

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Y316/01 Summer 2018 series**

Version 1

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper Y316/01 series overview .....	4
Section A.....	5
Question 1 .....	5
Section B.....	6
Question 2* .....	6
Question 3* .....	6
Question 4* .....	7
Erratum notice .....	7

## 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 Y316/01 series overview

Y316 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 of why there was opposition to the creation of the Union in 1800.

[30]

Stronger candidates were very knowledgeable about the opposition to the Union in 1800 and effectively used this to evaluate the passages. They were well versed in the desire of the Protestant ascendancy to retain their position of dominance and fears about what rule directly from Westminster might mean, especially if accompanied by Catholic emancipation. Some of the best answers pointed out that both passages were convincing to an extent and offered complimentary views rather than opposing ones. However some misunderstood the content of the passages themselves and struggled to comprehend their main arguments. Weaker responses described Wolfe Tone's rising in 1798 with few links to the passages, while others confused the views of the Protestant Ascendancy with those of the Catholic majority who had been promised Catholic emancipation. Some weaker responses chose to draw material from cultural nationalism much later in the period to make comments about anti British feeling.

**Please note an erratum notice was issued for this question. You can view this at the end of the report.**

## Section B

### Question 2\*

- 2\* 'Parnell was by far the most successful leader of constitutional nationalism in the period from 1798 to 1921.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was by far the most popular essay question and the best answers were able to focus on how success could be judged and often adopted themes such as level of support and relationship with the British government to good effect. There was an even split between Parnell and O'Connell as the most effective leader but some also credited Redmond for getting the Liberals to pass Home Rule. Assessment of Parnell in particular was very impressive in some cases and a sophisticated understanding was shown about the achievements of the leaders within the context of the period they worked in. Some sympathy was shown to Parnell for the tragic end to his career and to Redmond for the timing of the outbreak of the First World War, although there was an awareness of poor decision making in both instances. However many essays just focused on Parnell and O'Connell, and revolutionary nationalists such as de Valera and Collins also made unwelcome appearances. Often coverage of the 1914-21 period was thin or subsumed within coverage of revolutionary nationalism. Even some of the better candidates were tempted into separate coverage of the leaders in chronological paragraphs with perhaps a brief attempt to compare them in the conclusion.

### Question 3\*

- 3\* To what extent were the Whig and Liberal parties successful in helping bring stability to the Union from 1800 to 1921? [25]

There were some excellent answers which focused effectively on the Whig and Liberal policies over the period, but some of these were inclined to underplay the role of the Liberal and coalition governments after 1914. Many adopted thematic approaches around political, economic and religious issues to good effect and others looked at the mixture between conciliation and coercion. Strong answers gave credit especially to the Gladstonian Liberals for tackling economic and religious issues in Ireland in an attempt to pacify the province, while also being critical of Lord John Russell and his soup kitchens during the famine crisis. However there was a tendency to outline the policies themselves rather than explicitly link them to stability or the reverse. Weaker responses drifted into a comparison with the Conservatives and Unionists.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* 'Agrarian under-development was the major economic influence on the development of Irish Nationalism from 1791 to 1921.' How far do you agree? [25]

Stronger responses reached a clear judgement on the role of agrarian under-development on Irish nationalism and were able to show that after Wyndham's Act of 1903 the problem had largely been solved so the economic disparity between North and South came more to the fore. There were several occasions of responses that only addressed the famine and various Land Acts and this led to an over focus on the 1845-1903 period. In addition some failed to link their knowledge on the Irish economy in this period to the developments in Irish nationalism whilst few misread the question as a comparison between economic and other factors such as political and religious.

## Erratum notice

Turn to **page 2, Passage A** of the question paper and look at the **second paragraph, line 6**.

Cross out the words 'the Attorney-General'.

The first part of the sentence should now read:

'As Sir John Foster, one of the major parliamentary opponents of union argued... '

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