

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**


For first teaching in 2015


## **Y315/01 Summer 2019 series**

Version 1

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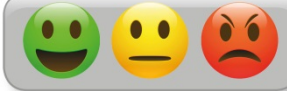
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## Introduction

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 Y315/01 series overview

Y315 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.

<b><i>Candidates who did well:</i></b>	<b><i>Candidates who did less well:</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question</li> <li>• were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words</li> <li>• were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge</li> <li>• in answering the essay questions, covered the whole period in a balanced way</li> <li>• adopted a thematic approach</li> <li>• made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic</li> <li>• explained the links and comparisons</li> <li>• supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples</li> <li>• reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question</li> <li>• demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the different command verbs e.g. identify, describe, explain and discuss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showed a limited understanding of one or both of the interpretations</li> <li>• did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation</li> <li>• did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation</li> <li>• in answering the essay adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach</li> <li>• did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph</li> <li>• did not cover the whole period</li> <li>• did not focus on the precise wording of the question</li> <li>• made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.</li> </ul>

## 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 the conduct and outcome of the American Civil War. [30]

Most candidates were able to understand the contrasting views offered in the two passages on the conduct and outcome of the American Civil War. They also recognised the need to engage with the interpretations and evaluate them using their own knowledge and did this with varying degrees of success. Stronger answers were able to draw on good knowledge of the role of Generals to evaluate Passage A but there were a significant number who wanted to explain at length the role of the North's industrial strengths which they felt had been neglected in the passage. It is important to remind candidates that their main task is to evaluate what the interpretation is arguing rather than indulge in a lengthy discussion of what is not in the passage. Most candidates felt that Passage B was more narrowly focused on events at the end of the war and was therefore perhaps more convincing as an explanation of the outcome rather than the conduct of the war.

Weaker responses mostly just described the content of each passage or explained them but with little attempt to work out which was the more convincing and why. Some also saw the mention of Generals in Passage A as an excuse to describe some of the important Civil War battles with few links to the task of evaluating the interpretation.

### Exemplar 1

The American Civil War from 1861-1865 was a brutal conflict between the rebellious Confederate States of the South and the Union States of the North. The two passages make differing arguments on the conduct and outcome of the war, with Passage B focusing on the economic aspect of Sherman's march to the sea and the disillusion of the Confederate Army, whilst Passage A focuses on the importance of singular generals and the impact of intelligence gathering.

Passage A's initial argument that "the importance of the personal factor in the conduct and outcome of war was, if anything, enhanced by the increase in the scale of warfare", accurately encompasses the importance of the actions of singular individual generals in the conduct of the American Civil War. Robert E. Lee's inspirational and hardened military experience from the Mexican-American War, made him one of the singular most important reason for the prolonged struggle of the confederate army against the far larger and powerful Union state that arguably should have won much earlier. Lee's personal importance can be seen in one of many of Lee's military victories such as at the Seven Day Battle. This same importance can be applied to the Union general of McClellan whose timid nature and caution prolonged the war by giving the Confederate army their initial victories at the First Battle of Bull Run and allowing the confederacy to organise their strength in the pivotal opening chapters of the war. Thus, the "personal factor" was indeed a pivotal reason for the conduct of the war and for the eventual outcome of the American Civil War; as the callous battle hardened nature of Grant was eventually the prime reason for the Union's victory

over the confederacy and for their method of warfare. Whilst the leadership of Robert E. Lee was a prime reason for the Confederacy initially successful stance in the early stages of the war before the turning point at Gettysburg. Thus, the passage initially makes a strong argument on the conduct and outcome of the American Civil War that showcases the importance of the personal factor of generals.

The passage then continues to argue that "Grant, Sherman and Lee were not courageous showmen, but by their obtrusive presence dominated their operations effectively". This argument is strongly unconvincing as the generalship of Grant could be seen as one of taking unnecessary risks and unnecessary battles in order to bleed his opposition into submission. Furthermore, his tenure as the military commander of the Potomac he was often seen as a drunkard and disrespected by his men, which is most evidently seen during the siege of Petersburg. Grant took many courageous showy battles which had little strategic value other than causing widespread carnage, on both sides that is, and could only be sustained by the fact that the Union had throughout the War twice as many soldiers as the Confederacy (roughly 1 million soldiers for the Confederacy and 2 million for the Union). The passage does, however, to some degree convincing in its description of Robert E. Lee as his military presence was loved by his men and his leadership dominated the battles he fought. Thus, this argument of the passage is entirely unconvincing as it, arguably, misdescribes

The final argument from Holden Read in passage A that "The role of cavalry as intelligence gatherers was neglected resulting in a significant increase in the number of engagements caused by the unexpected meeting of rival forces" does ring true for the Union army of the Potomac whose abysmal intelligence gathering was a direct cause for their slow and failed march against the capital of Richmond. However, the Confederate cavalry commander Norwood was an extremely important element of the Confederate defence against the advancing armies of General Burnside in the Eastern Theatre of the American Civil War. Norwood's intelligence gathering and skirmish fighting encapsulates the conduct of warfare in the Eastern Theatre and thus the passage incorrectly states that cavalry was neglected. Furthermore, the huge scale of the American Civil War meant that intelligence gathering, no matter what, was going to be nearly impossible to be perfectly accurate and thus it was inevitable that some degree of unexpected meetings were going to happen. Thus, it can be concluded that the passage's argument on intelligence and prioritisation of cavalry is utterly unconvincing and could be argued to be a misinterpretation of the nature of the American Civil War.

Passage B begins its argument with the statement that "In the Winter of 1864 and spring of 1865, desertion nearly destroyed the Confederate Army". Indeed, the Confederate Army had throughout the war struggled with desertion which was not helped by Jefferson Davis' decisions not to court martial deserters but instead often gave them lighter sentences. However, as the source accurately states this reached a turning point in the Winter of 1864 as a direct result of Sherman's March to the Sea, a form of total warfare that pillaged and destroyed the Confederate countryside and made (in Sherman's words) 'Georgia Howl'. The destruction of the morale and commitment of

Confederate soldiers to the war effort after 4 years of hard attritional warfare and without any signs of possible victory is indeed an accurate description of reason for the outcome of the American Civil War; where the army simply did not believe it could fight anymore. Thus, even though the Confederacy was never actually defeated in a singular battle and they could technically have kept fighting, the war weariness of the men and the desertion ensured that the Confederacy would surrender and Sherman's march to the sea, as argued by the source, was the catalyst for this change in support from fanatic support for the defence to the confederacy to a sense of defeatism in the army.

Passage B then argues that Sherman's march to the sea "did \$100 million worth of damage in the state of Georgia", this economic warfare is a pivotal reason that the South could not continue its war effort and was the driving reason for the eventual outcome of the war. The Confederacy had not shown many signs of defeat by set piece annihilation battles, but as the source convincingly argues, economic warfare was a prime reason for their eventual defeat and a strong indicator of the conduct of the Union generals who adopted total war strategies in order to defeat their opposition. The South was always on the backfoot economically, with 90% of pig iron being produced in the North at the start of the war, but Sherman's march to sea made this issue far more significant and made a continuation of warfare nearly impossible. This extremely accurately encompasses and showcases the reason for the Union victory over the South during the American Civil War, and the passage does a good job in showcasing the reasons for the outcome of the American Civil War.

The final point explored of Mitchell in passage B is that "Sheridan's final raid in March 1865 broke the supply line of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia". As the war was at this point being fought primarily in the South, Lee could not have relied upon foraging for supplies and was entirely reliant on massive supply lines to keep his army going. The Army of Northern Virginia, thus, was destroyed not militarily in a set piece battle, but economically by the destruction of their supply line that meant that they could have kept fighting other than in a form of guerrilla warfare, which as the source states Lee refused; in part because of honourable nature that would not have allowed him to commit tactics that he viewed as unhonourable, even though Bushwhackers and guerilla warfare was a viable option for the Confederate army after their traditional supply line was destroyed. This argument, thus, strongly puts forward a convincing view that economic warfare was the pivotal reason for the outcome of the war for the Union victory.

In conclusion, passage B is the most convincing explanation for the conduct and outcome of the American Civil War as it correctly attributes economic the warfare strategies of Sherman and Sheridan as the driving reason for the eventual fall of the Army of Northern Virginia that was headed by Robert E. Lee. It also showcases the change in the conduct of war on the Union side from set piece annihilation battles to total war strategies of pillaging and civilian targeting. A union strategy

which was far more effective in causing the outcome of the war. Passage A, on the other hand, correctly attributes the importance of singular commanders in the American Civil War, but places too much emphasis on this as firstly, there were too many theatres of war for one general to be of complete importance, and secondly Grant could be argued to be a courageous showman and his impact on the outcome of the war is arguably, quite minimal. Furthermore, it undermines the lack of focus on intelligence gathering but this was indeed an important element of both sides, especially the confederacy with its many cavalry divisions, and massively overlooks the huge scale of the two theatres of war that stretched many hundreds of miles and open spaces which inevitably would lead to some mistakes in intelligence gathering. Thus, passage B is the most convincing argument on the outcome and conduct of the American Civil war and passage A makes some good points but its omission and weak arguments makes it less convincing than passage B.

Exemplar 1 is typical of a Level 6 response with strong evaluation and good use of own knowledge to test the arguments in the passages.



## 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 did tactics change in the conduct of war in the period from 1792 to 1945? **[25]**

There were some strong responses which focused on change and continuity in tactics over the whole period and produced well chosen examples ranging across the whole period for both sides of the argument. Some strong responses took thematic approaches looking at offensive and defensive tactics and the uses of cavalry, infantry and weaponry over the period. However there was also a notable tendency to misread the question and either focus on the way in which tactics changed the conduct of warfare or to compare tactics to other factors which changed the conduct of war such as Generals. These responses were often well argued but their lack of focus meant they seldom got out of Level 4. Weaker candidates also sometimes resorted to a list of battles in the period with little focus on tactical continuity and change.

### Question 3

**3\*** How important were developments in weaponry in determining the outcome of wars in the period from 1792 to 1945? **[25]**

This was the most popular of the essay questions and most candidates were able to compare the developments in weaponry to other factors such as the role of Generals and developments in communication and transport. These worked well as long as candidates were able to give clear and precise examples and comparison over the whole time period.

At the top end candidates were able to effectively link the different factors, some arguing that it was only when Generals were able to effectively use new weaponry that their side had an advantage. Impressive knowledge was deployed as part of a comparative argument and a good balance was shown over the whole period.

Weaker responses tended to list new weapons with often an exclusive focus on the wars of the twentieth century with their tanks and atomic bomb. There was also a tendency to adopt a chronological approach within each factor which seldom got out of Level 4.

## Question 4

4\* How effectively did states mobilise their economies for war in the period from 1792 to 1945? [25]

This was the least popular of the essay questions but those that attempted it generally coped well with the demands of the question. Many adopted a thematic approach by looking at themes such as manpower, industrial production and economic forces and effectively made comparisons across the period. There were also effective essays that looked first at states that did mobilise for war successfully and then considered those that didn't which could produce plenty of synthesis as long as it didn't become a list.

Weaker responses often listed wars in a chronological approach or a few were tempted to discuss the reasons why states were able to mobilise their economies for war rather than a close focus on the question of whether they did. There was also a tendency to over focus on the Total wars of the twentieth century.

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