

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

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(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 18 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. Exemplar 1 is an example of a well-explained answer, built around the concept of diversity, is below. It clearly contrasts the negative experience of the Jews against the positive one of the Flemish weavers:

Exemplar 1

Jewish moneylenders came to Britain to find more jobs. Their experience in Britain was negative. They were treated as royal property which meant the King - Henry I could tax them heavily. The arrival of the Italian bankers in 1265 left them with very few jobs. The blood libels was a false accusation against the Jews, where people thought they sacrificed children for blood. The Jews were then expelled from Britain.

The Flemish weavers came to Britain to escape the 100s years wars. Also in 1348 the Black Death left Britain with lots of jobs available. The Flemish weavers helped boost Britains economy and they were eventually given a Denizen status.

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 was 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.

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

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.

This answer below 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 consider 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. 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 prove Mary's innocence. Also because it is from a Catholic website it also may want to prove 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 reflects 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, 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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