

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y307/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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 Y307/01 series overview

Y307 is one of twenty one components for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This component 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 a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

<i>Candidates who did well:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the different command verbs e.g. identify, describe, explain and discuss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • did not 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 overview

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.

Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of how successful Elizabeth's campaigns were against the Spanish Armadas. [30]

Responses showed a clear understanding of the two interpretations and most were able to at least explain the two views, but many were able to use a good range of contextual knowledge to evaluate them and reach a supported judgement. Most explained that Interpretation A argued that the Armada was not defeated by the English but by factors working against the Armada and considered the importance of fireships and the weather in its destruction. The stronger answers developed this and looked beyond the 1588 Armada, as the question required and considered whether the campaign against Spain should be considered a failure. Many were able to use contextual knowledge about both the fireships and the weather, but fewer were able to comment on subsequent events and Armadas.

In discussing Interpretation B, most identified the more positive focus but limited aims of English policy and commented on the importance of preventing Channel ports falling under Spanish control, the situation in the Netherlands and France. Some responses were able to place this in this wider context of foreign policy and linked it to the threat posed by Spain in Ireland with their support for Tyrone. Many responses commented that both interpretations acknowledged the limits to English power and how privateering was the only form of response really available to England, linking this to the lack of finances available to Elizabeth. This latter point was often developed and linked to the cost of both the war against Spain and the struggle in Ireland. The strongest answers linked this contextual knowledge clearly to the interpretations, while less strong responses simply deployed the material and showed no clear link between the contextual knowledge and the interpretations, limiting the response to either Level 3 or Level 4. The strongest answers used a range of evaluative words to establish the link between their contextual knowledge and the interpretations and centres would be well advised to encourage candidates to develop a working list of such words and phrases so that evaluation becomes second nature.

Section B overview

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 a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2

- 2* To what extent was England's position in Europe stronger in the period 1558–1603 than in the period 1485–1558? [25]

This was a popular question and the strongest responses adopted a clear thematic approach in which they compared the two periods. Responses considered issues such as military power, alliances and threats, the relative power of other nations and the financial position of England. No set answer was required and responses that supported and challenged the question were seen. The weaker answers adopted a chronological approach and simply explained the strength of England under each monarch with no real attempt to make comparisons. Such an approach makes synthesis very difficult and limits the level that can be achieved. This is a thematic paper and that suggests that a thematic approach is required and best suited to achieving the highest levels. In discussing alliances responses often compared the success of Henry VII and Henry VIII in securing alliances with Elizabeth. Some argued that the earlier period witnessed greater success, while others argued that the success ended with Henry VII and that religious divisions and the unreliability of both Francis and Charles meant England was in a weaker position from 1520 onwards whereas under Elizabeth was in a stronger position because of the situation regarding Scotland and the agreement with France. Some discussed the threat of invasion and argued that this was greater in the latter period with Spain, while others suggested the threat of a crusade against Henry made England's position less strong in the earlier period. In discussing finances many commented on Henry's ability to raise funds to invade France and contrasted that with Elizabeth's ability to sustain the war against Spain in the 1580s and 1590s. There was also discussion about the strength of the navy, which was usually seen as being stronger under Elizabeth, although some did comment on developments under Henry VIII and Mary. There were also comments on the trading position of England and attempts to access the New World. Some also argued that the privateering activities against Spain suggested that England was stronger.

Question 3

- 3* To what extent were relations with Scotland better in the period 1560–1603 than in the period 1485 to 1560? [25]

This was a popular question, but a significant number of responses did not focus clearly on the demands of the question and instead addressed why relations were better rather than the extent to which they were better. In addressing the question candidates often considered the issue of war and peace, alliances and religious unity. Some argued that relations were better in the period after 1560 as there was peace following the withdrawal of French troops and the closing of the 'back door', leading to a peaceful co-existence, although the strongest answers did note that there were still border raids. Other responses suggested that while overall the later period witnessed better relations, there were also good relations for much of Henry VII's reign following Ayton. Responses also considered the issue of war and commented on the frequency of conflict under Henry VIII and Edward VI and compared that with the later period, but again used the reign of Henry VII to show that warfare was not a constant feature, although some did comment on the attempted invasion from Scotland of Warbeck. There was also discussion about the issue of the succession and how that impacted on relations with many responses commenting on how the position of James VI often led to improved relations and this was contrasted with the attempt at 'rough wooing' in the 1540s. Too many responses looked to explain why relations improved, discussing issues such as the balance of power between France and Spain, religious issues and the Auld Alliance. Other weaker responses adopted a more chronological approach and this prevented explained comparisons between the periods, which was essential if the higher levels were to be reached.

Question 4

- 4* 'Tudor foreign policy had little impact on domestic developments in England.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular question. There were a number who misread the question and wrote about the impact of domestic developments on foreign policy, while others simply lacked the depth of knowledge to go beyond a description of a few incidents where foreign policy impacted on domestic issues. Those that adopted a thematic approach often considered how foreign policy developments created unrest at home, particularly leading to the monarch desiring money and stimulating unrest, as seen in the Yorkshire, Cornish and Amicable Grant rebellions. Some commented on how the need to prepare against invasion and a foreign crusade had an impact on the development of the navy and fortifications, while others noted how foreign policy was used to glorify Elizabeth in her later years. Foreign policy was also seen to have impacted on religious developments in England and this was linked to the question of the divorce and Elizabeth religious settlement of 1558-9. However, this was a clear example of where candidates do need to read the question carefully and make sure they remain focused on the exact thrust of the question.

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