

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y312/01 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 Y312 series overview

Y312 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"> 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 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. 	<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 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

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.

Question 1

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

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the reasons for the Salem witch trials. [30]

The two interpretations offered different views as to the reasons for the Salem witch trials. It is important that responses take an overview of the interpretation and consider what view it is offering about the issue in the question, rather than cherry pick a phrase and then evaluate that.

Exemplar 1 provides an example of a strong response that was focused and placed at the top of Level 6. It shows the depth of knowledge and level of evaluation expected. There were a number of candidates who simply explained the two interpretations, often using knowledge to support that explanation, but did not evaluate the passages. Evaluation requires candidates to give a value to the interpretation in each passage about the issue in the question, hence it is important to take an overview of what the view of the interpretation is.

There was much contextual knowledge that could have been used to test the views. Interpretation A focused more on the longer term causes of the witch trials, whereas Interpretation B considered the roles of individuals and more short-term causes. However, both did discuss religious and social and economic issues. In evaluating Interpretation A, candidates could have argued the view offered was valid given the impact of the Indian Wars, the issue of the Charter which threatened Puritan domination and the economic impact of the Navigation Acts. In terms of religion, Interpretation A might have been seen as valid because of the message in the sermons of Puritan preachers, while Interpretation B also stressed the role of religion, but focused on the issue of tensions caused by the church ministry. Interpretation B might have been as valid with its focus on the tensions between the Putnams and Porters, which also manifested itself in the religious struggle.

However, where Interpretation A was often challenged is that many of these issues were there before 1692 and did not lead to a witch hunt - and that they impacted much of Massachusetts, but the hunt was largely confined to Salem and Andover. In challenging Interpretation B, some responses considered whether the divide between the Putnams and Porters was reflected in the accusations and considered who was actually accused.

Exemplar 1

These two passages each seek to explain the witch trials of Salem, which occurred from 1692-93 amidst great local strife and conflict. Passage A ~~seeks to~~ ^{and social} attributes the trials to 'extreme anxiety' amidst local problems, which a religious mindset then worked upon to see a witch-threat afoot to root out. Passage B ~~seeks to~~ argues 'social and economic tensions' in Salem caused the trials, influenced by 'religious tensions' and the relevant individuals. Overall, while passage B makes a ~~strong~~ good explanation of how ~~social~~ religious tensions locally helped trigger the trials, passage A's greater awareness of the multiplicity of factors ^{for its reasons} at work makes it ultimately the much more convincing explanation.

Indeed, passage A argues that 'extreme anxiety' in New England amidst 'wars' ^{and} 'epidemic illnesses', and ~~'constitutional change'~~ combined to create an atmosphere susceptible to witch-hunting, driving the trials. It is certainly the case that extreme local problems troubled Salem, with the nearby King William's War being fought in Maine with the Wabanaki Indians, and as refugees from this conflict passed through Salem warning of it in the 1691-92 winter, we can see how a highly tense atmosphere developed against this existential threat. Moreover, smallpox had devastated nearby Indians, further worsening the local situation and creating a desire to remove such threats by attacking the witches responsible: seen in the trials' execution of Martha Carrier, who had brought smallpox to Andover, as a witch. Thus the passage is highly-substantiated in building ^{its} ~~up~~ image of 'extreme anxiety' as these local problems developed the tense fear of existential threats susceptible to externalising them by attacking the witch-threat. But this is undermined by the fact such factors were ubiquitous in Salem New England: the hunts were not. Even so, Passage A continues to argue

that amidst such issues and 'constitutional changes' as well, this became seen as a 'general movement of God's will against New England' - that would leave Mass susceptible to a witch trial to prove godliness. Indeed, the 'constitutional changes' rumoured (correctly) to be coming with the new 1691 charter for Massachusetts of enforced religious toleration terrified local Puritans like those in Salem as it meant they could not build a pure theocracy. And in the Puritan vision of - all afflictions and problems as representing a test by God - like seeing Native Americans as diabolic agents - a drive was thus created in the local community in Salem to persecute diabolic witches once this threat arose to affirm godliness and secure His favour. And while the passage is again focusing on factors like these that were ubiquitous in New England, it shows a strong awareness of how religious fears were inflamed - all that was needed for the trials was an accusation to light the spark. Thus the passage makes a highly convincing explanation of the reasons for the trials in showing how 'extreme anxiety' developed susceptible to witch-hunting locally, even if many such fears were ubiquitous.

The passage goes on to contend that these fears were fuelled by the 'painful undertone of social change' which ~~was~~ ^{was} crucial in Salem itself in developing the anxieties that produced the trials. This can be seen in how the first person tried and executed by the trials, in June 1692, was Bridget Bishop, a local innkeeper who allowed ~~any~~ gambling and drinking Puritans disapproved of, and also symbolised social change as a woman running this. Thus the passage is very much substantiated in seeing 'social change' as key since that was a key target of the hunts. And as ~~the~~ Salem was ^{SPs} ~~also~~ ^{also} driven between the mercantile, more tolerant Porters and agrarian, Puritan Puritans who helped drive local justices of the peace to allow the trials in the first place, to win God's favour for their influence to triumph, we again see a highly strong case from the passage as 'social change' builds a sense of threat and a 'sharp clash of interests' which drove the witch trials as - climactic attempt to maintain ~~the~~ traditions against 'social change'. This highly convincing account

from the passage directly relates to Salem itself, even as the passage fails to make that explicit connection, and thus further supports its account. Passage A ends by discussing 'civil and religious ^{C...} faction' climaxed in the witchcraft trials, but here the passage makes a serious error as it argues villagers played 'accuser' and townspeople 'witnesses'. For while the initial accusations indeed came from those in Salem village - Betty Parris and Abigail Williams - there is no geographic correlation between accusers/accused and the East/West Village/Town divide. This seriously undermines the passage's explanation since its claims here are clearly not substantiated, even as it is certainly right to see 'religious C... faction', since as we have seen the Puritan Puritans supported the hunt; sergeant Thomas Putnam pushed local JP John Hathorne to issue the initial warrants. Thus while the passage is wrong in its division of accuser/accused, it still offers a highly convincing account of how 'faction' drove the trials.

As such, while insubstantiated in its division of accusers, the passage A's highly-substantiated case for how 'faction', religious issues, 'social change', and local strife combined to 'build "extreme anxiety" which climaxed in the trials outweighs this. For it offers a high awareness of the multiplicity of factors at work that leaves it very convincing as it shows how these could and drove the trials.

On the other hand, passage B argues that 'social and economic tensions' in Salem village ~~down~~-caused the trials, ^{drives} the pro-anti-Parris split. This tension was certainly extreme, so much that the pro-Parris rates committee was ousted in October 1691 by the opposing faction; a division only made worse by Parris' own demands for a higher salary and free firewood. This developed a strong tension in the Salem between the Parris-supporting faction, led by the Putnams, and anti-Parris one led by the Porters. Thus the passage is highly substantiated by seeing this deep rift as present, but again the lack of geographic

Correlation that should exist for Western Pro-Parris accusers and Eastern Anti-Parris accusers seriously undermines this. For it shows the trials were not simply driven by such strife, since it then did not play out as before in ~~the~~ ^{all those} ~~targeted~~ ^{targeted}, showing a markedly weaker case from the passage. The passage nonetheless goes on to argue that these 'factional strains were rooted in religious tension'. This is indeed true, since the Putnams were more Calvinist and supported a church in Salem Village while the Porters were more tolerant and supported the existing church in Salem Town - a strong divide. Moreover, ~~some~~ early targets of the hunt were of dissenting religiosity: Sarah Osborne, among the first accused, rarely attended church, and George Burroughs, executed for witchcraft in July 1692 despite ~~not~~ having been Salem's minister, was suspected of being a baptist. These contextual norms and thus made them targets by the Putnam-oriented accusers - though neither was aligned with the Porters. Thus while the passage is convincing in arguing that 'religious tension' helped drive the factional strain, this often worked so independently of this drive the trials in expurgating the impact, leaving the passage extremely weak in its ill-substantiated assertions of these social tensions directly correlating with the trials.

Passage B goes on to ~~stand that~~ acknowledge the separate role of religion, since these 'religious tension' helped lead to the conclusion the initial afflictions 'were caused by agents of the Devil'. Indeed, with Parris preaching in late 1691-92 of diabolic agents afflicting him and Salem now that the anti-Parris rates Committee wanted his salary, we can see how these fears and religious tensions were reflected in Parris himself, and so into his home. And thus when his daughter Betty Parris and ward Abigail Williams experienced afflictions affirmed by the local Dr Corlidge to be supernatural, we can see why he saw this as diabolic work as his prayers failed to alleviate their afflictions. Thus this passage is strongly corroborated and much strengthened by its highly convincing explanation of how religious tension 'contributed to the initial afflictions' and the conclusions drawn that 'typical ~~the~~ ^{the trials} ~~trials~~'.

in seeing this diabolic threat to be removed by trials' as the tensions were reflected in Parris' own home and mind. Passage 3 then relates this to how the threat of a mass witch-conspiracy led 'some religious and secular leaders' to support the trials, spreading them out and driving them. This can be seen in how the appointment of the zealous William Stoughton as presiding judge of the trials led to their spread as he consistently clamoured for action even into 1693 for the hunts, despite by then having no public support for it. Meanwhile, Parris' convictions of the threat were seen echoed by leading theologian Cotton Mather, who kept on the trials as needed divine work and argued for them to continue in frequent June and October 1692 pamphlets. This leaves passage 3 very well-corroborated in seeing how individuals enabled and drove the trials, though this more caused the expansion of the trials than actually initiated them, slightly weakening this fairly convincing point.

As such, while passage 3 does make a highly-substantiated case for ^{select} individuals enabled the hunts and religious tensions led to the girls' afflictions being swiftly kept upon - producing the trials, its unconvincing and ill-corroborated account for how the Puritan Parris fanaticism specifically drove the trials is much less convincing. Moreover, the fact it directly states 'social and economic tensions' as it caused the hunt without developing the latter or fully substantiating the former ultimately leaves it a fairly unconvincing account for the reasons for the trials despite its success elsewhere.

To conclude, while passage 3 makes a strong case for individuals enabling the trials and religious tensions in Parris' own home driving the initial push for trials, it is outweighed by its ill-substantiated case for social tensions as key earlier failure to consider the broader context of the Salem hunts. For passage 4 offers a strong endorsement for the multiplicity of factors which built an 'extreme anxiety' of open to the trials, which more than

		Compensates for its failure to fully account for the accuser focused split. As such,
		passage it's greater awareness of the multiplicity of factors at work and
		greater overall substitution leave it by to see it much the more con-
		vincing explanation for the reasons for the Salem trials than 8.

Assessment for learning



'Evaluate' means give a value to the interpretation. In simple terms, is the view valid?

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 strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2*

2* 'Economic causes were always more important than religious ones in the growth in persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was a popular question with most candidates able to explain the role of economic and religious issues in the hunts, but with a number drifting away from the demands of the question to consider other issues which were not relevant to the question set.

There were a number of economic issues that were discussed, and responses did explain the role they placed in the hunts, with particular reference to the mini ice age or the impact of war. Where responses were less strong was in comparing these issues across regions and therefore often just produced a response which went into Level 4 with, at best, some limited synthesis. This was also seen in the discussion of religious issues, although candidates did find it easier to compare areas of religious tension with those where there was uniformity of belief and argue that hunts were often in the regions where there were tensions, comparing Southern Germany with Spain or Italy.

There were also comparisons made about the impact of religious wars, for example the increased persecution that impacted the Thirty Years War or the English Civil War alongside the lack of persecution in France during the Wars of Religion, allowing synthesis to be demonstrated. Many argued that religion was an underlying factor throughout the period and pointed to the role of the Church in wanting to purify society or its statement on witches and the literature produced.

Question 3*

- 3* To what extent did the geography of the witchcraze remain the same in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

[25]

This was the least popular question and one candidates found most challenging, hence Exemplar 2 which provides an example of covering both possible approaches and a high level of synthesis throughout. The issue for most candidates was that they wanted to turn this into another essay on the reasons for persecutions, rather than it being driven by the actual geography.

The strongest responses considered issues such as the movement from West to East, with many commenting on the division between east and west of the River Elbe after c1650. There were others that commented on the constant feature in the west of hunts taking place in border regions.

There was also some discussion of the contrast between Southern Europe and Central Europe, with responses commenting that for the most part hunts in the South of Europe were earlier, if they happened – although the strongest responses did note exceptions – than those in Central Europe/Germany. There were also those who discussed whether the hunts were focused on urban or rural areas throughout the period. Responses also pointed out that were certain areas that never really saw a major witchcraze, arguing that much of the North was largely exempt. If these issues were taken up then candidates found plenty of opportunity for synthesis and remained focused on the question, often able to supply very good details about the scale of the hunts, or lack of, in the regions considered.

Exemplar 2

		Answer:
		The geography of the witchcraze changed a great deal over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As religious tensions moved North and expanded across Europe in the period, so too did the witchcraze often follow it in tandem, changing to reflect it. Moreover, as the underpinning ideas of the craze spread across Europe, the hunt craze reflected this, following them to push East of the Elbe after 1650. And while the geography remained consistently focused on rural areas, the fact the areas in question shifted across Europe over the period demonstrates that far from staying the same, the witchcraze's geography dramatically change changed.

Indeed, the witchcraft shifted its geography as it followed the growth of religious divisions across Europe, as these lent it ideas of a diabolic threat credibility. Initially, the core was centred on Switzerland and the Alps, as with the *Como Inquisition* of 1500-1510, which killed ~1000 witches over years of local *Waldensian* heresy. ~~By However~~ ^{consequently}, the growth of the Reformation from 1517 and Counter-Reformation from 1545 in Germany pushed the witchcraft Northwards, as with the 1626-31 Franconian hunts presented by zealous Prince-Bishops to rid themselves of all other religious impurities, killing 4000. What this contrast illustrates is that as religious tensions shifted Northwards, so too did the witchcraft, in turn dramatically altering its geography from an initial base on Switzerland to a later one around Germany and the Holy Roman Empire (HRE). Thus as religious divisions spread like wildfire over Europe, so the witchcraft too did not so much stay the same as ~~slowly~~ ^{seriously} geographically altered from the heretical hotbed of the Alps North into Germany over the sixteenth century.

Moreover, as new denominations sought to expurgate the witch-threat, so did their mass hunts force the witchcraft's geography to dramatically alter to follow this. Thus the establishment of the Danish Lutheran Church in 1530 and its driving a 1544 hunt killing 52 there drove the witchcraft northwards for the first time, into Scandinavia. Similarly, Puritans' feeling threatened by the prospect of enforced education drove them to support the ~~1691-92~~ ¹⁶⁹¹⁻⁹³ Salem trials, bringing mass hunts to North American shores in full. Thus we see how in these two examples how the witchcraft followed the growth of zealous and new confessional strife first Northwards into Scandinavia and at the end of the period to North America. In this, we cannot but recognise the ~~significant~~ ^{massive} geographical change in the witchcraft as it continues to push outwards across continents; far from staying the same.

However, the witchera's geography's being shaped the by the spread of its underpinning ideological ideas off led to some stability in its geography until this. For the failure of these ideas to ever seriously penetrate Russia meant the witchera never properly developed there, beyond a few trials from 1622 to 1700. Meanwhile, the popularity of Kramer's 'Malleus Maleficarum' (1486) and its warnings of a witch threat in to christendom in the HRE led to 75% of all hunts happening there; focused West of the Elbe prior to 1650. This ^{contrast} elucidates a level of stability as its geography consistently found its limits in the Easternmost periphery of Europe in Russia, while remaining consistently focused in the HRE's more Western side prior to 1650 where its ideas were prominent. Thus the ~~by~~ contrast shows how the spread of its intellectual ideas or the lack thereof determined its geography's finding consistent boundaries in a resistant Russia, and a fairly consistent focus in the ~~western~~ HRE. This shows a broad stability in its geography's limits and focus, albeit one undermined by how the HRE ~~was~~ was the focus only after Switzerland.

For the Witchera's ideas ~~never~~ shifting in how widely accepted they were in the HRE meant even here the geography shifted. Thus while the Trier hunt of 1581-93, which killed 1000, and was stimulated by a local printing run of Kramer, came at a time when practically no hunts were occurring in Austria or Bohemia. And ~~even~~ By contrast, the Trier hunt's destructiveness prevented many further trials there so while Bohemia and Austria had spots of trials killing 1000 and 900 respectively in 1695-1720, Trier had none as it had already grown sceptical to the relevant ideas. This contrast perfectly elucidates how excessively variable the witchera's geography really was, since even within the HRE it experienced remarkable eastwards fluctuations over time. In this, we can see how very much the geography changed and altered even within the area where the witchera was most concentrated. These erratic and variable

Contrasts in the hunts there as different regions of the HRE were attuned with leontheological ideas at different times shows dramatic shifts Eastwards ^(from West) even within the HRE in the case's geography over the seventeenth century.
 * = and 7% in urban areas

Even so, it could be rural areas consistently represented the main focus of the witchcraft's geography, for their greater autonomy to prosecute mass hunts. Thus while the urbanised Northern Netherlands had few executions (under 100) and their last in 1603. For witchcraft, the nearly Combrisis rural area was just beginning its persecution in the 1570s-1610s. Similarly, in Poland-Lithuania 81% of hunts occurred in rural areas* of its 3-4000 deaths from 1676-724 1720. This clearly contrast between urbanised and rural areas not only shows that rural areas consistently represented the primary geographic focus of the case, but equally that urban areas were consistently those it struggled to reach. As such, we see strong testament to the witchcraft's geography staying the same in this respect over the period as across Europe and at centuries it remains focused in rural areas.

But even these rural areas in which the witchcraft was focused dramatically shifted, showing even further alterations in the period as centralisation in the West pushed them East. Thus the rural Champagne-Ardenne hunt of 1587-88 was stopped by the Paris parliament after killing 300, and the PP steadily centralised control here, in 1624 demanding it review all witchcraft cases, ending rural autonomy and the witchcraft here essentially. By contrast, Hungary after in the seventeenth century remained highly decentralised and thus its hunts only began in force ^{in rural areas} there in the 1690s, killing ^{over} 800 between then and 1700. What this contrast shows us is that even as the ~~former~~ witchcraft was centralised in rural areas, legal centralisation forced these rural areas to themselves shift Eastwards to areas like Hungary and Poland-Lithuania which remained heavily decentralised. Thus even within an apparent stable geography focused on rural areas, the

		Witchcraft's geography was pushed Eastwards in a dramatic ^{states} major shift to more decentralised states there over the 1600s.
		To conclude, while the witchcraft's geography was consistently focused on rural areas and the HRE ^{circa} in 1500-1600, while consistently finding a borderline ^{borderline} against it in Russia, it dramatically altered over the period. For just as novel religious divisions pushed it steadily Northwards from Switzerland at the start of the period to the HRE in the middle, to Scandinavia, and even to North America at its end, so too did its rural areas change. For the witchcraft moved from a more Western focus to the still decentralised ^{rural} areas east of the Elbe and Germany after 1600, and even within the HRE its geography was constantly changing as its underlying ideas were alternately escaped or rejected. As such, we must conclude that far from staying the same the geography of the witchcraft dramatically and constantly changed over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Question 4*

- 4* 'Torture was the most frequent response of the authorities to witchcraft in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was probably the most popular question, but unfortunately led to many weaker responses describing the methods of torture that were used rather than addressing whether it was the most frequent response.

Candidates were largely aware of areas where torture was used on a frequent basis, and this often led to an explanation as to why, but it could have been contrasted with regions where torture was not used or where it was banned, allowing some level of synthesis to appear in the responses. In responses that did this they often made reference to Spain and Italy where torture was not allowed, or England which provided an ideal opportunity to argue torture was the most frequent response where authorities had lost control. Most responses were aware as to why it was used, providing as it did a much higher confession rate. The strongest responses compared national and regional approaches and again this provided the opportunity for synthesis. Some argued that the use of torture declined everywhere over the period as attitudes to witchcraft changed through the scientific revolution, often making reference to specific writings, such as Langenfeld. Others argued it declined because of a desire from the authorities for increased proof. However, it was important that responses considered other issues, regardless as to whether they were to argue torture was the most frequent response. Responses that did this considered issues such as legal developments, punishments and confessions obtained without torture. A simple description of the methods used was not rewarded highly and was most likely placed in Level 2 unless there was some explanation.

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