

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Y318/01 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 Y318/01 series overview

Y318 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

### 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 reasons why Alexander II emancipated the serfs. [30]

The interpretation question was, on the whole, answered well. The majority of candidates were able to access the higher levels by clearly linking their own knowledge to the views and opinions mentioned. At the top end, candidates used precise and accurate own knowledge, explaining that A reflected the view that Alexander II emancipated the serfs as he was a conservative and also wanted to gain favour with western powers. B argues that the serfs were emancipated due to the outcome of the Crimean War

The most successful answers dealt with each interpretation in turn before coming to a measured conclusion. Answers which attempted a thematic approach often were confused and lacked evaluation, leading to an essay-like approach. Centres should be aware that credit is given in assessing the relative convincingness of the views that are present in each interpretation. Answers which proceeded to list impacts that were not present in each interpretation did not score highly, as they were not explicitly evaluating the view of each historian. This was often highlighted or prefixed by the phrase “ fails to mention”. Candidates should focus on the actual views presented and test them against historical knowledge.

Centres should also be aware that there is no requirement to mention other historians.

In regard to Interpretation A, the majority of candidates were able explain the desire to maintain autocracy. Those at lower levels merely described the interpretation. As for Interpretation B, most were able to identify its key message the Crimean War was the main factor. In the lower levels, however, many mentioned the fact that only one factor was present. The interpretation was, the argument followed, was weak as it was limited. Candidates should explore the strength of the argument presented, rather than critique the number of points made.

Exemplar 1 was marked in Level 6.

## Exemplar 1

Both Passages A and B assert that there was a necessity to Alexander II's emancipation of the Serfs edict in 1861. Passage A asserts that Alexander emancipated the Serfs in order to maintain his tight grip of autocratic control as fear of Russia whilst making Russia a 'modern statehood'. Passage B asserts that Alexander was shown the failures serfdom was causing through 'the lesson of the Crimean war'. Passage A is more convincing as an explanation of the reasons why Alexander II emancipated the Serfs.

Passage A is significantly convincing as an explanation behind the emancipation of the Serfs because it reflects Alexander's personal view. For example, it states that Alexander was a "~~liberal~~ conservative, determined to preserve what was best from the old system". This is convincing because Alexander still maintained an autocratic leadership style despite 'liberal' reformation. Alexander was <sup>wary</sup> ~~cautious~~ of further reform after suffering an initial assassination attempt and would, for the later years of his tenure, uphold a less reformative stance on domestic policy. This is in tune with the doubts Alexander expressed "about the loyalty of most sections of society, from the nobles to the peasants". Another reason as to why the passage is convincing is because ~~it~~ it asserts that Alexander was worried about uprisings. For example, it states that Alexander said "it was better to abolish serfdom from above than await the time when it began to abolish itself from below!". This is convincing because the 23 million Serfs freed in 1861, were ~~the~~ initially angry about the details of the

emancipation. In the four months after the emancipation, over 700 peasant disturbances were recorded with one minister stating that peasant anger about the edict would "dissolve to quiet grumbles over the next 40 years. This shows the emancipation as nothing more than Alexander trying to maintain control and not as a policy to 'free' the serfs or give any real greater rights. ~~Another reason why passage A is convincing is because it states~~ However, a reason passage A may be seen as unconvincing is because it asserts that Alexander II's reasoning behind the emancipation was just to 'reduce the risk of rural revolt'. This is not convincing because Alexander was looking to expand Russia in the height of the Industrial Revolution. He shows this through the 11,000 miles of railway completed and foreign investment/aid (e.g. J.J. Hughes - who produced half of Russia's steel) in a bid to ~~take~~ <sup>progress</sup> Russia upwards and make them the 5<sup>th</sup> largest industrial power in the world. Alexander ~~was~~ freed the serfs in order to help this economic boom which would help him in his goal to see Russia accepted amongst Western super powers so he could achieve the 'approval of Western monarchs' that he so craved. To suggest Alexander passed the emancipation edict to only reduce risk <sup>of revolt</sup> and not to 'free up labour' would be incorrect.

In comparison with this, passage B ~~asserts that~~ is partially convincing because it asserts that Alexander ~~freed~~ emancipated the serfs <sup>as a</sup> ~~in order to~~ result of the terrible outcome of the Crimean war and the implications



that Russia had lost the Crimean War because of 'the standing contrast between the Russian Serf and most of the free men of Europe'. This is unconvincing because the war was not lost by the soldiers of different status but by the nature of the opposing nations. Russia was an agricultural based nation that was fighting the world's most developed industrial nation, Britain, amongst others. This meant Russia was at a disadvantage to begin with and Alexander II did not emancipate the Serfs due to the loss of Crimea and now they had faced on a man to man size-up but because Serfs are key to the progression of Russia as they made up 80% of the population. If they could be reformed, it would make reform to other areas (e.g. military and industrially) much easier/more efficient and effective.

In conclusion, passages A and B both suggest Alexander II did not emancipate the Serfs because he wanted to 'transform Russia' or to make it more democratic but because he wanted Russia to 'catch-up' with its western counterparts and develop economically. Passage A asserts that Alexander had his own thoughts and beliefs at the heart of his decision whereas Passage B implies that he did it in order for Russia to grow and because he wanted to see the nation prosper. For these reasons, I would argue passage A is more convincing than passage B as ultimately, Alexander remained the absolute leader of Russia who did what he believed was best despite what those around him

may have thought (as seen in March 1856 at the assembly of Moscow Nobles).

## Section B overview

### Question 2

- 2\* 'Opposition to Russian rulers was more successful under the rule of the Tsars than the Communist governments.' How far do you agree with this view of the period 1855–1964? [25]

This question was popular with candidates.

At the top end, candidates assessed three or four opposition movements within each paragraph, evaluating the level of continuity or change in each area. Successful responses utilised the word “similarly” and then explained the level of success. Finally, answers in the top level contained interim assessments (or end of paragraph judgements) before writing a developed conclusion. The key to this question was selecting the right themes. This question is about opposition to regimes; as such candidates who explored political opposition (from parties or cliques), peasant opposition and worker opposition had the greatest success.

At the lower end of the mark range, candidates did one of the following

-Wrote chronologically

-were unable to compare rulers within thematic paragraphs

-selected the wrong themes to explore (e.g. ideology, structure of government and repression OR censorship, secret police and army). This was particularly important as candidates who attempted a thematic answer but assessed these themes were unable to meet the demands of the question.

Exemplar 2 was marked in Level 6

## Exemplar 2

Opposition throughout the period had its successes and failures. ~~These~~ These can be separated into different sections as under each ideology, each area had differing success for example in the Urban areas from workers, rural area from peasants and cliques/factions within government. I believe opposition was more successful under the rule of the tsars than the Communist governments in the period.

In terms of urban workers, opposition was more successful under the tsars. ~~Less~~ than the Communists. This is certainly the case with Nicholas II and ~~Joseph Stalin~~ <sup>Lenin</sup>. Under Nicholas, the Father Gapon/bloody Sunday uprisings saw the tsar come under immense pressure to reform the government from urban workers who succeeded with the formation of the Duma in 1906. It can be argued that the Fundamental Laws of the same year and four abandonments of the Duma between 1908 and 1917 would make this unsuccessful but it would be a key factor behind the emergence of the progressive bloc and the fall of the Romanov Dynasty. Under ~~Stalin~~ <sup>Lenin</sup>, there was much less opposition. His orders to the Cheka to shoot any absentees on Christmas day 1918 would ~~be~~ see any workers looking to take part in a religious holiday (which Lenin called 'the opium of the people') see their opposition fail. Also, under Alexander II and ~~Stalin~~ <sup>Khrushchev</sup>, we see opposition successful under the tsars.

In 1881, Alexander II was killed by a bomber ~~the~~ member of the People's will who opposed the tsar and were successful in bringing him down. Their success can be scrutinized however as Alexander III hung 5 members and arrested 10,000 surrounding his father's assassination, arguing this may be unsuccessful. Under Khrushchev, the Hungarian uprising of 1956 was crushed and 3000 people were executed along with Nagy, an example of a failed opposition to ~~the~~ Communist rule. However, under Lenin and Alexander III, tsars may not have seen the most successful opposition. The Kronstadt rebellion of 1921 which saw 20000 Red ~~army~~ army soldiers led by ~~the~~ Trotsky executed kill 3000 naval personnel may be seen as a failure however it was a large factor in the New Economic Policy installed in 1921 which scrapped total Communism. Under Alexander III, there was no successful opposition from the urban workers after he had the People's will suppressed. With this in mind, the tsars faced much more successful opposition than the Communists.

In terms of peasant opposition, again, it was much more successful under tsars as seen with ~~Alexander~~ Nicholas II and Khrushchev. ~~The~~ The peasant revolts of 1905 put the tsar under immense pressure to reform resulting in Stolypin's agricultural reforms of May 1906. This was successful and gave greater freedoms to the peoples of Estonia and Latvia due to possible trade. Under Khrushchev however, peasant opposition was largely crushed as seen with the Novorossack

Uprising which resulted in 22 people dying. Another example of more successful peasant opposition under Tsars versus communists can be seen with Alexander II and Lenin. Alexander II came under great pressure from the peasants in the immediacy of the emancipation edict of 1861. Over 730 uprisings were accounted for and showed the general discontent at the 'reform'. However, this reform cannot really be seen as successful as no change was achieved. Lenin fought peasant opposition by opening 7 new concentration camps and sending several thousands of peasants who disobeyed with the rules of ~~the~~ the War Communism + grain requisitioning plans. In contrast, Alexander III saw less successful opposition as he with the help of finance minister Bunge, removed the salt tax in 1887 and poll tax, 1889 as well as increasing tariffs <sup>(by 23%)</sup> which helped peasants to sell their goods and have a better quality of life.

Despite these factors, in terms of opposition from factions of government, it was more successful under the Tsars as seen with Khrushchev. In 1964, Khrushchev was removed as a result of his failings with the Virginland Campaign and mishandling of Cuban Missile crisis. This was successful opposition from the CPSU who ousted Khrushchev. Under Alexander II, there was a ban on political parties who were kept under ~~control~~ surveillance of the Okhrana. Under Lenin and Alexander III, there was also more successful opposition from factions. The Politburo under Lenin saw communist party leaders able to debate

criticise party policy. More liberal numbers were behind a movement to end war communism and install the New Economic Policy and the small scale capitalism this brought in 1921. Alexander III however, again never suffered from opposition from factions of government. However, under Stalin there was no successful opposition in government. As can be seen with the removal of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky from the party and the latter's assassination in Mexico in 1940. Also, Nicholas II was the subject of successful opposition from the Progressive Bloc in the Duma who would form the provisional government (Octoberists / leaders) after his abdication in 1917.

In conclusion, opposition was more successful under the rule of tsars than communists as opposition would see the fall of the tsarist regime / Romanov dynasty that had been in power since 1613. The communists excessive use of Gulags (18m sent under Stalin) would see most opposition ultimately fail and saw communism in place for the remainder of the period.

### Question 3

- 3\* 'The Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905 changed the lives of the peasantry more than any other war in the period 1855–1964.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was also a popular question. Candidates were able to focus on three thematic paragraphs that were related to the lives of the peasantry (a range from political, social, economic, living conditions, working conditions, repression)

At the top end, candidates used the Russo Japanese war at the start of each paragraph before comparing it to two other turning points (in each paragraph). Successful answers were able to compare throughout the paragraph (this changed the lives of the peasantry more than.. because..) and then assess at the end. The best conclusions assessed the Russo Japanese war in each theme to reach a sustained judgement.

At the lower end of the mark range, candidates wrote about three turning points in total, either chronologically or as factors. They also did not use wars as factors. Some candidates decided to use revolutions, which was not part of the demand of the question.

Furthermore, centres should be aware that this style of question is not designed to assess whether two events were similar or not; it is about assessing change. Candidates should be encouraged, therefore, to come to a sustained judgement about the importance of the event in the question in relation to others; not whether it was similar to them. Finally, candidates who did not cover the whole time period were not able to reach the higher levels.

### Question 4

- 4\* 'In the period 1855–1964 the lives of the nationalities changed more under the rule of the Communist governments than the Tsars.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular question. Candidates were able to identify themes and evaluate the level of change. Centres should be encouraged to fully explore the nationalities as a theme within their teaching.

At the top end, candidates selected three themes (often political, economic and social) and assessed three or four rulers from across the time period, evaluating the level of change (or lack of). Some successful candidates approached the question using geographical regions or nationality (including the Jews). Answers in the top level contained interim assessments (or judgements) before writing a developed conclusion.

At the lower end of the mark range candidates approached their answer either:

A - chronologically

or

B – were unable to compare rulers within thematic paragraphs.

Answers here also referred to the provisional government for which there is no requirement.

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