

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Y316/01 Summer 2019 series**

Version 1

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper Y316/01 series overview .....	4
Section A overview .....	5
Question 1 .....	5
Section B overview .....	8
Question 2 .....	8
Question 3 .....	8
Question 4 .....	9



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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 Y316/01 series overview

Y316 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 importance of O'Connell during the period of Catholic Emancipation. [30]

The great majority of candidates found the passages accessible and recognised the need to engage with the interpretations and evaluate them with their own knowledge and did this with varying degrees of success. Stronger responses were able to draw on good knowledge of the importance of Daniel O'Connell during the period of Catholic Emancipation and also the wider context of events at Westminster and many agreed with Passage A that these were just as important as O'Connell's campaign. Good knowledge of O'Connell's leadership of the Irish party at Westminster after Emancipation was also brought in to evaluate Passage B and some strong answers pointed out that franchise reform limited the Catholic vote in Ireland after 1832.

Weaker responses often just tried to explain the argument in each passage with little attempt to evaluate them and sometimes only the information in Passage B was used to evaluate Passage A, especially on the question of whether O'Connell represented all classes in Ireland. Many answers also ignored Passage A's paragraph on events in Westminster and only focused on O'Connell himself.

### Exemplar 1

Catholic emancipation, following the act of Union was a significant issue in the early part of the period. Having been promised Catholic emancipation, the Catholic middle and upper class were impatient. Bills failed to pass through Westminster for twenty years before it was finally granted in 1829 and this allowed the birth of constitutional nationalism. The key debate over Catholic emancipation is to what extent was it solely due to the efforts of Daniel O'Connell. His actions were certainly instrumental but it was the culmination of issues in Westminster, the granting of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act in 1828 and the Catholic Association methods that allowed Daniel O'Connell in his election at County Clare to be the straw that broke the camels back and get Catholic emancipation. Passage A is the stronger of the two passages as it considers the importance of O'Connell against other factors such as the British government and the Catholic Association, whereas Passage B briefly mentions the role of the Church, but focuses on O'Connell and his character more than on his efforts to gain Catholic emancipation.

Passage B makes clear reference to O'Connell and how his actions led to a fear of 'risk of extensive disturbances', it is inferred that this is in the eyes of the British. This is key as a fear of civil war was a significant driver for granting emancipation. The passage also considers the role of the church and how this then brought the church into being an integral part of constitutional nationalism for the next ten years, and giving it a life long legacy. Furthermore, it is sure to mention that the county Clare election was the catalyst for seeing Catholic emancipation granted, as O'Connell, a Catholic, had been fairly elected and the British could no longer refuse him his seat. However, the passage is very vague in reference to O'Connell and his significance to achieving Catholic emancipation, focusing more on how his role then developed into the 1830s. Moreover, the phrase 'radicalised the Catholic vote', is too strong for referencing the role of the 40 shilling freeholder in being protected by the Catholic rent in voting against their landlord for emancipationist MPs. The passage does not mention the issues in Westminster, the rift being driven between the Tory party over emancipation, that certainly drove the Commons to grant emancipation. Moreover, there is also not significant consideration of the significant role played by the Catholic Association in mobilising support and providing the rent that protected the 40 shilling freeholder – in one year £19,000 was raised. Therefore passage B is less convincing as an explanation of the importance of O'Connell during the period of Catholic Emancipation.

Passage A is very clear in its consideration of multiple factors responsible for Emancipation. It ensures to consider the importance of O'Connell's election at County Clare and the role played by the Catholic Association. Furthermore, the passage has clear focus on the role of O'Connell in emancipation and considers this against the wider context giving better evaluation of his actions. In this way it considers, unlike passage B, the role of the House of Commons and the politics surrounding granting Catholic emancipation. Although once again, the divisions in the Tory party are not considered. The passage also takes note of the different methods used by O'Connell and the Catholic Association, ensuring not to focus solely on the rent, but also on his peaceful organising of mass opinion, large scale public meetings and national organisation. However, Passage A does have some faults. It does not consider the important role played by the Catholic church in helping to mobilise support and collect the rent, nor does it consider that the Catholic rent being lowered from a guinea to get wide class

support was not O'Connell's idea by other members of the Catholic association which is significant in evaluating his importance. Furthermore, it is too sweeping when it considers Catholic emancipation to give full civil and political rights to the Irish, or that it caused the formation of the first political party. Catholics were still prohibited from holding public office until 1840 municipal and corporations act and the O'Connellites cannot be considered a party. Nevertheless, the consideration of a variety of factors makes passage A a more convincing explanation of the importance of O'Connell during the period of Catholic emancipation.

Therefore, in conclusion, passage A is the more convincing explanation of the importance of O'Connell during the period of Catholic emancipation, as it considers his role in reference to other factors and therefore evaluates his importance. Whereas passage B puts too much focus on O'Connell and his success later into the 1830s, thus it is not well focused on emancipation and does not evaluate O'Connell against other factors. Neither passage considers O'Connell's actions on the Catholic board in the 1810s, however, this is not detrimental to the success of Catholic emancipation.

Exemplar 1 is typical of evaluation using a good depth of own knowledge seen in a Level 6 answer.

## 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\* 'Revolutionary nationalism achieved more than constitutional nationalism.' How far do you agree with this view of Irish nationalism in the period from 1798 to 1921? [25]

This was the most popular of the essay questions and produced some very impressive answers at the top of the cohort. Stronger responses directly compared the achievements of revolutionary and constitutional nationalism across the period using such themes as level of support and achieving their aims and some successfully argued that they were most successful when working together such as the Land War in the 1870s and 80s. There were some excellent essays which concluded that the revolutionary nationalist did more at the end of the period to achieve an Irish free state while still others put forward a strong case for the role of constitutional nationalists such as O'Connell and Parnell over the whole period.

Weaker responses were often confused over the difference between the two groups and some adopted a chronological approach which did little more than list the main events. There was also a tendency to deal with nationalist leaders separately with little comparison between them and this rarely scored higher than Level 4.

### Question 3

- 3\* 'Ireland gained more from the policies of British Tory, Conservative and Coalition governments than it did from Whig and Liberal ones in the period from 1798 to 1921.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was a familiar question and there were some very good answers. A thematic approach looking at political, religious and economic policies worked well and led to some effective synthesis and synoptic judgements over the whole period. The best answers were also able to identify the different groups in Ireland, especially the Ulster Unionists and their reactions to possible Home Rule after 1886.

Weaker responses took on a chronological approach which rarely made comparisons across the period and therefore struggled to get out of Level 4. There was also some confusion over the British political parties and their leaders especially when it came to the end of the period with the Coalition government often being left out completely.

## Question 4

- 4\* 'Home Rule was the most important turning point in reform within the Union during the period from 1800 to 1921.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular of the questions. Some candidates did not focus on reform within the Union and discussed at length events such as the Irish famine and the Easter rising. Stronger responses were able to compare Home Rule with reforms such as Catholic Emancipation, Land Acts and franchise reform and there were some good attempts to explain how Home Rule evolved between 1886 and 1921.

Weaker responses were sometimes unsure what happened to Home Rule after 1886 and indeed some had it coming into force in Ireland either then or in 1912. There was also a tendency to list events (some with little connection to the question) and a reluctance to compare reforms across the period.

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