

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y319/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper Y319/01 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 Y319/01 series overview

Y319 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 the position of African Americans during the Gilded Age. [30]

Most candidates were able to understand the contrasting views offered by the two interpretations about the position of African Americans during the Gilded Age. While many candidates felt that Passage B was the more convincing, there were also some excellent answers that found Passage A more convincing with its more positive interpretation of African American responses to segregation.

Stronger responses recognised the need to engage with the views in both interpretations and evaluate them using their own knowledge. They were able to draw on good knowledge of the position of African American during the Gilded Age including the 1877 compromise which allowed the Southern state governments to both introduce segregation and limit voting rights through literacy tests and grandfather clauses. The very best candidates also gave a substantiated judgement where they explained not only why one interpretation was more convincing but also some of the limitations of the other passage in comparison.

Weaker responses explained the content of each passage with some misunderstanding of the views expressed and made little attempt to evaluate them. A few were tempted to discuss the provenance of the passages and a few fruitlessly considered whether the publication of Passage B in 1984 made it closer to the events it was discussing and therefore more convincing. There was also a marked tendency to discuss events and individuals such as the Emmet Till case and Malcolm X which were far outside the period under discussion.

As with last year the biggest discriminator was between the candidates who attempted to evaluate the arguments in each passage using their knowledge of the Gilded Age and those that either described the content of the passages or explained them with little attempt to work out which was the more convincing and why.

Exemplar 1

1. The Gilded Age for African-Americans was a mostly negative time period in regards to their civil rights. Many of the rights that had been gained during reconstruction such as the right to vote and be free citizens were eroded throughout the country, especially in the South where racist attitudes continued to be perpetuated by the majority. As a result of this, Southern states began to push for oppressive laws and policies which ultimately segregated African Americans from using the same facilities as white Americans and implemented Jim Crow laws that prevented African Americans from voting and being represented politically. Passage A argues that it was the process of industrialisation that played a key role in implementing segregation, with modern facilities being the first to be segregated, followed by the rest of Southern life. In contrast to this, Passage B focuses on the attitudes of the South and the influence that rich white families had in the region that allowed them to implement laws to disenfranchise black people for their own political consolidation. Ultimately, Passage B provides the best interpretation of the position of African Americans during the time period as it focuses on the direct influence that racist

attitudes in the South had on segregation, rather than focusing on segregation in relation to growing industrialisation in the USA.

Passage A's main interpretation is that segregation was an 'accompaniment to modernisation' and a solution to the violent conflicts that had been occurring between black and white groups. Whilst this interpretation is valid to some extent, as the Gilded Age was a time of rapid industrial growth for the USA, where Passage A is limited is the lack of focus on Southern white attitudes and the role that these attitudes ultimately played in the introduction of segregation and the disenfranchisement of African Americans. The passage argues that segregation was a 'liberal alternative to violent encounters' that had been occurring and as a prevention of empowering people who were regarded inferior. Whilst this may have been the justification that many who introduced segregation used, oftentimes these ideas were far more entrenched in the belief of white superiority that was commonplace in the south at the time. Many state governors in the South were elected on clearly racist campaigns and Southern states had already attempted to implement black codes to oppress the black vote before federal soldiers had to be sent in to abolish them in reconstruction. Also, violence was disproportionately targeted at African Americans by white Americans, so the validity that segregation was implemented to prevent these attacks from occurring is not valid. However, the passage is valid in its assertions that it was modern facilities that were segregated first, followed by the rest of Southern society. This was because segregation in these facilities had not yet been challenged legally, so they could be used as test cases in order to challenge the right to segregate at a supreme court level. This resulted in the *Plessy v Ferguson* verdict that deemed segregation constitutional, which allowed for Southern society to segregate further. Finally, Passage A argues that segregation essentially strengthened African American communities, as African American professionals worked to 'uplift the poor black working people'. This is valid to some extent, as segregation did lead to a formation of a black middle-class, however this was a minority experience. The majority of African Americans remained as labourers or sharecroppers in the rural South, sharing the land with white landowners whilst living in poor conditions. Overall, Passage B's interpretation is limited as it fails to address the attitudes of Southerners and their role in introducing Jim Crow laws whilst also looking at a minority of African Americans that were able to benefit somewhat from segregationist policies.

In contrast, Passage B chooses to focus its interpretation on the influence of the powerful white ruling class and the ways in which they were able to influence the white majority in the South to support segregationist policies. Passage B opens with the growing influence of the black vote in many areas in the South, with many black voters supporting the more progressive Populist Party in the area. This assertion is valid to some extent as the Populist Party did attempt to garner support from African Americans in order to compete with the Democrats, however many African Americans were still not registered to vote as many lacked education or agency as they were focused on making a living. However, their influence was still enough to threaten the white ruling class in some areas. The Passage then follows this up by stating that powerful white figures began arguing that 'the black vote should be eliminated'. This interpretation is valid, as evidenced by the support that wealthy white landowners gave to openly racist politicians, and also the increase in support that

these politicians received when bringing up perceived race issues when it came to election. The passage then goes on to mention that this was ultimately successful, as the 'principal of racial segregation extended into every area of southern life'. This is valid and also supported by Passage A which also mentions the totality of the segregation in the South, although it could be argued that Passage A has a more valid interpretation on this issue as it highlights that modern facilities were segregated first, followed by the rest of the public facilities in the South. Nevertheless, Passage B then focuses on the position of African Americans and provides a mostly negative interpretation, as only 'a few brave souls' were in a position to speak out against the racist measures implemented and by large 'blacks had to accommodate them as best they could'. This contrasts to the more positive outlook of Passage A that focused on the growth of the black middle-class, however Passage B provides the more convincing interpretation as the vast majority of African Americans in the South were poor sharecroppers and were often at risk of white violence if they spoke out, as seen by the treatment of anti-lynching campaigner Ida Wells. Overall, Passage B provides the more convincing interpretation as it focuses on the strong influence of white prejudice against African Americans whilst also focusing on the majority experience of African Americans rather than the minority.

In conclusion, Passage B provides the more convincing interpretation of events as it focuses on the attitudes of powerful Southern whites and touches on the experiences of the majority of African Americans in the South. Whilst Passage A does also hold some validity by its focus on how segregation came to be legally and by also exploring the impact that segregation had on a minority of African Americans, where Passage A is limited is by its focus on industrialisation as a precursor to segregation, rather than by attitudes displayed by whites towards African Americans. A strong link can be drawn between racist attitudes and segregation, as powerful white Americans provided funding to racist politicians, who were elected by Southerners who supported their views to implement racist policies. However, whilst there may have been a correlation between industrialisation and segregation in the south, to say that this is an explanation of the current position of African Americans is unconvincing, as industrialisation also occurred in the North and segregation did not occur on such an unprecedented level as it had in the South. Therefore, Passage B provides the most convincing explanation of the position of African Americans during the Gilded Age.

Exemplar 1 is typical of a Level 6 response with strong evaluation and 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* 'The quality of African American leadership was the most important factor in the advancement of African American civil rights in the period from 1865 to 1992.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was a popular question and it provided candidates with a good opportunity to compare the role of African American leaders with other factors such as the federal government, civil rights groups and changing attitudes over the whole period. The stronger candidates were able to not only identify important leaders but also to explain the role they had played in advancing civil rights over the period. Martin Luther King was understandably the favourite example but good knowledge was also shown on other leaders (Jesse Jackson, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, WEB Du Bois, Ida B Wells and Booker T Washington) over the whole period and the role of organisations such as the NAACP. Strong answers were able to show the fluctuating influence of factors over the whole period and indeed the importance of these factors working together such as in the 1960s. Many of the best essays concluded that the federal government played the most crucial role as only they could overcome de jure segregation in the South.

Weaker responses tended to list the African American leaders with little attempt to link them to advancements in civil rights or to compare them to other factors. There was also a tendency to over focus on the 1960s and ignore the rest of the period.

Question 3

- 3* 'The Dawes Act was the most important turning point in the development of Native American civil rights in the period 1865–1992.' To what extent do you agree? [25]

This was the most popular essay question and also the one that elicited the strongest responses. Many candidates adopted a thematic response around themes such as land and cultural rights and then compared the Dawes Act to other turning points within these themes. There was usually a good balance over the whole period with some arguing that the Dawes Act was a negative turning point that the Native Americans were never able to recover from, while others looked at the Indian New Deal or the period of Red Power and Johnson, Nixon and Ford's responses to this activism as the most important turning points.

Weaker responses were sometimes unclear about the Dawes Act itself with some confusing it with the reservation policy and a few went no further than the 1930s which limited their marks. There were still a significant number who saw a turning point question as an opportunity to discuss each potential change in a separate paragraph with no attempt to compare them and these rarely got out of Level 4.

Question 4

- 4* 'Changing economic and employment opportunities were the most important reason for the advancement in women's civil rights in the period from 1865 to 1992.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular essay question perhaps because there was some confusion over what changing economic and employment opportunities were. Some candidates seemed to have pre-learnt an essay plan about the influence of wars on women's rights and assumed that was the same thing as economic and employment opportunities over the whole period. The stronger candidates often adopted a comparison between the named factor and the role of the federal government and women's activism over the whole period and that tended to work well. There was also a tendency to adopt a political, social and economic thematic approach which was sometimes successful but could lead to some very convoluted arguments about the role of economic opportunities within an economic theme.

Exemplar 2

In terms of political rights, for example the right to vote and the right to have your voice heard in politics, the changing nature of the economy certainly had a significant effect. Throughout much of the early period, women's political rights struggled to progress due to the notion of 'Separate Spheres', whereby women were expected to occupy a different role to men, with men focused on work and politics while women focused on the domestic, meaning that both men and women alike felt that women should be denied the right to vote as they were seen to be 'too weak' to enter the difficult world of politics (something that can clearly be seen in the foundation of the National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage in 1911 by Josephine Dodge which presented women's rights activists who were campaigning for the vote as unhappy housewives who had no idea what they were doing). The changing nature of the economy certainly had a significant effect on damaging the notion of 'separate spheres'. During the First World War, where women were needed to join the world of work due to the conscription of men into the army, the actions of women in work allowed them to show that women could have a role outside the traditional domestic work, allowing them to move into politics as a 'morale force' that could balance the influence of men, resulting in the ability to pass the 'Sheppard-Towner Act' in 1921 which provided for maternity care. Despite this however, the changing attitudes towards

women in politics would have meant nothing if not for the intervention of the Federal Government with the 19th Amendment in 1920 which gave women the right to vote, as while the changing economy in the war meant that women were seen as having a potential place in politics, without the right to vote they had no way to act on it. Furthermore, claiming that the emergence of the idea of women as a 'morale force' in politics was solely due to the changing economy would be to deny the influence of women themselves, through groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (founded in 1873) whose campaign for prohibition proved women could use their 'motherly instincts' to protect people through politics, and the National American Women's Suffrage Association (founded in 1890) whose campaigning had a significant effect on pressuring the government to enact the 19th Amendment. Furthermore, the changing economy was not enough to completely eradicate separate spheres, as even after the 19th Amendment many women felt politics was not their place and didn't vote, meaning even by the 1970s and 1980s women themselves had to establish the National Women's Political Caucus (1971) to promote voting unity, and EMILY's List (1985) to give money for women in congress. Thus, the changing economy was not the most important factor for the development of political rights and it was the work of women themselves who actually capitalised on the economy and the federal government to give women a political voice which was the most important.

Exemplar 2 is an extract from a Level 6 answer and shows strong and focused synthesis.

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