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GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B (SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/21 Summer 2024 series

Contents

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 21 series overview

It is always pleasing to see the degree with which candidates interact with their site and their understanding of its role in the wider historical framework.

There are many different sites and types of sites studied by centres, so the answers to the questions chosen by candidates will vary hugely. However, the vast majority of candidates are able to demonstrate that they understand aspects of their site. They are also able to explain some of the events which have taken place there and often display a considerable depth of knowledge and understanding about the role their site has taken and the people associated with it.

Most candidates are able to attempt the required two questions and can select relevant aspects of their site to discuss, though there are still a few candidates who attempt all the questions and the quality of their answers is often affected by the resulting time pressure.

Each question is awarded up to 5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Generally, candidates fall into the Intermediate performance. Use of appropriate technical terms and a more sophisticated level of expression can raise this to the higher level.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- stated their site clearly at the top of the response - stated a period or significant point in time in response to the requirements of the question - made use of the physical features of the site and/or additional supporting documentation to verify their comments - related their explanations to the time periods or required aspects of the question.	- wrote a general history of their site - did not specify time-period(s) for their answer - rote about multiple time periods when the question only asked for one - did not support their comments with reference to features of the site.

Key point call out – attention to detail in the question

This year, every question required candidates to select at least one time period or significant point in the history of their site as a focus for their answer.

Candidates not doing this or selecting a time-period/significant event and then writing about a different time/event/point, was the single biggest reason for low marks across the paper as a whole.

It is also important to note that when the question asks for explanations from one time-period, no credit will be given for explanation from a second or additional time periods.

Question 1

1   Explain how the physical features of your site could be used by someone to produce an **interpretation of the site** that **shows how it was used** at a significant point in its history.

Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer.   **[20]**

✎ Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology   **[5]**

Candidates were required to choose a significant point to write about for this question. Many candidates did not score highly because they wrote about the site at multiple time points or wide periods.

It is important that candidates state the significant point they have chosen at the start of their response because examiners will only take explanations from that reference point. If no time is stated, the first explanation is judged to be the chosen one.

A second issue with this question is the requirement for the focus to be on the production of an interpretation. Many candidates launched straight into a description of their site in the given period (or a single period), without any indication of how it should be used in an interpretation. Even fewer candidates indicated what type of interpretation might be produced or who might be producing it or for what purpose. All of these factors made a difference to the mark within the level the candidate obtained.

A final area of concern was that candidates were expected to link their recommendations for the interpretation to the physical features of the site – in other words, to explain how this information could be gained from their site, rather than just stating that a particular feature had been important at the stated time.

In conclusion, stronger responses stated a specific point/event; indicated the type of interpretation which could be produced and used physical features to inform what should be included in the interpretation.

The best answers would also explain why this was important to include in the interpretation.

Weaker responses did not mention an interpretation, nor did they show how their chosen features would explain the significance of the site at their chosen time.

Exemplar 1

The site I have studied is Quarry Bank Mill, and a person who is going to make an interpretation of the site could use a variety of physical features that were important to how the site was used.

The most important physical feature the interpretor needs to add is the river Bollin that is situated next to the mill, running through all areas of the site. It holds a great signifi significance because the river is one of the first natural resources Quarry Bank Mill has used in their cotton production. With it's strong power from running down the mountains near the area, the river Bollin was used to power the water wheel and create energy for the cotton spinning machines used in production. This means that more cotton was being produced at an efficient rate and as a result, more profit was being made as they sell the finished goods. This was incredibly important and common, during the industrial revolution in the 18th/19th century as it helped with the economy locally and nationally. It was common that there would be water-powered mills, as there were many of them during the industrial revolution. It is also important to mention how the mill was river Bollin was used for transport which is just as important as it's use for powering the

the mill. With the many transport links the river provides, it gave Samuel Grey, the over owner of the mill, a good opportunity to get his finished goods to bigger cities in the north. Cities like Manchester and Liverpool had a great economy impact on the industrial revolution's economy. While both of them, are port cities, it is also useful to get raw materials for the mill and transport them to Quarry Bank mill via the river Bollin. This brought a lot of profit and production of cotton, which shows how it was used.

Exemplar 1 is an extract from a response on Quarry Bank and demonstrates what a developed explanation should look like.

The candidate immediately informs the reader that the interpretation will need to include the River Bollin and goes into detail about the function of the river in relation to the site during the Industrial Revolution. A better response would have stated the significant point at the start of the answer, but the method used here is acceptable as it forms part of the explanation of why the feature should be included.

The candidate then explains additional uses of the river in the wider historical framework. This response did not identify a type of interpretation or person who might be constructing it, so was kept at the bottom of the relevant level.

The response as a whole contained two more explanations of features to include (the mill building and the apprentice house) so it was given an overall mark of Level 5/17 marks.

SPaG was given 4 marks (higher level) due to accurate use of appropriate historical language.

Question 2

2   Choose **one** period in your site's history.

Explain what a study of your site reveals about the lives of different types of people at that time.

Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer.   **[20]**

✎ Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology   **[5]**

For Question 2 some candidates answered 'what were the lives like of people at the site?' rather than 'what does the site reveal about people's lives?' This meant they would miss out on the higher levels as they made little reference to current physical features at this site.

However, many candidates tackled this question well, specifying a period of time and different types of people. There were sensible attempts to specify different groups even within sites where there was one main usage – e.g. choir monks, lay brothers, the abbot for largely monastic sites.

To gain the higher levels, candidates had to either explain how the site tells us about the lives of three different groups, or comment on just two groups but make two separate points about one of them, using different features of the site.

The least successful responses were those who simply wrote about 'people of the time' without making a distinction of different roles. These answers could not achieve higher than Level 3, irrespective of quality, due to the requirement of the question being to describe different groups.

Candidates are advised to make reference to which parts of their site provide the evidence for the claims they make about the lives of groups at the time. (Note this does not have to be referenced to physical remains, but can also include documentation, pictures and other artifacts.)

Exemplar 2

Another way that Porchester Castle reveals the daily life of prisoners during the Napoleonic war is the entertainment that took place. For example, prisoners would put on plays at the theatre, which were sometimes visited by members of the public. The prisoners also made crafts and played board games to stay entertained. Physical

features that remain to show this are dice from board games, lace and various other crafts. The painted theatre wall still remains, and graffiti left behind from prisoners. Therefore, it is useful to study life at Porchester castle during the Napoleonic war, to know how the prisoners of war entertained themselves daily.

Another way that studying Porchester castle during the Napoleonic war reveals about daily life of different people is the diversity. Porchester castle often kept French offices as they were valueable for making exchanges in return for English soldiers. Offices were paid 1 shilling a week and were allowed to leave the castle on weekends to explore town. Porchester castle also kept Caribbean prisoners of war, they were segretated for their own protection because they were not used to the cold climate. The Caribbean prisoners were also given extra rations, such as better food and clothes. Therefore, studying the lives of different people who lived at Porchester during the Napoleonic war is useful to learn the treatment of different types of prisoners.

Exemplar 2 is an extract from a response based on Portchester Castle. The response clearly states the time from for their answer as the Napoleonic Wars and gives a clear, well-informed explanation of the use of the site as a prison and the activities of different types of prisoners here. While the information is valid and the answer within the time period, there is no reference to how this information could have been gained from the site. This part of the response was marked at Level 2.

To improve this response, there should have been reference to documentation which provided the details of the wages and/or rations of the two groups identified. This would have elevated this answer to a developed explanation.

Elsewhere in this response there was reference to the physical features of the hammock hooks, artifacts of dice and board game pieces used to support conclusions about the living conditions of the prisoners, so this answer gained and overall mark of Level 3/12 marks.

It is an example of a standard Intermediate level for SPaG and was given 3 marks.

Question 3

3   Choose **two** different points in your site's history.

Explain the ways in which the site **or** its uses changed between these two points.

Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer.   **[20]**

✎ Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology   **[5]**

This question also required candidates to identify specific time periods in order to explain how their site had changed. Many candidates knew a great deal about their site in one particular period but then only stated changes which had occurred without supporting these by referencing aspects of the site. To gain a developed explanation level (Level 3 and above), candidates should have given evidence from both beforehand and then what changes were made to the site.

Some candidates did not establish the first point securely as they did not include site evidence. A number of candidates also said the site did not change that much or added bits about continuity, which was not answering the question.

In some cases. there was good knowledge shown about changes which had taken place but very little supporting evidence about what the situation had been like beforehand. Often the response was approached through a general description of the site and then a general description of a later period. These responses were less successful, and they often did not compare similar aspects of the site.

A more successful approach was to isolate a specific aspect of the site and describe its use, followed by an explanation of how that aspect had changed and why. This approach allowed candidates to continue their answer by identifying another aspect of the site and how that was changed and so on.

Many candidates only reached Level 2 because they either only identified the changes, or they only gave supporting evidence from one of the time periods.

Exemplar 3

Kenilworth's physical features and uses change drastically from the military era to the palatial era. During the military Era, 1120s, Kenilworth clearly showed it's deliberate use of being a defense and power control for the rich and royal over the poor, during England's chaotic era. King John, spent £1,100 of military defenses such as Mortimer and lunns tower, both of these towers were used by soldiers for servalence and defense, this is evendent because Mortimers Tower contained dangerous Artiler weponcary, such as arrao slits and pot holes. This clearly shows how Kenilworth was used as a threat against enemy lines. However, you could argue because King John, was not seen as a respectable King and not very liked in England, that he implanted these defense buildings such us the Outer Custat wall to prove his power and worth to the already unstable English society in order attempt to restore peace. &

However, after the Seige, and in 1266, there was an end to the rebells peace was restored therefore, was not a need for restoring pea restored peace in England, therefor this is shown represented by the switch of physical features in Kenilworth during the palatial era (1266 - 1642). Kenilworth was taken back into royal control, John of Gaunt, made the Castle into a pralace, he added

many features useful for enrichment, such as the great kitchen, which contained many stores and large stores for food, this clearly indicates not only a physical change of Kenilworth, but a cultral change as these large kitchens were used to hospitalise and feed many aristocratical guests, enticing a shift in atmosphere in Kenilworth from strict and violent to calm and joyful, showing illustrating that the castle was used as a place of socialisation for the rich, and relaxation.

Exemplar 3 is an extract of a response about Kenilworth Castle. The candidate starts the response very clearly by identifying the two periods they will be using for comparison – the military and palatial periods. (This is an acceptable method of identifying time-periods – candidates do not have to use dates, though they may do so.)

The response begins with a clear description of the features of the earlier period and relates these to the key use of defence and dominance.

It then explains the change in focus of the site due to the change in ownership and the physical changes which occurred as a result.

The whole response also included a second example of the changes in this period and so the final mark given was Level 4/15 marks.

It was awarded higher level SPaG – 4 marks due to appropriate use of language.

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