

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 exam paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 33 series overview

There were some excellent responses this year as candidates demonstrated some very positive knowledge of Viking religious views, past times and culture. It has also been notable to see a further year of candidates demonstrating good knowledge of the reign of Harald Bluetooth. It is obvious that candidates had been well prepared for the demands of knowledge retention in these areas of the curriculum. It is also worth commenting that many candidates tackled the source inference questions in a way that built from the surface details to the message and meaning of the evidence. There were some excellent inference responses in the Nazi Germany section of this paper which show that candidates were prepared well with the skills to answer such questions.

It is worth noting specific areas where candidates did not perform as well. For example, the summary questions this year elicited a limited number of analytical responses in which candidates could develop their historical knowledge around a supporting theme or concept. This was a shame because there were so many good examples used but without an overarching concept (Q2). It is also worth noting that candidates who answered the essay regarding the competing legends of both Bluetooth and Forkbeard were rarely able to write about Forkbeard with specific, valid examples and most responses centred on Bluetooth without the prerequisite balance needed for the top level (Q5).

In Section B, many candidates did not manage to identify the purpose and intended impact of historical sources. It is important that candidates are taught to explicitly consider the intended audience, purpose and impact of the evidence in a more critical way. While there was positive inference drawn from the sources these often did not give due concern to the provenance of the evidence. In a nutshell, it would be helpful for candidates to be better prepared for a focus on purpose which can be supported for the source-based questions (Q6 and 7).

The essays on Nazi Germany were answered reasonably well. However, candidates needed to focus on the specific questions which were asked. For the first essay, many students drifted from the theme of workers in much the same way that some students drifted from war in the second question. The key teaching point would be for candidates to underline the key command words in the questions and the events to which they relate so that they can plan their essay responses before they write it. It is notable that few candidates plan their essays before writing and this would have clear benefits for both the accuracy and structure of responses in the future (Q8 and 9).

Question 1 (a)

Viking Expansion, c.750–c.1050

- 1 (a) Give **one** example of a group that traded with the Volga Vikings. [1]

Most candidates identified a group with the most common being 'Arabs'. It is worth noting that the specific question refers to groups and not countries. Centres should prepare candidates so that they read the wording of the question carefully

Question 1 (b)

- (b) Identify **one** reason why Vikings left their homelands. [1]

The most common response was 'lack of arable land' and this was answered really well.

Question 1 (c)

- (c) Identify **one** feature of Harald Bluetooth's rule. [1]

Most candidates used the 'conversion to Christianity' and this was a valid response.

Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the trading activities of the Volga Vikings. Support your summary with examples. [9]

What was striking this year was how many candidates used so many excellent examples of their historical knowledge. This has clearly been taught well and candidates gave detailed summaries which were descriptive. The missing link was to provide an analysis as required in the question. Few candidates were able to offer an organising concept such as significance or diversity. This is a key teaching focus for future entries because the knowledge was there, but it needs to be framed around a concept for full marks

Question 3

- 3 What was the impact of the Great Heathen Army's invasion of England? Explain your answer with examples. [10]

The key differentiator in this question was the word 'impact' in the question stem. Candidates who offered a description of invasion (crucially, not Lindisfarne) were unable to progress beyond 4 marks. Candidates who focused on changes that made an impact such as the establishment of Danelaw were generally explained well. Two explained impacts qualified for top marks and many candidates got to Level 4 as a minimum

Question 4

- 4* 'Religion was the most important aspect of the lives of Vikings in their homelands.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

This was the most popular essay question for Vikings. Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of different gods and Norse mythology. However, to access the higher marks it was important to explain how these beliefs influenced the lives of Vikings. Candidates were also able to explain other influences such as raiding, trading and farming to offer balance. Four good explanations allowed students to access the top level

Question 5

- 5* 'Harald Bluetooth was more important than Svein Forkbeard in the development of a Viking kingdom.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Few candidates completed this question and it would be accurate to summarise that knowledge and understanding of Bluetooth was better than Forkbeard. Candidates who did this question were able to explain the impact of Bluetooth on the empire in terms of religion and connectivity. Few candidates were able to balance this with explanation about Forkbeard.

Exemplar 1

5	Harald Bluetooth and Svein Forkbeard both tried to develop a Viking Kingdom.
	Harald Bluetooth played a crucial role in the development of a Viking Kingdom, the first part that Harald changed was religion Vikings were Pagans and lived by Pagan Beliefs once Harald came into power once his father died he realised that the world was moving into a
	Christian dominated place. Harald turned Christian to connect with Christian traders this opened up their trading links therefore developing a Viking Kingdom.
	On the other hand, Svein Forkbeard - Harald's son, also played an important role in the development of a Viking Kingdom. After killing his late father Harald, Svein had an army and had took back the land that his late

		<p>father had lost and became King of Norway in 980. From this point Svein also began the minting of his own coins. This contributes massively to the development of a single Viking Kingdom by minting Viking coins.</p> <p>Furthermore, Harald Bluetooth used Religion to bring more to the Norway, for example Harald built a Church in Jelling to symbolize Christianity in Norway. This brought more Christian trade into Norway expanding their trade. Harald also moved the capital of Norway from Jelling and Harald also built a bridge to help trade. Harald's rule was mainly based on trade.</p> <p>In contrast, Svein Forkbeard did not only become the King of Norway throughout his reign he respected the religion of Christianity whilst being a Pagan. This allowed constant trade and a large following. In the last few weeks of his rule Svein became the King of</p>
		<p>England. This massively contributed to the development of a Viking Kingdom.</p> <p>Overall, Svein Forkbeard achieved more which contributed to the Viking Kingdom, however some things such as the Christian trade was from Harald Bluetooth.</p>

This is a good response and the candidate shows a good understanding of the reign of Harald Bluetooth in particular. This was fairly common for students who answered this question and it would be fair to say that centres may wish to address the revision of Svein Forkbeard in the next academic year as knowledge of his impact was limited in comparison. This response shows basic but valid explanations which build up into an unbalanced argument. To progress to the next level there would need to be a further, valid explained reason alongside a clinching argument for the top mark. This was awarded Level 5.

Section B

Question 6

Living under Nazi Rule, 1933–1945

- 6 What can Source A tell us about the Holocaust? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer. [7]

Candidates were generally given Level 2 (4-5 marks) for identifying evidence and making an inference based on the source. The most relevant comment to make here is that teachers had clearly taught the skill of inference well this year, but few candidates got to Level 3 because the purpose of the source was not explained. It would be worth explicitly focusing on the importance of provenance when teaching candidates to answer source-based questions.

Question 7

- 7 How useful are Sources B and C and Interpretation D for a historian studying the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship between January and July 1933? In your answer, refer to the two sources and the interpretation as well as your own knowledge. [15]

This question was not well answered by candidates. Too many candidates simply approached this by summarising each of the three sources before making a summative comment on the utility. This level of response is based on the surface features of the evidence and could not progress between Level 2. Some candidates were able to move into the highest levels by explaining what can be learnt from the evidence or explain the purpose of the evidence on a more critical level. The main lesson was that candidates did not focus on the idea of establishing a dictatorship as identified in the question.

Question 8

- 8* 'The lives of all workers improved as a result of Nazi policies between 1933 and 1939.' How far do you agree with this view? [18]

This was the most popular essay question for Nazi Germany. Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of policies that were related to work but did not always explain how these policies benefited or disadvantaged workers. For the top marks, candidates needed to explain four examples of impacts. There were some excellent responses that centred on issues such as economic anti-Semitism and 'strength through joy'.

Exemplar 2

8	<p>I agree to a small ^{certain} extent that workers lives improved due to Nazi policies during 1933 and 1939. This is because, I</p>
	<p>think their wages were improved, and they had many more jobs on offer due to things like the construction of the autobahn, and they also had more luxuries such as cheap holidays and vouchers given to them when they worked hard, yet they also worked in poor conditions, for long hours, and despite wages increasing, real wages fell as prices for things like food went up, and workers were tricked into things such as winning a Volkswagen car for their hard work.</p>
	<p>Firstly, I agree because because workers were given more opportunities for work. This was because more jobs opened up before the war began, such as the construction of the autobahn and machinery/weapons, in preparation for the war. Because so many new jobs were available, more people had jobs, and less people were unemployed. Workers also had a lot of hope for themselves, the future of their country under Hitler's power, and hope for their families. This was due to Hitler's promises of cheaper food, vouchers and cheap holidays. They were also able to listen to music, literature and cinema for cheaper prices under Hitler's power. This gave them hope, and also made them work harder. Because of the promises Hitler made to them, they were happier and more excited for the future than before.</p>
	<p>On the other hand, I think their lives also got somewhat worse. Despite their high hopes, the workers who worked hardest never won a Volkswagen car from Hitler, so Hitler lied to them. The fact they won cheaper things meant they had more to look forward to, yet due to propaganda reasons, workers were only allowed to watch Nazi films, music and</p>

literature, and so their freedom was limited greatly. The fact they were working so hard also meant they were working under poor conditions, and the fact they had lost their ^{women's} rights under the law passed by Hitler, ^{in 1933} it meant they had no say in how they wanted working conditions to be improved, so they continued to work hard, and for long hours, under bad conditions such as tiredness and unhygienic conditions, that were unhealthy. Despite an apparent rise in their wages, the cost of things such as foods and other necessities had ~~rose~~ increased, meaning their real wages hadn't increased, but fell instead, as they were paying more for things, which they originally paid less for.

In conclusion, I do agree that Nazi workers lives improved due to Nazi policies between 1933 and 1939, yet only to a small extent, as the workers ~~only~~ lives improving was mostly down to propaganda, and Hitler lies which gave them hope for a better future for them and Germany, promising them cheaper things, higher wages and unemployment to be ended. Yet, workers lives got worse, as they worked harder, with the hope they'd get more out of it, yet could only listen to Hitler's propaganda music or cinema, and had their rights taken away from them, meaning they worked under extremely poor conditions, for long hours, and for their real wages to be reduced as prices of food went up.

Question 9

9* 'The German people supported the war between 1939 and 1945.' How far do you agree with this view? [18]

Few candidates completed this question and it would be accurate to summarise that knowledge and understanding for this question was not closely aligned to the war. The most common error was that candidates were focused on knowledge which was too generic, and this could have been better if examples such as the July plot were a greater focus.

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