

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

**Y112/01 Summer 2022 series**

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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. A selection of candidate answers are also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper Y112 series overview

Y112 is one of thirteen units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about fifty years through an Enquiries or source-based option and an essay. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates have to answer a compulsory source questions based on four written primary sources. The question requires them to use all four sources to assess the validity of a view. In Section B candidates are required to answer one essay question from a choice of two.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to be able to consider both provenance of the sources and apply contextual knowledge to them in order to reach a judgement about the sources in relation to the issue in the question.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion.

| Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:   | Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considered the provenance of the sources and used relevant contextual knowledge</li> <li>• clearly linked the contextual knowledge to the source being discussed to show whether the view of the source was valid or not</li> <li>• reached an overall judgement as to the extent to which the sources supported the view in the question</li> <li>• in answering the essay question, discussed at least two issues in depth</li> <li>• gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic</li> <li>• reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question</li> <li>• made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not consider both the provenance and use contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources</li> <li>• wrote an unbalanced answer in their treatment of the sources, with very little consideration of one of the sources</li> <li>• reached a judgement based on their knowledge rather than on the strength of the sources or did not make a judgement at all</li> <li>• showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay</li> <li>• were unable to support their answer with relevant material</li> <li>• did not focus on the precise wording of the question</li> <li>• made unsupported comments about issues which were assertions.</li> </ul> |

## Section A overview

The Enquiry section in this unit examines the causes of industrial unrest in the period 1910-1914 and in particular whether this was caused by low wages. The question requires candidates to critically assess evidence and reach judgements. The critical evaluation of sources is the central theme in this section with all marks awarded against AO2.

### Question 1

#### England and a New Century c.1900–1918

- 1 Using these four sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that low wages were the main cause of the industrial unrest in the years from 1910 to 1914. [30]

Many candidates were able to analyse the content of the four sources and reach a reasonable conclusion regarding those which supported the premise in the title and the sources that didn't. Most candidates displayed a well-developed understanding of technique and so understood the need to use both context and provenance, although provenance was sometimes less-well developed. Judgement was still an issue though, meaning that many otherwise good responses were capped at the top of Level 4. Judgements must be made on the provenance of the sources and their overall strength in either supporting or challenging the view in the question. Candidates were assessing the strength of evidence in relation to whether low wages were the main cause of industrial unrest in the given period.

Source A was generally used to support the idea that low wages were the main cause of industrial unrest in the period 1910-14, although good responses were able to spot that the content could be used to support the alternative view that upholding trade union principles was also a cause. Content was well-used and many candidates were able to apply contextual knowledge from across the period, for example the Tonyandy unrest. Provenance was generally used appropriately with a number of candidates pointing out that as a Board of Trade report this would be a generally reliable account used for internal government usage.

Source B was handled well. Most candidates used the source to support the idea that industrial unrest was caused by low wages and poverty. Candidates were able to discuss the Liberal reforms mentioned, including the pensions and National Insurance and some were also able to discuss wage rates and poverty, referencing Booth and Rowntree's investigations as evidence. Provenance was usually treated soundly. Most pointed out Keir Hardie's position within the Labour movement and evaluated his potentially partisan view accordingly.

Source C was less well-handled. Some candidates missed the socialist aspect of the source while some had a limited understanding of socialism and its principles. Contextually there was limited discussion of syndicalism or socialist thought although many candidates did develop the idea of the competency of government. Unions received some discussion with relevant points being made about the changing government policy towards unions in the period after 1901. A few candidates knew H G Wells and supported their evaluation with some pertinent points on provenance while most focused on his socialist credentials more generally. Some candidates thought socialism was something that opposed support for the working classes.

Source D was, like Source C, misunderstood by some. Syndicalism was not well-known by the majority of candidates although most were able to discuss trade union unrest in the period to some extent. The Labour Party was a frequent feature in these answers with a growing movement towards working class rights. Only a few trade union leaders were noted. Provenance was seen as being subjective with most concentrating on this being a summary of several labour views and there was some merit to this approach.

Overall judgements tended to be lacking in a number of responses. Candidates did not, on the whole, summarise the strength of the evidence on both arguments based on the provenance of the sources and this is something that will allow them to access the highest levels of the mark-scheme.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates how one candidate skilfully uses context and provenance to evaluate Source B. The qualities shown are indicative of a higher-level response.

### Assessment for learning



On the source question there must be a judgement on the strength of the sources supporting each argument. This judgement should come on the provenance of the sources not knowledge of the subject. This is crucial to access Levels 5 and 6.

### Misconception



Socialism was seen as something benefiting the political class and something that opposed the working classes in some answers.

## Exemplar 1

Source B blames poverty for the wave of industrial unrest in the 1910s. Hardie's claims that one third of the population were in poverty are supported by Seebohm Rowntree's 1900 study of the city of York which found that a third of the city's population were in poverty - statistics very similar to Charles Booth's findings in London. From 1906 onwards, the Liberal government had introduced reforms such as pensions and insurance but these schemes were still small-scale in terms of who was eligible and how much money was paid out. As leader of an opposition party, Hardie may have been keen to overemphasise the Liberals' failings as a cause of the unrest. However, as the Labour party had been set up in the interests of workers, Hardie should have had a good understanding of what was causing the workers' frustration. This source agrees that low wages, and the poverty that resulted from it, were the main cause of pre-war strikes.

## Section B overview

Two essays are set, each from a different Key Topic. Here the candidates are asked to examine the reasons for the failure of the General Strike in 1926 or to measure the successes of Labour's domestic policies in the period 1945-51. The questions set require candidates to analyse the causes and consequences of major historical issues.

### Question 2\*

#### Britain c.1918–1951

2\* 'Poor leadership within the trade union movement was the main reason for the failure of the General Strike of 1926.' How far do you agree? [20]

This was the slightly more popular essay question and in general it was well-handled by the majority of candidates. Most were able to construct an argument based on several factors including poor leadership within the trade union movement, the preparations of Baldwin's government, the role of the BBC and newspapers, Labour's reluctance to strike and the attitudes of the general population. Strong responses factors against each other and evaluated the relative strengths of these in relation to the question before coming to an overall judgement. Interim judgements and an overall judgement were characteristics of a Level 6 response.

Exemplar 2 demonstrates a response which covers factors but largely treats these discretely - a 'shopping list' approach which is indicative of a Level 4/low Level 5 response.

#### Exemplar 2

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| B |   |   |
|   | 2 | There has been debate amongst historians for many years over the main reason for the failure of the General Strike. It is certainly true that poor leadership was <del>was</del> a main reason, however, it is necessary to consider the success of government preparations as well as the loss of momentum of the strike, in order to determine the main cause. Ultimately, the success of the government was the main reason for failure. |

Firstly, the poor leadership of the TUC was certainly a crucial factor in the failure of the General Strike. There was a lack of circulation of the worker's magazine 'The British Worker' which meant communication was very poor. This was not helped by a lack of commitment from the second wave of strikers and a lack of enthusiasm, as well as the fact that the BBC refused to broadcast the views of the strikers. These suggest that the TUC did not conduct the strike well at all. Furthermore, London was not brought to a standstill and

TUC membership was falling rapidly which contributed to ~~the~~ lack of control of the trade unions. If they were faced with violence then there was no chance of success as the TUC had no armed forces - unlike the government. However, successful leadership of the TUC would not have secured success as the government would still have been stronger, making government preparation a more important reason for failure.

Government preparation, particularly Baldwin, was the main reason for the failure of the General strike. Baldwin was clever and knew that the TUC had no stomach for the strike, so he played a skillful waiting game. His £10 million subsidy to the workers, arguably coerced the strikers into the strike and he also used it to rally middle-class support. Government preparations were ~~not~~ always going to be more important, no matter how good TUC leadership was as Baldwin prepared 226,000 constables to put down the strike. Similarly the government paper 'The British Gazette' was used to criticise TUC leaders ~~and~~ meanwhile the government was able to stop the paper 'The British Worker'. This shows how Baldwin was in control of the strike and he had no fear in his ability to put it down. What's more, he took the strike as an attack on the constitution and refused to negotiate with TUC ~~leaders~~ leaders, which further suggests he dominated the ~~strike~~ fate of the strike.

Another reason for failure to consider ~~is~~ is the loss of momentum of the strike and the TUC. It is crucial to note that the TUC had no real aim and it was not clear

what they wanted to achieve. They made it clear that their aims were not political, which immediately made them less of a threat. Additionally, they went into the ~~o~~ strike half-heartedly and it is necessary to remember that they were forced into it by the miners. In this sense we can argue that the strike was, therefore, always doomed to fail. Increasing the <sup>chance of</sup> failure, was the realisation that nationalisation was not going to solve their problems so it was difficult to see what the strikers actually wanted and this made them lose popular support. However, even if this lack of momentum did not exist, it would only have elongated the strike, it does not mean that the strike would have been successful. In fact, it was unclear as to what a 'successful strike' would have looked like anyway.

By way of conclusion, it can undoubtedly be argued that government preparation was the main reason for the failure of the General Strike. Although poor leadership led the strike to a premature end, good leadership could not have secured

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|  |  | success- It can be argued that no matter what the TUC did, Baldwin's strategies were always going to be stronger and he was always going to be able to defeat the strike.   |
|  |  | Therefore government preparation was more important than good leadership.   |
|  |  | The lack of clarity and momentum of the strike undoubtedly led to the strike to failure also, however, it can be argued that the strike was going to fail regardless of this loss of momentum due to the fact that Baldwin was in control of the strike and government preparation was far too strong, making failure inevitable. |

### Question 3\*

- 3\* How successful were the domestic policies of Labour governments in the period from 1945 to 1951? [20]

There were many good responses on this particular topic, focusing entirely on domestic matters. They were able to discuss a range of factors including the creation of the NHS, housing, education, nationalisation and continuing austerity. Most candidates established criteria for success and then produced sensible lines of argument comparing these issues.

Very good responses, as seen in Exemplar 3, used the criteria from the Beveridge Report to make their case.

## Exemplar 3

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|---|--|
| 3 | <p>Between 1945 and 1951, the Labour government reached a reasonable level of success in their domestic policy. Their 1945 election manifesto had been based on tackling the Beveridge Report's 'five giants' of poverty - want, idleness, ignorance, squalor and disease. Although Labour implemented policies to address all these issues, their success was limited by economic issues left over from the war.</p>  |
|   | <p>Labour took radical action to tackle idleness (unemployment) and want but there were several flaws to their policies. One of their first actions in government was to introduce the National Insurance Act in 1946. This was to be the foundation of the Beveridge reforms by providing unemployment benefits to all workers who made contributions. However, a safety net of National Assistance had to be added in 1948 as many of the poorest members of society were not eligible for national insurance. Although the entire population was now eligible for welfare, the benefits paid out were only 19% of the average industrial wage, making them well below subsistence level and unable to fully tackle the giant of 'want'. Labour's second economic policy was to reduce unemployment through nationalisation. Although government control of industry was successful in keeping unemployment low, the use of wage subsidies for struggling companies hindered further progress as firms felt little need to improve their profits, therefore stagnating wages and working conditions.</p> |

Although Labour took significant action to tackle unemployment and want, more could have been done to improve workers' incomes.

Labour were less successful in addressing ignorance (education) and squalor (housing). The Butler Education Act ~~was~~, which aimed to overhaul the secondary system, was partially abandoned with new technical schools never being introduced. Moreover, the Tripartite system was later criticised ~~was~~ for being socially divisive. Housing was a more pressing need as the Blitz had left 750,000 families homeless. Temporary pre-war homes were used to ease the worst of these problems but financial issues and a lack of materials (both caused by the war) meant few permanent homes were built. As a result, homelessness in 1951 was at the same level as 1931. Out of all five giants, 'squalor' and 'ignorance' were the ones Labour was least able to tackle through domestic policy.

The post-war Labour government's greatest domestic achievement was perhaps the creation of the NHS in 1948. As the solution to 'disease', the National Health Service would provide the British population with comprehensive healthcare. As can be expected, demand was high. However, Labour did not anticipate that annual running costs would reach £358 million by 1950. By this point, the expense of their domestic reforms had pushed Labour to introduce austerity measures; ~~see~~ for prescriptions

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|  |  | and dentistry was the next step. Although this seems like a minor change, it undermined the concept of universal healthcare and triggered the resignation of health Secretary Bevin, significantly splitting the party. Although not perfect, the introduction of the NHS was perhaps one of the most momentous domestic policies of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.   |
|  |  | In conclusion, Labour were partially successful in their domestic policies from 1945 to 1951. Although radical changes like nationalisation and the welfare state were introduced, they were not enough to eliminate poverty - their ultimate goal. Meanwhile, promises around healthcare, housing and education were unfulfilled due to a lack of funding. Having said this, however, the third Labour government must be admired for being the most radical and most active government of its era, despite the highly unfavourable economic condition of Britain after the Second World War. |

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