

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Y314/01 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.

## Paper Y314/01 series overview

Y314 is one of twenty one units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an Interpretation option on a named in-depth topic and two essays. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in-depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the interpretation. In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period, explaining similarities and differences between the events they are discussing in order to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons made may be either between periods within the topic or between regions. The strongest answers will test an hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

### *Overview of candidate performance*

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question
- were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words
- were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both Interpretations using contextual knowledge
- in answering the essay questions, covered the whole period in a balanced way
- adopted a thematic approach
- made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic
- explained the links and comparisons
- supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples
- reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.

Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:

- showed a limited understanding of one or both of the interpretations
- did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation
- did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation
- in answering the essay, adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach
- did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph
- failed to cover the whole period
- did not focus on the precise wording of the question
- made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

## Section A

### Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation for the lack of national feeling among the Southern states in the period between 1867 and 1870. **[30]**

Both passages were accessible and were well understood by candidates, although some were confused over the timings and whether the war with France had already happened in 1867. There were also those that referred to Bismarck's Kulturkampf as if it were in the past instead of the future. However, the key discriminator between a strong answer and a weaker one was the ability to evaluate what the passages were arguing using own knowledge rather than just explaining their content. The best answers were able to pick up and evaluate the range of arguments in each passage while weaker ones often only identified Catholic fear in passage A and fear of Bismarck in passage B. There was also a tendency to describe events at length that were not mentioned in a passage as if the historian was unaware of them. It is generally more effective to use knowledge to evaluate what is discussed in the passages rather than describe other events that seem vaguely relevant. Strong answers were able to use their knowledge of the confessional divide in Germany to good effect and to point out that many of the southern states had sided with Austria in the 1866 war. Some argued that the more agricultural economies in the south were increasingly losing out to an industrialising Prussia which was referred to in passage B. There was quite an even split between those who found A or B to be the more convincing and a few candidates pointed out that in many ways their views were complimentary.

## Section B

### Question 2\*

2\* To what extent did German nationalism lack popular appeal in the period from 1789 to 1919? [25]

There were strong answers that could identify changes in support for German nationalism over time and account for its increasing or decreasing popularity. They were able to focus on major events across the period such as 1813, 1848, 1871 and 1914 and identify what evidence there was for the popular appeal for nationalism in its different forms. Some took a thematic approach using themes such as political and cultural nationalism to good effect while others looked at different social groups over the whole period. Many effectively argued that nationalism only had mass appeal at times of war and was limited throughout the period by arguments over Klein or Gross and associated with Prussian domination and then challenged by the rise in socialism. Some responses showed a lack of synthesis based around popular appeal with different social classes frequently appearing as lists. A few candidates were convinced that the socialist party was a supporter of German nationalism and focused on its rise as an example of nationalism's increasing popularity. A noticeable feature was to cover much before 1871 but far less afterwards. Relatively few engaged with the developments after 1890 and indeed with the First World War. This created imbalance and hindered effective synthesis over the period.

### Question 3\*

3\* How far was the development of German nationalism in the period from 1789 to 1919 dependent upon economic forces? [25]

The stronger candidates were able to discuss the part played by economic forces effectively, especially the Zollverein early on and then industrialisation in the later period, and link them to the development of German nationalism. The range of examples from across the period was generally good and better answers showed the links between industrialisation and military success or militarism (army reforms, navy etc.). There were also links made to individuals such as Bismarck and Wilhelm II and the economic forces that helped them. Economic forces were effectively compared to other factors such as social and cultural forces, and many good answers argued that political and military factors dominated overall. However many answers tended to list the factors and failed to establish a sense of relative importance over time. Some knew little about the economy and tended to generalise.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* 'Warfare divided Germany more than it united it.' How far do you agree with this view of the period from 1789 to 1919? [25]

There were a number of excellent answers that ranged across the whole period showing that wars both divided and united Germany in equal measure. Some used themes such as political, cultural, linguistic, confessional and regional (particularism was often handled well) as well as economic and social (classes, North-South differences). The First World War was often used effectively to show how unity in 1914 had disappeared by the end of the war but in some ways was resurrected by the common hatred for the Versailles diktat. Many good answers also argued that German speakers were often separated from the German state by wars such as in 1866 with Austria and the settlement of 1918. However there was a tendency to approach each war in turn chronologically among the weaker candidates and few attempts to make links across the period. There were also a few who over focused on the wars of 1870/1 and 1914 which led to imbalance, and even those who ranged across the whole period often overlooked 1866 which saw the end of the hopes for a Grossdeutsch solution. Unfortunately a significant number of candidates also misread the question and assessed the role of warfare against other factors in dividing or uniting Germany in this period.

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