

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY A**

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**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

**Y315/01 Summer 2024 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 is 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.

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## Paper Y315/01 series overview

Y315 is one of twenty-one units for Paper 3 of the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an interpretation question on a named in-depth topic and through 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.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>showed a clear understanding of the views of the two passages in relation to the question</li> <li>were able to use contextual knowledge to test the passages, linking that knowledge directly to the passages through evaluative words</li> <li>were able to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the passages using contextual knowledge</li> <li>covered the whole period in a balanced way in the essay questions</li> <li>adopted a thematic approach</li> <li>made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic</li> <li>supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples</li> <li>reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>showed a limited understanding of one or both of the passages</li> <li>did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the passage</li> <li>did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the passage and therefore did not evaluate the passage</li> <li>adopted a chronological rather than a thematic approach in the essay questions</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

There is one compulsory question in this section. This question requires candidates 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.

Section A in Paper Y315 is focused on Confederate generalship during the American Civil War.

### Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages.

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of Confederate generalship during the American Civil War. [30]

There were many successful responses to the interpretation question, with most candidates able to take a holistic view of the passages and identify the key points in their arguments. Candidates recognised that Passage A suggests that Confederate generalship was weak while Passage B argues that General Robert E. Lee was effective but failed at Gettysburg. More successful responses provided key examples to both support and challenge the views in the passages and they used evaluative language to clearly link the candidates' knowledge to the historians' views. In less successful responses candidates had sometimes misread the question to mean leadership rather than generalship and focused at length on Jefferson Davis and even Abraham Lincoln. There were also sometimes lengthy descriptions of generals and their battles and often this was not linked to the arguments in the passages.

Exemplar 1 below is a Level 5 response which has a good overview of the arguments in each passage and then evaluates each in turn using the candidate's relevant own knowledge. It did not achieve Level 6 as it is not as effective when discussing the weaknesses of each passage and there is some evaluation by omission.

## Exemplar 1

1		<p>The American Civil War was a divisive conflict which oversaw the largest loss of American life in a single conflict. It spanned 1861-1865 and was between the confederacy in the south and the union army in the north. Passage A presents the Confederacy leadership as inferior to the north, depicting the leadership to be ineffective and not strategic. Whereas passage B completely <del>disagrees</del> contradicts passage A, depicting General Lee as a military genius, comparing him to Napoleon in his <del>bold</del> bold strategic and tactical decisions. However both sources do converge to an agreement that the costly attacks and loss of manpower lost the war for the Confederacy.</p> <p>Firstly, passage A offers an explanation focussing solely on the negative aspects of the Confederacy's leadership during the American Civil War. The passage starts by stating the South "produced no generals" who were on par with the likes of Generals <del>of</del> Grant or Sherman. Whilst the North's generalship initially was incredibly poor the likes of Grant and Sherman were indeed very strong and capable leaders. However the passage is incorrect in saying the Confederacy had no generals of a similar calibre. General Lee of the Confederacy was a brilliant tactical leader who managed to produce during victories such as at Vicksburg, this prolonged the South's war effort and demonstrated the effective <del>tactics</del> tactics.</p>
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1		<p>             leadership that the Confederacy did have, which was able to beat the <del>the</del> Union in many battles, <del>that</del> <del>was</del> before making it an unconvincing explanation of the Confederacy's generalship thus far. The passage then continues and perceives the lack of Southern resources in the Western theatre <del>was</del> meant the Confederacy lost the West and then the war. This is true, the Confederate generals due to severe ineptitude disregarded the Western theatre, <del>that</del> which eventually did lead to the Union army capturing the Mississippi, dividing the South and gaining victory, <del>therefore</del>, <del>that</del> <del>therefore</del> <del>the</del> <del>Confederacy</del> thus offering a more convincing explanation of Confederacy generalship. Moreover, the passage is convincing in its explanation of Confederacy generalship as it offers the view that the South bled itself dry. Indeed the costly attacks made by most specifically General Robert E Lee into the north were incredibly costly, although they produced <del>some</del> great victories which heightened morale, the South would leave the campaign suffering more losses than the North even in battles they won. However the source disregards the factor of army size. <del>Before the war</del> At the start of the war the South was expected to lose swiftly however the war, thanks to brilliant Southern leadership lasted longer than <del>the</del> as previously conceived. Due to the North's larger armies the South would struggle to win, <del>that</del> not solely due to inept military generals. Therefore whilst it is           </p>
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1		<p>Convincing as the South did bleed itself dry, it can't only be linked to poor leadership. Lastly, the passage believes the Confederacy "should not have tried to fight a conventional war" <del>there</del>, the passage appears to not understand the initial grand strategy of the Confederacy. This grand strategy was to not fight a conventional war <del>but</del> <sup>and</sup> to stop exports to Europe, attempting to gain the assistance of the likes of France or England, who would help negotiate peace. This plan failed of course but should not be disregarded by <del>the</del> passage A, making it less convincing. Thus, through historical evidence, it can be shown that despite offering <sup>some</sup> convincing explanations towards the Confederate generalship that passage A offers inconvincing explanations and disregards factors, making it not significantly convincing.</p> <p>Whereas passage B offers a perspective very different to passage A, displaying <sup>the Confederacy's leaders such as</sup> General Lee as a <del>strong</del> tactically cunning and capable. <del>and the Confederacy</del> Firstly, the passage is accurate in its depiction that Lee had <del>the</del> elements of Napoleonic leadership. General Lee indeed used Napoleonic tactics, which could attribute to his downfall, as well as made <del>an</del> an effort to bond with his men while he wasn't entirely "invincible" as the passage suggests it is clear his leadership was effective, as he managed to command the South helping them survive as long as possible in a war they could never win, therefore the passage further offers a compelling argument to Confederate</p>
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1		<p>             leadership. The passage then depicts the attack into the North in 1863 as "clearing" but also the South could withdraw "in good order" whilst the attacks were very clearing and surprised many, allowing the South to gain fantastic victories the South <del>never</del> <sup>did</sup> not withdraw in good order. The South sustained heavy casualties and in a war of attrition that could be the deciding factor, especially for such a small army. Thus offering a less convincing explanation. <del>Whereas passage then</del> whereas the passage attributes the most significant erosion to the war effort was Lee's large loss of manpower. This is entirely accurate as the South did not have to population size, <del>was</del> sitting at around 9 million including slaves to the North <del>with</del> with over 3 <del>times</del> times. This made the South predicted to lose and <del>the</del> the risky frontal assaults against the North could not be afforded, <del>which are</del> <del>also</del> making the passage more convincing. Lastly, the passage is true in depicting Gettysburg as the Confederacy's greatest failure. The battle saw less than half the men who fought return, clearly orders such as Pickett's Charge sent the men to slaughter. This horrific battle could be the effecter in the snowball effect that is the South's defeat, with the consequences leaving worse morale and will to fight. Although the passage doesn't mention the Confederacy's disarray for the western theatre, which could           </p>
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1		possibly be one of their greatest failures, <del>the</del> passage B offers a historically supported and convincing argument into the Confederate generalship.
		On the balance of historical evidence it is clear that, while both passages agree that the risky Confederate attacks were one of the greatest factors for defeat of the South, passage A <del>also</del> disregards significant factors and overall offers unconvincing explanations towards the Confederate leadership, failing to regard the grand strategy and the cunning leadership of the generals such as Lee. This is not to be disregarded, making passage B significantly more convincing as it mentions topics disregarded by passage A and presents an explanation of strong historical accuracy. Therefore passage B <del>is</del> is more convincing in its explanation of Confederate generalship.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should take an overview of the two passages. What is the main view of each passage about the issue in the question?

## Section B overview

Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three. To do well on Section B candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period of their study. They should explain similarities and differences between the events they are discussing to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period, unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons may be made across the period within the topic or between regions, depending on the topic. It is also important that the comparisons are explained – what is similar or different between the periods or regions.

The most successful responses will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

### Question 2\*

**2\*** 'The concept of 'Total War' can only be used to describe twentieth century wars.'

How far do you agree with this view of the period from 1792 to 1945?

**[25]**

This was the most popular of the essay questions and there were some very impressive answers which showed a good understanding of the concept of Total War and how far it can be applied throughout the period. Many candidates used the introduction to address the concept of Total War and then established themes such as manpower, economic production and civilian involvement to make comparisons across the period and establish synthesis. Some responses approached this 'war by war' in separate paragraphs and therefore rarely got above Level 4 as they did not make direct comparisons across the period and often did not have a direct focus on the question. Less successful responses sometimes only focused on the twentieth century wars and in particular the First World War dominated answers with little reference to any other wars.

Exemplar 2 below is a Level 5 essay which is focused and achieves some synthesis with a thematic approach but that synthesis is not developed enough for Level 6.

## Exemplar 2

2)	<p>The concept of Total War has undoubtedly become more prominent as warfare has progressed, particularly in its involvement in army sizes and conscription, the role of propaganda and nationalism, as well as the <sup>industrialisation</sup> <del>organisation</del> of the state in preparation for large conflicts. While it can be argued that total war as a concept is only applicable to twentieth century conflicts since this is when it became most prominent, I would disagree with this statement since it fails to consider massive civilian and government involvement in wars long before this which surely count as total war.</p> <p>Primarily it could be argued that total war is only applicable to the 20th century when viewing the mass effect <del>of</del> it had on army sizes and conscription within wars in this era. For example, World War Two contained massive conscription and army growth efforts from Germany, who had been condemned to just 100,000 men after the Treaty of Versailles in 1918. By the outbreak of the war, they were reaching numbers of nearly 8 million and <del>that</del> over 13 million had served by the conclusion of the war, demonstrating the impact of conscription as a factor of total war. Similarly, Russia also made massive mobilisation efforts within this period, with their army reaching 8 million men from a previous number of 1.8</p>
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million men, ~~demonstrating~~ during the first World War, demonstrating the impact of total war during the 20th century. However, the impacts of such conscription are just as evident prior to the 20th century, making ~~this~~ this element of total war applicable to numerous conflicts outside of this period. Specifically, the French Levée en Masse during the French revolutionary wars, organised by Carnot, conscripted all able bodied men between 18 and 25, and gathered numbers of up to 1.5 million men, thus demonstrating the impacts of conscription and drawing a likeness to total war. Similarly, the American Civil War saw conscription efforts from both sides, with the Confederates 1862 conscription act, and the Union's subsequent 1863 enrolment act helping their armies reach numbers of 1 million and 2 million respectively, demonstrating it further as an early showing of total war. Even after losses during the Napoleonic Wars, many countries underwent ~~an~~ extreme mobilisation in their total war efforts. After defeat at Sena-Auerstadt in 1806, the Prussian army grew from 66,000 to 300,000 by 1813, while Austria raised a reserve militia of 180,000 after being galvanised by defeats at Ulm and Austerlitz. As a result, this demonstrates that the effects of conscription as a factor of total war are not solely limited to the 20th century, hence why I disagree with the statement.

Another element of total war which can be seen massively in 20th century wars is that of propaganda, like in World War Two, where the war was depicted differently depending on its audience. Goebbels presented the war to Nazi Germany as a clash of civilisations, while Britain and the USA depicted it as a vital fight for democracy. Meanwhile the ambitious Japan displayed it as a chance to build their glorious empire, inspiring strong feelings of nationalism. Similarly, they also took this approach during the Russo-Japanese War, where their ambitions in Eastern Asia like Korea and Manchuria thrust them onwards in their victorious conquests against the Russians, hence showing the impact of propaganda as a factor of total war. Though, this is equally applicable to wars prior to the 20th century and their own use of propaganda and nationalism as an effort to further total war. During the revolutionary wars, over 1 million nationalist pamphlets were printed to inspire French troops, alongside a republican songbook which was massively influential, demonstrating the early impacts of propaganda as a medium of total war. Similarly, the wars of unification inspired strong nationalist feelings led by propaganda, such as the Franco-Sardinian victories at battles like Custozza, while the ever present impact of nationalist Italians like Garibaldi during his victories at Sicily and Naples led to great public approval, demonstrating the



importance of propaganda as a total war factor well before the 20th century, thus proving its importance outside just this era.

Industrialisation and organisation of the state was another element of total war heavily present during the 20th century, though countries like Germany in World War 1, whose industrial efforts at home skyrocketed. For example steel production grew from 3 million tons in 1870 to over 13 million by 1914, greatly aiding their preparedness for war. Similarly, during the Russo-Japanese war, the Japanese had undergone great industrialisation to prepare and had 68 ships in use in a single battle at Tsushima bay compared to the Russians' 38, demonstrating the usefulness of industrialisation as a factor of total war. Though, it is once again arguable that these efforts were present prior to the 20th century - During the War of Unification, Prussia had become one of the first countries to truly industrialise and had railways spanning hundreds of miles, as well as newer weaponry like the Krupp cannon and Dreyse needle rifle. Similarly to this, the American Civil war saw massive industrialisation in the ~~South~~ North, who laid 21,000 miles of railroad, and produced pig iron and firearms 94% and 97% more than the South respectively. As a result it is clear that even within industrial efforts as part of total war, it is not solely limited to the 20th century.

		Therefore, it is overall that I would disagree with the concept of total war only being applied to the 20th century wars, as a considerable number of elements encompassing total war were clearly in effect in various wars throughout previous centuries, hence making the statement invalid in this respect.
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### Question 3\*

3\* 'Throughout the period from 1792 to 1945 military plans had little impact on the outcome of wars.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was the least popular of the essays and there was a noticeable tendency to compare military plans to other factors such as generalship or weapons technology which was not the focus of the question. More successful responses focused on the impact of military plans on the outcome of wars across the period and established themes such as the size of armies, use of railways and the integration of new technology in order to test the thesis in the question. In less successful responses candidates rarely went beyond describing military plans such as the Schlieffen and Anaconda Plans and as with Question 2, there was often a tendency to approach this 'plan by plan' in separate paragraphs which made synthesis hard to establish.

### Question 4\*

4\* 'The mobilisation of the economy for war has been more important in the period from 1866 to 1945 than in the period from 1792 to 1866.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This question was often well answered with more successful responses establishing themes such as technology, transport, finance and the size of armies to make comparisons between the early and later periods. Most candidates agreed with the thesis in the question, especially with the development of weapons of mass destruction, but good evidence was also found from the Napoleonic and American Civil Wars to counter the argument. In less successful responses candidates often took a chronological approach which then made it difficult to compare the two periods and meant that they frequently ran out of time before they got to the end of the period.

### Assessment for learning



Remind candidates to provide evidence to support any comparisons or contrast made, otherwise their argument becomes assertion and is unlikely to reach the higher levels.



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