

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y112/01 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 Y112/01 series overview

Y112 is one of 13 units in Paper 1 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about fifty years through an Enquiries or source-based question and a traditional essay question. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A, candidates have to answer a compulsory source question 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. The judgement should be based on an evaluation of the reliability of the evidence given, not on the topic or contextual knowledge. To reach Level 6, a judgement should be made at the end of the analysis of each source, with an overall judgement in the conclusion.

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. To reach Level 6 candidates should also make an overall judgement as well as interim judgements when assessing each factor.

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

Section A overview

There is one compulsory question in this section. This 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 given against AO2.

The Enquiry section in Paper Y111 is focused on the development of the Labour Party 1893-1914 and its dependence on the support of the Trade Unions.

Question 1

England and a New Century c.1900–1918

- 1 'The development of the Labour Party during the period from 1893 to 1914 was dependent on the support of the Trade Unions.'

Use the **four** sources in their historical context to assess how far they support this view. [30]

This question was generally well answered with most candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the views of the four sources and able to relate them to the actual question set. Contextual knowledge was soundly applied with many candidates able to discuss the role of Keir Hardie, the electoral link up with the Liberal Party in 1903, the impact of the Taff Vale judgement as well as the Trade Disputes Act and the growing power of the trade unions in the period. Provenance was similarly well handled with most candidates able to make use of the roles of Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden and Reynold's newspaper. Source D saw a variety of comments about Webb and the Fabian Society, with some candidates seeing them as supporters of the Conservative Party.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should ensure that they are reaching a judgement about the sources using provenance in order to access Level 5 and Level 6 of the mark scheme.

Exemplar 1

Source C quite clearly sets out the importance of the role of the trade unions in promoting the Labour movement. The ~~delegate~~^{writer} rightly points out that numbers affiliated to the LRC were booming and uses statistics to support these - "the numbers... were 450,000 and today the numbers were 750,000". This is accurate since union membership doubled from 450,000 to almost 900,000 between 1901 and 1902. The journalist here is quite objective, even if there could be a tendency to sensationalize events for the reading audience. The union delegate is correct to note that "it would go on more and more" since union membership soared to 1.4 million by 1910 and Labour's funding and support grew too. Although a union worker could easily be biased against "the judges in the Taff Vale case" where the railway workers' union was forced to pay £62,000 in damages, he is correct to point out that "the more the workers realised that... the more ^{would} their movement grow". After the 1901 Taff Vale case, 41 unions affiliated with the LRC and this led to huge growth in Labour membership. Although the newspaper would look to bias the role of the

unions since it was staffed by ^{trade} unionists and interviewed a trade unionist, it uses statistics ~~and~~ ~~to~~ to prove the importance of the unions to Labour. It also perfectly encapsulates the sentiments many working people had about the Taff Vale case.

Source B supports Source C's notion regarding the importance of unions. Snowden uses statistics, like Source C, to demonstrate the unions' power - "the Trade Unions had 500,000 represented". He claims labour policy was determined by the support of the unions - "an extreme socialist programme would have made their co-operation most unlikely". This is certainly true since the trade unionists often fought with the ideological left-wing of the party, particularly over the issue of World War I*. Snowden even quotes Hardie - "a readiness to co-operate with any party... promoting... the interests of labour". This can be evidenced by the 1903 Gladstone - MacDonald Pact: Snowden could be biased against the trade unions since he was a member of the ILP who were far less represented - "seven representing the Trade Unions, two the ILP". However, his language is unbiased ~~and~~ and by 1934 he had already been expelled by the ILP. He recounts the events in a very straightforward style and seems to push no agenda in particular - "the three socialist parties... were represented". The fact that the 1918 Labour Party Constitution looked to establish a less & trade union-based local presence shows how prevalent the unions were. Source B convincingly portrays

* which Labour, in line with the trade unionists, ended up supporting.

the trade unions' part in shaping the Labour movement and the need for LRC leaders to appease them.

Source A, written by ~~Arthur~~ ~~Robert~~ ~~Robert~~ former Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald, looks to suggest Labour grew in spite of the unions. The language is flowery and biased - "it was a forlorn hope attacked by... the union leaders". As this was an introduction to Keir Hardie's biography, it looks to glorify his role as the man who formed the ILP despite all the odds. This is seen further "Hardie's dogged persistence made faint-heartedness impossible". The hyperbolic language, "fighting and bridging", renders this source vastly unreliable. He does rightly note the "negligible background" into which Labour was formed - an amalgam of political interests from the Fabian Society to radical Social Democratic Federation. What emerges from Source A is MacDonald's glorification of the ILP, "the greatest political influence of our time", and this reflects MacDonald's political manoeuvring after his loss in popularity in 1914 to use the ILP to return to the leadership, which he did in 1922 - just a year after this source was published. This source speaks far more about the "creation" of the LRC and attributes it, naturally in a biased fashion, towards Hardie. It hardly talks about Labour's growth or development. Whilst Hardie was very important, this source is riddled with bias and a clear political agenda to glorify the ILP. So whilst it

doesn't support the trade unions' importance, this is because of inherent bias rather than use of any evidence.

Source D is intriguing since it criticises the Labour Party but actually does recognise the importance of unions to Labour, in trying to win workers' support over to the Liberals. Webb's inherent bias is clear when she proposes the "right of the middle and professional classes to do the work of government". This wrongly assumes the "real" working man had no interest in politics. The first Labour government of 1924 mostly consisted of working-class ministers and there was outrage over the 1909 Osborne Judgement which removed automatic political funding from union membership. Webb's own political bias comes into play - "the closer... to the Liberal Party the better". This perhaps reflects fear of a working-class upheaval in the wake of heavy striking from 1910 to 1914. 40 million working days were lost in 1912 alone. However, Webb acknowledges the unions' power - "MacDonald represents the views... of the bulk of Trade Unionists". Although she claims it is "propaganda", she acknowledges that "the British workman has been persuaded... that a Labour Party is useful". Although a biased opinion expected of someone critical of Labour, Source D in many ways supports Sources B and C in so far that the unions have a key role in boosting Labour's popularity.

In conclusion, the sources largely support the notion that

		<p>Labour's development relied heavily on the support of the trade unions. Source B notes their role in influencing policy whilst Sources C and D comment on their role in boosting membership and giving the fledgling party much needed momentum and support. Source A acts in complete contradiction to B, C and D and claims Hardie grew Labour in spite of the trade unions. However, Alison MacDonald has clear political and authorial agendas here which renders this source unreliable. Source D too is unreliable but actually very useful as it shows Liberal fear of the unions' role in driving Labour. Sources B and C however are very objective and clear in supporting the view asserted in the question.</p>
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This exemplar shows a strong Level 6 response with interim and concluding judgements on the sources.

Section B overview

Candidates are required to answer one essay from a choice of two. Each question is taken from a different Key Topic and requires candidates to weigh up the importance of a range of factors or issues.

In Paper Y112, the candidates were asked whether the Conservative government of 1924-29 unified the country or to assess the reasons why political extremism in Britain achieved limited support in the 1930s.

Question 2*

Britain c.1918–1951

2* 'The Conservative government of 1924–1929 unified the country.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This was the less popular of the two questions with many candidates choosing to focus on specific events such as the 1926 General Strike as being evidence that the country wasn't united, but without placing this into the wider context of the Conservative government's other reforms. Most candidates were able to discuss the General Strike and its consequences as something which showed Baldwin's government were unable to unify the country. Some knew that the Trades Disputes Act divided opinion and many were also able to discuss the return to the Gold Standard and the problems that ensued. Alternatively, a few candidates argued that the response to the General Strike showed elements of unity, whilst the very best responses also pointed to the extension of the franchise as well as Baldwin's foreign policy as being a force for unity and peace. Very few candidates looked at the structural unity provided by the creation of the BBC or the National Grid or the continuing importance of Conservative organisations in driving unity.

Question 3*

3* Assess the reasons why there was limited support for political extremism in Britain in the 1930s.

[20]

This was the more popular of the two questions and candidates had a good conceptual understanding of this topic. Weaker responses tended to focus mostly on the BUF whereas most candidates were able to discuss the BUF and the Communist Party. In examining why there was limited support many candidates looked at leadership of the extremists, a lack of clear policy, links with the Soviet Union and European fascists as reasons for their lack of support, although some candidates were able to point out that initially both groups did have some support. Alternatively, the best responses highlighted how links to violence lost them supporters, how the racism of the BUF alienated people and how the government's domestic policies limited support for extremism.

Exemplar 2

	<p>The weaknesses of Britain's extremist parties did play a role in their ability to gain traction. For example, poor leadership was detrimental to the Communist Party of Great Britain. They struggled to gain the support of the workers as they fought regularly with trade union leaders like Ernest Benn. They were unable to present themselves as having practical solutions which explains their failure to produce a membership higher than 5,000 in the 1930s. They lost the 2 MPs they had in 1922 due to poor delivery on pledges and failed to use the popular affiliated National Unemployed Workers Movement, with its 50,000 members, to boost their own political status. On the right, the British Union of Fascists suffered from self-created issues too. Unlike the Communists, Oswald Mosley initially had support from the press, with the Daily Mail even publishing the now infamous editorial "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!". But with bouts of violence at his rallies at Olympia in 1934 and thuggish street violence at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, he failed to win over any supporters of the mainstream politics. In many ways, the extremist parties were architects of their own downfall.</p> <p>Their downfall was also more speedily brought about by government action and legislation. The 1934 Incitement to Disaffection Act was clearly targeted at bringing it down the CPGB</p>
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as it was cleverly vague, arresting those who threatened to 'betray their duty to the king'. Naturally, the preachers of revolution were arrested and with no leadership, the CPGB crumbled. Similar targeted legislation was used on the BUF - the 1936 Public Order Act specifically banned paramilitary uniform which destroyed Mosley's 'blackshirts' and allowed the government to break BUF demonstrations with force. These pieces of legislation brought in by the National Government crushed extremism and arguably exacerbated their aforementioned weaknesses by making their rallies effectively illegal.

The most crucial factor which underpins the two previous factors was the governments' social and economic policy which helped keep people away from abject poverty, which might drive them to want to take more radical action. The most vital factor in this was Britain's system of unemployment benefits which kept people financially afloat. From 1927, Baldwin's government effectively allowed people to stay on the benefit and the dole for however long they needed since unemployment was consistently above 1 million. MacDonald's 1930 Unemployment Insurance Act even removed the necessity for proving you were 'genuinely seeking work'. When cuts were made to the benefit in 1931 ~~in 1931~~ ~~due~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~1931~~ ~~economic~~ ~~crisis~~, they were swiftly reversed when the economy had recovered by 1934. The governments of the period were aware

of the dire financial situation, over 2.6 million workers were unemployed in 1932, and acted to prevent families from being driven to such poverty they would lose faith in democracy altogether. The government shouldered a more advanced benefits system than anywhere else in Europe, costing a ~~huge~~ huge £125 million in 1931 alone. These provisions and other incentives helped improve the economic situation over the course of the 1930s and give people more optimism. The 1934 budget cut taxes and increased wages. As the benefit ~~sum~~ was fixed and global deflation took place, cost of living actually fell by 25-30% in the 1930s. ~~Private~~ Homeowning increased from 10 to 35% due to incentives set up by the Housing Acts of 1933 and 1935 whilst interest rates fell to 2% in 1932 making loans easier. Britain's economic situation was poor but stable enough to prevent growing extremism. This arguably explains the extremist parties' weaknesses and why the BUF's membership never exceeded 50,000. Progressive measures, like the 1929 Local Government Act which abolished the unpopular workhouses of the 'Poor Laws' era and the 1930 Greenwood Act which initiated huge slum clearing, gave working-class people some faith in government. By subsidising the wheat industry in 1932 and the shipping industry in 1935, the government kept farmers and workers alike in jobs. The role of the government in providing a basic, even if poor, standard of living was essential to the extremist parties' inability to gain traction.

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In conclusion, there were multiple inter-linked causes for the failure of political extremism. The parties themselves acted naively and failed to garner support which was in turn made worse by the government targeting the CPGB and BUF in legislation to take them down. But the most ~~events~~ important factor, even if all of the above were necessary, were Baldwin and MacDonald's measures to keep the huge unemployed population, 1/6 of all British workers in 1933, away from abject poverty and away from losing faith in the democratic process. The CPGB and BUF fundamentally failed because there was not a significant proportion of the population that felt the need or desperation to resort to anti-democratic policies. There was displeasure at the state of affairs, Britain's ~~own~~ exports fell from £729 million in 1929 to £365 million in 1932, but not enough to drive people to talk of revolution or dictatorship.

This candidate response reached Level 6 as it highlighted how links to violence lost supporters, how the racism of the BUF alienated people and how the government's domestic policies limited support for extremism.

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