is definitely a feature of stronger candidates that there is a clear ‘direction of travel’ from the beginning – that they know their judgement before they start to write. Centres should encourage candidates to start with a clear statement of the overall judgement and then this should be continued with well substantiated paragraphs.

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The very best answers will really tackle the interpretation and almost look to provide their own interpretation if that is where the argument has taken them. They are therefore able to end their answers with a conclusion that either agrees or disagrees with the interpretation or to rephrase the interpretation to what they can justify is a better one. All three approaches are equally valid.

Centres should practise these longer-style essay questions with their candidates using the guidance above to help candidates achieve the higher levels.
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