

**GCSE (9–1)**

*Examiners' report*

**HISTORY B**  
**(SCHOOLS HISTORY**  
**PROJECT)**

**J411**

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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 15 series overview

For the second year of the new 9-11 GCSE History (SHP) specification we were very pleased to see how the feedback offered last year has been acted on. The overall standard has risen with candidates tackling Questions 2 and 3 in particular with more clarity and better use of the Second Order Concepts needed to reach the higher levels. There are still areas where candidates, as a whole, can improve: in particular on Questions 6b and 7. With Question 6b, more thought is needed as to how they can frame an historical enquiry question from the interpretation given as opposed to asking a more generalised question about the period without referencing the material given,. On Question 7, candidates do need to think and explain more about the intended impact of the interpretations given - as opposed to statements that 'it is biased' which is not really sufficient. Overall, however, the quality of the extended written responses and the knowledge deployed as support is a credit to how centres have engaged with the specification.

## Section A overview

### Crime and Punishment, c.1250 to present

Crime and Punishment continues to be a very popular option. It seems apparent that more candidates are showing an understanding of the three themes of this thematic course – crime, law enforcement and punishments. It is vital that candidates do answer the questions (in any period (s)) with a focus on the theme identified in the question. Overall, the standard of answers on Questions 2 and 3 rose from last year as more candidates organised their answers around a second order concept. The quality of extended responses on Question 4 or 5 was also an improvement. This is because there was more development of the points being made.

#### Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Name **one** type of capital punishment used in the period 1250–1500. [1]

Valid responses included burning, hanging, beheading.

#### Question 1 (b)

- (b) Give **one** example of an organised crime in the period 1500–1750. [1]

Valid responses included smuggling, highway robbery, poaching, heresy and treason.

#### Question 1 (c)

- (c) Identify **one** example of a new crime since 1950. [1]

Valid responses included racial crime, car crime (compulsory seatbelts, drink driving, joyriding), cybercrime and illegal drugs.

## Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the nature of crime during the Medieval period (1250–1500). Support your summary with examples. [9]

This question demands more than a basic description of crime in the medieval period. To move beyond Level 1, it's important that candidates are clear about how to organise an analytical response in these types of questions. The organisation of the answer around a historical concept (such as change, continuity, causation, consequence, significance and diversity) is the driving force behind this question, as opposed to contextual knowledge alone. Where candidates answered with descriptions of types of crime generally then this was a Level 1.

Candidates who attained Levels 2 and 3 did so by organising their responses around a second order concept; causation/consequence and change over time were the two most frequent concepts rewarded. Many candidates provided two or more examples of the causes of crime in the period.

## Question 3

- 3 To what extent did the enforcement of law and order change in the Early Modern period (1500–1750)? Explain your answer. [10]

It was important that candidates did keep a clear focus on the question: some weaker answers did concentrate on the nature of crime in the period as opposed to law enforcement as demanded by the question. The better responses to this question did two things well. Firstly, they provided specific examples of law enforcement in the period and then went on to explain the extent of change or continuity. These answers provided a clear answer to the question and were rewarded at Level 4 (one well explained change/ continuity) or Level 5 (two well explained changes / continuities).

The most common examples of changes seen were the fact that more criminals dealt with by JPs and that the influence of manorial courts and church courts declined alongside the introduction of the Bow Street Runners towards the end of the period. Candidates were mainly very strong about examples of continuities too showing good contextual knowledge about the still no effective police force (personal freedom, cost), the use of the army to put down any protests, and the use of the hue and cry continued to be the principal way of catching criminals.

Level 3 answers and below were awarded for those candidates who wrote in general terms, or where the knowledge used was not specific enough to the period itself. It is worth stressing to candidates that they do need to develop strong knowledge and understanding of the themes (type of crime / law enforcement and punishments) specific to each period – it was clear on this question that a minority had confused the early modern with the industrial period because answers mentioned the 'introduction of the police force'.

## Question 4 and 5

These were generally well-answered questions and most candidates did try to produce a balanced argument. For clarity for centres, it is important that candidates understand the need to consider both periods where required: the consideration of only one period, such as the only explaining changes from 1500 to 1750 when the question demands 1250 – 1750 means that the answer cannot be awarded above Level 4 no matter how many accurate changes in punishments are accessed. For Levels 5 and 6 we need to see a degree of balance with both periods considered although it does not have to be equal. Level 6, for example, can be either two explained points on each side or three on one and one on the other. The key to reaching the top 2 levels is making sure there is a consideration of both periods / sides of the argument in the answer. Finally, candidates should always be encouraged to carefully check the wording of the question to make sure that everything they write is directly relevant to the question being asked.

## Question 4

- 4\* 'There was little change in the punishments used in the period 1250–1750.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Both Questions 4 and 5 proved equally popular. It is important when answering questions that are asking for a comparison between periods that both periods are considered. As said above, those answers that gave examples of the changes in punishment for 1500 – 1750 alone and did not consider the period 1250 – 15-00 could not score higher than Level 4. It was also the case that candidates needed to focus on specific changes or continuities in punishment and not just list out punishments used in these periods. Those answers that just described a range of punishments such as transportation or methods of execution often at length, about could not score higher than Level 1.

Higher level responses gave specific examples of the changes in punishments during the period such as arguing that the introduction of the bridewell was important alongside the increase in use of both the Bloody Code and the use of transportation to the Americas from the early 1600s onwards. It was also notable how many candidates were able to explain how there was little change in the punishments used across the two periods with examples of support being the continuation of punishments from medieval times such as fines, pillory, whipping and branding supported by the fact that prisons were little used and finally the continuing use of hanging as a punishment. The type of supported example that is credited at Level 3 and above is demonstrated in Exemplar 1 below:

## Exemplar 1

Another reason why I agree with this statement is because capital punishment was continued from the Medieval period. This could include hanging, being hung, drawn and quartered or being burned alive. For crimes such as treason or killing your husband if you were a woman. Even though the Blood Code was introduced this still involved Capital Punishment but there were ~~more~~ 200 crimes punishable by death instead. The Capital Punishment was also done in public which isn't a change from the Medieval period. This was done to be a deterrent for other people and to show them that justice had been served.

Certainly, examiners saw some very good deployment of knowledge, in particular about the latter period in these answers which led to many high marks on this question. The very best responses had a 'clinching argument' and provided a level of analysis beyond a summary in their conclusion (, e.g. *I think that there was actually more change than continuity. Even though some traditional punishments like the stocks continued, the beginning of a change in attitude is more significant in this period – both the use of a 'correction house' and the less frequent use of capital punishment marks the beginning of a belief that the purpose of a punishment was to change people's behaviour rather than to deter via harsh punishment.*)

## Question 5

- 5\* How far do you agree that governments have been the most important factor influencing crime rates since 1750? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Most candidates were able to reach at least Level 2 by identifying or describing government action in one or both periods. Some candidates at this level knew the names of new laws or initiatives such as the introduction of the Metropolitan Police Force were unable to develop their response by comparing to other factors.

However, many candidates were able to move beyond this by explaining how government action had led to a rise / fall in crime rates but also considered other reasons why there had been a rise / fall. Most commonly this was around the idea of new crime (such as drugs) and the work of reformers to change the nature of prison alongside the impact of industrialisation as below which is a good example of a well explained point that examiners would reward:

The very best responses had a 'clinching argument' and provided a level of analysis beyond a summary in their conclusion (, e.g. *I think that other factors had a much more significant impact than the government. There is no doubt there is a correlation between the introduction of the police and the fall in crime rates after 1850. However, the establishment of the police happened partly in response to the increasing crime anyway, which was still far higher in 1900 than it had been in 1750*).

## Section B

Candidates do seem to enjoy their study of this period with many very strong responses seen on both Questions 8 and 9 which reflected some really good practice. Question 8 was the more popular question but those who answered Question 9 often really knew about different explorers in the Elizabethan period which was very good to read. As with the other depth components, centres are advised to look at purpose on Question 7: saying 'It is a Catholic website so it is bound to be biased in favour of Mary' is not really sufficient to reach the top levels in the mark scheme – nor is 'he is a historian so he will be more accurate'. Answers which referred to the title of the book – and therefore suggest that the motive was to show how the spy-master had saved England – were much more lucid and likely to reach Level 4.

### Question 6 (a)

- 6 (a) In Interpretation A, the illustrator portrays how an Elizabethan noblewoman tried to impress guests. Identify and explain **one** way in which he does this. [3]

In general, this question was answered well. Candidates understood the interpretation that was being offered was putting forward and were able to use detail in the picture to develop their answer. It should be noted by centres that we are only looking for **one** feature of how / why it has helped the author create the impression. 3 separate points will only score one mark.

## 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 nature of Elizabethan society. [5]

Higher level responses were able to think historically, framing wider enquiry questions which were usually around diversity or causation. The most common one was centred on whether the actions of the noblewoman were typical. If candidates were able to indicate how it would help further historians' understanding, they moved into L2. At the top level, candidates were able to use Interpretation A as part of their enquiry, explicitly comparing the impression given by A

Too many candidates ended up in the lower levels for a mixture of reasons. Firstly, where candidates did not advance beyond L1 it was typically because they did not frame an enquiry around a historical concept, but merely wanted to find out more 'information' from the interpretation, e.g. 'I'd like to know more about the food ... I'd find out what they had to eat and drink'. Secondly, some candidates came up with an enquiry question, but one which was not linked to the interpretation in question at all. This seemed very 'rehearsed' and there was no attempt to link it to Interpretation A. Most frequently, this was things about the lives of women and men in Elizabethan society. The question asks for research on 'one aspect of Interpretation A', so these responses often did not even attain Level 1. Finally, some candidates did come up with a valid enquiry question, but not one which would 'help us to analyse the nature of Elizabethan society'. Most frequently these were questions about the lives of the poor which is not was being asked for in the question –*which needed to focus on an aspect of Interpretation A*. Finally, too many candidates used phrases such as 'I know from my own knowledge that....' which rather invalidated their enquiry question as they were providing the answer to the question.

Exemplar 2 does reach the top of Level 2 but it needed to have a more explicit reference to Interpretation A for Level 3:

## Exemplar 2

If I were to do further research into interpretation A, I would investigate how typical it would of been for an Elizabethan noble woman to want to impress guest in this way. I believe it would help us understand Elizabethan society as we would find out about Elizabethan nobility, ~~and~~ in general, and see how they chose to entertain and possibly impress their guests.

As a summary to help centres going forward: Candidates need to make sure their enquiry is linked to Interpretation A and centred around a historical concept such as change, consequence, causation, consequence, significance or diversity. They also need to make sure that they take into account the second part of the question, i.e. pick a question that will help further understanding of what has been cited in the question.

## Question 7

- 7 Interpretations B and C both focus on the threat which Mary Queen of Scots posed to Elizabeth. How far do they differ and what might explain any differences? [12]

As mentioned at the start of this report, this is the other question where candidates struggle to reach the highest level. Level 4 is reserved for answers that make a valid comparison of portrayals in B and C, with support from both sources and the difference are explained with specific reference to the purpose / audience of B and / or C. Too often attempts were made when looking at Interpretation B and its audience that were only creditable at a low level such as 'It is from a Catholic website so it will be positive about Mary as she was a Catholic'. This is not sophisticated enough to warrant the higher marks for explaining the purpose of the interpretation. A stronger example of developed purpose is below in Exemplar 3. This clearly explains the intentions of the author of the website:

### Exemplar 3

Interpretation B describes Mary as a "Martyr" and talks about her innocence in the assassination attempt against Elizabeth. The purpose of this article is to praise Mary's innocence. Also because it is from a Catholic website it also may want to praise the protestants wrong and make people see that Elizabeth was wrong to sign Mary's death warrant.

For Interpretation C, too often candidates made superficial points around 'He is trying to promote his book' which, again, is only really rewardable at Level 1. What was rewarded at Level 4 was more sophisticated such as 'His book is called 'Elizabeth's Spy-Master' so he is going to want to produce a case that Walsingham saved Elizabeth through his work'.

That said, most candidates did reach the middle levels on this question. For Level 2, candidates identified individual points of similarity and/or difference between the interpretations: B says Mary was innocent and C suggests she was guilty of treason. , At Level 3 we need to see direct use of one, or both, of the interpretation such as 'B says Mary protested she never plotted to hurt Elizabeth and C says Mary's letter clearly encouraged the conspirators'.

Question 7 is an area where centres should look to work with candidates to develop their skills to really think and explain why an interpretation has been offered about events of the past and (as a general rule) try to avoid use of the word 'bias'.

## Question 8

- 8\* According to the book *Travel: London*, Elizabethan theatres 'had the support of everyone from the Queen to the peasants.' How far do you agree with this view of people's attitudes towards theatres between 1580 and 1603? [20]

This question was attempted by all but a handful of candidates and we saw a full range of responses. It was clear that this had been a topic that centres had prepared many candidates well for with few poor quality answers. Most candidates came down on the side the theatres did have the support of most of the population. Reasons for this ranged from the fact there were numerous new theatres built during this period which is a reflection of their popularity – e.g. The Theatre, The Curtain, The Rose, The Swan and that plays on Bankside attracted thousands of Londoners and visitors. Further that the plays were popular with all social groups who loved the comedies, tragedies and histories and that they were popular with the poorer classes because 'groundlings' only paid a penny. Finally, that the audiences were often noisy and engaged with the actors which shows they were popular.

Nearly all candidates were also able to make the case against - the Puritan disapproval of plays and 'having fun' was the most common example cited alongside concerns by the authorities that crowds lead to a rise in crime such as pickpocketing. We did credit that Elizabeth enjoyed watching plays at court and some of her courtiers sponsored a theatre company to win her favour. Overall, this question saw many answers rewarded at the highest level for quality writing.:

This seems a very good question for centres to use with candidates to show the benefits of combining knowledge with structure to create a well-argued piece of historical writing.

## Question 9

- 9\* According to the website [www.elizabethan-era.org.uk](http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk), Elizabethan adventurers were motivated by the belief that 'new discoveries could bring untold riches.' How far do you agree with this view of the motives of adventurers between 1580 and 1603? [20]

This question was answered by very few candidates. Where it was done well, it was done very well with candidates able to focus on details about the motivations of Elizabethan adventurers. Many agreed that wealth motivated many, e.g. Francis Drake plundered many Spanish and Portuguese ships in the Caribbean and West Africa, bringing back vast quantities of treasure.

Stronger answers also considered that Walter Raleigh knew that gold and silver mines in Central and South America had brought the Spanish great wealth and he hoped that the discovery of gold in North America would do the same for England (and himself). The case against was often based around trade – for example that Ralph Fitch sailed to Syria in 1583 to establish trade links between England and the Mughal Empire and that James Lancaster sailed to the East Indies seeking opportunities for trade with spices, cotton, silk, jewels and perfumes from East Asia. Overall, as said, this question either produced very good or very weak responses which depended on the amount of contextual knowledge deployed by each candidate.

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