

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 17 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

This component on Migrants to Britain produced some very strong responses which showed detailed knowledge about the causes of migration as well as the different experiences between 1250 and the present day. Questions 2 and 3 were particularly well-answered as explained below. The longer essay-style questions saw more of a mixed response with some less able candidates not supporting their points with relevant information – a key skill tested by Questions 4 and 5.

Question 1 (a)

Migrants to Britain, c.1250 to present

- 1 (a) Give **one** example of a response to migrants in Medieval Britain. [1]

Valid responses included restrictions on where Jews could live, being property of the king, paying higher taxes or the Statute of Jewry 1275, forced conversion, accusations of blood libels, executions and mass-murder, forced to wear yellow badges, restricted from farming or buying land. Finally - Royal invitations extended to Italian Bankers and to Flemish weavers.

Question 1 (b)

- (b) Name **one** migrant group that came to Britain between 1750 and 1900. [1]

Valid responses included Irish, Gypsies, Jews, Chinese, Italians and Africans.

Question 1 (c)

- (c) Name **one** organisation set up in Britain in response to migrants since 1945. [1]

Valid responses included the Anti-Nazi League; the National Front; United Against Fascism; British National Party; Rock Against Racism and the Commission for Racial Equality.

Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the migrant communities in Medieval Britain. Support your summary with examples. **[9]**

This question demands more than a basic description of people's lives in the period 1750 - 1900. 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 most regularly on this question diversity) is the driving force behind this question, as opposed to contextual knowledge alone.

Candidates who attained Levels 2 and 3 did so by organising their responses around a second order concept. Many candidates provided two or more examples of analysis of people's health in the period which was rewarded at Level 3.

Question 3

- 3 Why did Protestants migrate to Britain between 1500 and 1750? Support your answer with examples. **[10]**

The better responses to this question did two things well. Firstly, they provided specific examples of groups that migrated to Britain and supported these with reasons why groups migrated. Many candidates were able to explain the impact of conflict in continental Europe and the relative peace in England from the middle of the sixteenth-century which led to the migration of French Huguenots and German migrants, including Palatines. Many candidates were able to make the link between the increase in Huguenot migration following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. Another common response was the public support for protestant refugees and government willingness to offer denizen status to some, e.g. Charles II 1681.

Level 3 answers were awarded for candidates who wrote in general terms, or where the knowledge used was not specific enough to the period itself such as migration occurred because Britain was a protestant country. That said, overall examiners were very impressed by the level of detail that was shown around this topic with many answers achieving the highest level for two well explained and supported examples.

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 only considering the importance of economic forces in the period 1500-1750 means that the answer cannot be awarded above Level 4 no matter how many accurate responses are accessed. The period 1750 – 1900 must also be considered to achieve the higher levels. 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 two levels is making sure there is a consideration of both 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* 'Since 1900 British governments have become more and more negative towards migrants.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

This was a very popular question and provided a wide range of responses. There were just as many candidates who agreed with the statement as disagreed which showed the question had worked well. Those who agreed most often considered the treatment of migrants during the wars with the treatment of 'enemy aliens'. The Aliens Act of 1905 was also well deployed as was the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Other popular support came from the 1971 Immigration Act which created work permits for specific time period and the laws passed between 1996 and 2007 which placed increasing restrictions on 'asylum seekers'.

The wars were also used for those who disagreed such as the welcome by governments of refugees from Europe during the World War and the 1947 Polish Resettlement Act which led to Poles staying and consideration of the wartime migrant experience was often done very well as below:

Exemplar 1

In WW1 Belgium refugees came to Britain and ~~over~~ German migrants were in Britain. The Belgium refugees had a positive experience in Britain, they fled from their country as it was invaded by Germans. The British government organised for the Belgium refugees

to come to Britain and many volunteer families let them stay in their homes. The German enemy aliens had a negative experience. $\frac{1}{3}$ of them were deported, $\frac{1}{3}$ were sent to internment camps and $\frac{1}{3}$ left alone. The government and the British population had a negative impact on them causing British people to attack German houses. The King also changed his name ~~from~~ to Windsor from his original German name. Overall, in WW1 the British government had a positive opinion on the 'non threatening migrants'.

Other examples for disagreeing included the 1948 Nationality Act which gave all Commonwealth citizens the right to hold British passports and enter Britain and the passing of the 1965 Race Relations Act and finally the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976. Weaker answers often strayed into the grounds for the UK voting for Brexit in 2016 with rather unsupported phrases such as 'the government wanted Brexit to remove migrants from the country' which was not either accurate or rewardable. It may be good advice to remind candidates that they are better off knowing the specification and keeping personal (political) views away from the exam paper.

As stated above, it is possible to reach the highest marks either by agreeing or disagreeing or anywhere between but to access the two highest levels, answers must identify and consider the alternative point of view.

Question 5

- 5* 'Economic forces were the most important factor causing migration to Britain between 1500 and 1900.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

The vast majority of candidates were able to reach at least Level 2 by identifying or describing how economic forces had encouraged specific groups to migrate to Britain, in particular Irish migrants escaping the famine which was the most common example.

Some candidates at this level knew the names of groups that migrated such as the Chinese but didn't have the support as to 'why then' which is needed on a question like this. A simple listing of groups and saying 'these were all migrating for economic reasons' is not sufficient on this type of question. It is important to consider the reasons for migration and for candidates to 'prove it' with evidence.

Many were able to move beyond this by explaining how other factors had led to migration (and the Irish famine was often mentioned on this side of the argument which was perfectly valid). Common factors used by candidates included changes in communication and / or transport, (particularly shipping and railways) which had a huge impact on migration. Religious conflict in Europe had also led to large scale migrations to Britain (e.g. Huguenots) as well as European refugees fleeing war in Italy after 1871 or the Jews being invited back by Oliver Cromwell.

Section B overview

The Norman Conquest section was generally answered well, in particular Question 8 on the motives for castles. That said, Question 9 was answered much less well mainly as some candidates appear to have seen the words 'cavalry' and 'Normans' and so wrote about the Battle of Hastings which was not what the question was about. It is important that the date in the questions are strictly adhered to. Also, some attention needs to be paid by centres to the reasons why interpretations are different: too often examiners read on Question 7 that 'Horrible Histories' was 'dumbed down for children' while the historian 'would have done more research so was likely to be accurate'.

Question 6 (a)

The Norman Conquest, 1065–1087

- 6 (a) In Interpretation A, historian David Howarth argues that life in England just before the Norman Conquest was pleasant. Identify and explain **one** way in which he does this. [3]

In general this question was answered well. Candidates understood the interpretation that Howarth was putting forward and were able to use his words 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 life in England immediately before the Norman Conquest. [5]

This is the question the majority of candidates find difficult. 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 hard labour ... 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. 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 and understand life in England on the eve of the conquest'. Most frequently these were questions about the impact of the Norman Conquest which is not was being asked for in the question – '*life immediately before the Norman Conquest*'. 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.

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 life was pleasant in this way, with 'plenty' of everything, for all different types of people / in different areas of England. 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 (i.e. life was peaceful and idyllic for everyone in England), to finding out whether this was the case for all kinds of people on England or whether it varied with region, wealth, etc. 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

I would choose to research whether this was typical across the entirety of England, in the north and south. This would be interesting to research because it would tell us more about whether life was better but only depending on where you lived, and perhaps even who controlled the area you lived in. This would be useful because it would tell us more about the ~~wealth~~ distribution of wealth in Britain at the time but also about the different styles of leadership across each section of the country.

As a summary to help centres going forward: candidates need to make sure their enquiry is linked to Interpretation A and is centred around a historical concept such as change, consequence, causation, consequence, significance or diversity. They also need to make sure that they consider the second part of the question, i.e. to 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 impact of the Norman Conquest on English society by 1087. How far do they differ and what might explain any differences? [12]

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 programme aimed at children so it has been written in simple language / tries to be funny / looks to engage them through making it seem gory'. In the case of the 'Horrible Histories' extract, more depth was required to reach the top level such as 'I think the reason that B is more negative is that B is aimed at children so is trying to make the content quite dramatic yet with a clear and simple narrative – hence the title 'Wicked William the Conqueror'.

For the Morris interpretation, too often candidates made superficial points around 'He is trying to promote his book with the film' which, again, is only really rewardable at Level 1. What we did reward at Level 4 was more sophisticated such as 'He is trying to put forward a different view of History that William actually was a positive influence':

That said, the majority of candidates did reach the middle levels on this question. For Level 2, candidates identified individual points of similarity and/or difference between the interpretations (e.g. B says William burned stuff down but C says he freed slaves), or identified how the interpretations portrayed William /the conquest differently, but without support. If support was provided then candidates reached Level 3. Here they were able to compare the overall portrayal of William or the conquest as presented in the two interpretations (e.g. B suggests that the conquest was entirely negative. It presents the Anglo Saxons as being oppressed by a 'wicked' foreign invader who 'slaughtered peasants'. But C argues that the conquest also had some long-term positive impact such as introducing 'chivalry' and getting rid of slavery) but did not deal with the purpose or audience well enough to reach Level 4 as this example shows:

Exemplar 3

In interpretation B is all about normans being horrible towards the saxons. ~~that the normans~~ making the normans look bad ~~by~~ there saying that the normans burnt stuff down that they slaughtered peasants and that they were fighting with the church. that he wicked all saxons land.

On the other side Interpretation C is all about how good the Normans are that ~~they~~ the Normans treat Anglo Saxons better than they treat themselves. Plus not ~~many~~ many people realised that 30% of the population is slaves, that the Anglo Saxons branded, beaten, mutilated and killed by their owners or masters.

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* In his 1979 article *Medieval Castle Architecture*, historian Charles Coulson argues that the construction of a castle 'was intended as a symbol of lordly status, rather than a response to military insecurity.' How far do you agree with this view of Norman castles in England between 1066 and 1087? [20]

This question was attempted by all but a handful of candidates and elicited a full range of responses. It was clear that all candidates has clearly studied the use of Norman castles in England and many were able to direct their knowledge at the question, which was pleasing to see. At Level 2 and above, much was made of the military features of early Norman castles, their use in response to rebellions and the suppression of London, and archaeological findings suggesting their role in housing soldiers. On the other side of the debate, candidates were able to point out that Anglo Saxons were often forced to build the castles, and that they were often built over the top of Anglo Saxon sites, which showed them have a function of showing status and power. They also argued that the evidence of particular castles like Castle Acre, which had few defensive features, revealed castles to be more about showing off. Many candidates also used the pattern of castle building (i.e. far more built after rebellions had died down in 1070, and being built out in the countryside) to argue that the vast majority of castles did not serve a military function.

There was a huge range of Norman castles and specific knowledge used being used as evidence in this question which was very impressive.

Answers at the lower levels did not cite specific evidence which rooted their descriptions in the 1066 – 1087 period. For example, there were many responses which claimed, inaccurately, that England was full of stone castles, with barbicans, gatehouses and concentric circles by 1087. Others did not give any precise evidence to support the points made, e.g. Castles were built after rebellions so they had a military purpose. There were some but not many clinching arguments in this question, most suggesting that the interpretation was too simplistic because in fact the purpose of castles had changed during the period in question .As a way of supporting candidates going forward, centres should work with candidates to make sure their points are not just listed but supported by specific examples as evidence.

Question 9

- 9* In his 2004 book *The Penguin History of Britain: The Struggle for Mastery, 1066–1284*, historian David Carpenter argues that the main reason why the Normans were successful before 1066 was because of 'their use of cavalry and fast-moving warfare.' How far do you agree with this view of Norman society, culture and warfare before 1066? [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 importance of fighting skills to the Normans. Answers used evidence such as the fact the Normans had as full-time soldiers - these soldiers had chainmail, swords and shields, and had mastered the art of fighting on horseback. I.e. they were knights. Furthermore, the invention and spread of the stirrup allowed knights to charge their enemies on horseback and to remain on the horse leaning out and swinging their swords while still fixed firmly in the saddle. Candidates were able to explain that to fight this way needed years of training and that William of Normandy had grown up among men who had mastered the technique.

However, too many answers saw the question as being about the Battle of Hastings and wrote about events in October 1066 providing an analysis of which factor helped William win the battle the most. These were often barely rewardable. It is therefore vitally important that centres make sure that questions are trained to read (and answer) the question on the paper, not the one they would like to be on the paper. Referring back to the question regularly through the answer can be one way of helping candidates make sure they are answering the question and keeping a focus on the question throughout.

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