

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY A (EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD)**

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**J410**

For first teaching in 2016

**J410/07 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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper 7 series overview

This component saw a range of candidate responses to all questions and candidates had been well prepared for the exam. Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this comprehensive paper. The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted to respond to all the questions. The range and quality of some responses was impressive, and candidates showed a flexible application of their skills when analysing source material, interpretations and examining knowledge.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilised a wide range of contextual knowledge examples across all questions</li> <li>• were able to explain contextual knowledge examples about the question being asked</li> <li>• were able to analyse the content and context of historical interpretations</li> <li>• were able to compare their own historical knowledge to the interpretations provided</li> <li>• were able to draw complex inferences from the sources provided</li> <li>• were able to draw judgements from the sources provided to assess their historical utility</li> <li>• were able to provide balanced arguments to essay questions</li> <li>• were able to provide summary and comparative conclusion arguments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used generalised rather than specific historical examples</li> <li>• left identified factors undeveloped or did not relate them directly to the question asked</li> <li>• took historical sources at face value rather than placing them in context</li> <li>• were descriptive rather than analytical of sources and interpretations</li> <li>• listed historical knowledge regarding interpretations, rather than analysing them in context</li> <li>• spoke about historical issues outside of the time periods covered in the questions</li> <li>• did not provide explanations relating to the question or conclusive paragraphs to compare arguments.</li> </ul>

## Section A overview

Candidates were asked to consider knowledge questions and interpretation analysis questions relating to their study of International Relations in the period 1918-c.1975. This section had been taught well, as many candidates answered more comprehensively than in the depth study part of the paper. Candidate's understanding of approaches to and knowledge of the interpretation questions, in particular, needs commendation.

### Question 1

- 1 Outline the main disagreements between the leaders of the Allied powers at the Yalta and/or Potsdam conference(s). [5]

Generally, this was a well answered question with a full range of responses across the ability spectrum. Most candidates were able to identify the main disagreements at Yalta and Potsdam at a basic level and many were able to develop those identifications into an explained point. Stronger answers developed two separate identified disagreements to an explained level. Less developed responses were still able to achieve Level 1 by describing generally the content of the conferences or the differences in the leaders. With no requirement to address both conferences separately, or compare outcomes, the majority of candidates were able to access Level 2 or 3 with considerations of disagreements between leaders over how to treat the defeated German nation and Soviet expansion into Eastern European nations.

There was a significant number of responses that referred to leaders and decisions made at Versailles and/or Munich and were therefore unable to access any marks. Similarly, some candidates described what happened at the conferences accurately without addressing the concept of disagreement, which was required by the question.

#### Highly recommended

Candidates should pay close attention to the time frame and focus given in the question, in this case the Yalta and Potsdam conferences at the end of World War Two. They should also look for trigger words. In this case we were looking for disagreements between the leaders, not a general account of what happened at the conferences.

## Exemplar 1

1		<p>Firstly, one main disagreement was over Germany. Stalin wanted to obliterate Germany whereas the US and UK were more cautious and wanted to rebuild Germany. Secondly, another area of disagreement was Eastern Europe. Stalin wanted a buffer zone and he felt he could just take all the countries whereas the US and UK wanted free elections. Thirdly, reparations and other economic factors were disagreed on because of fear by the UK and Truman that a trade partner would be gone.</p>
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This candidate reaches Level 3, 5 marks by identifying and explaining two accurate disagreements at either conference. The candidate expands on the disagreements over Eastern Europe and outlines the position of both sides, adding two additional explanations of reparations and treatment of Germany.

## Question 2

2 Explain why Germany was unhappy with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

[10]

This was a well-answered question and showed that candidates have engaged well with the content. The majority of candidates were able to identify the key terms of the Treaty and reasons why the German people were unhappy with these terms. Level 3 and above responses were plentiful and showed that candidates knew the content; in particular, the need for Germany to pay excessive reparations and the loss of the German military. There were fewer Level 4 and 5 responses as candidates needed to develop accurately identified factors to reasoning and impact on the German people/state. Candidates who achieved this outlined a range of impacts including the destruction of the German economy after the war and the lack of ability to recover, alongside the vulnerability of the German state due to reductions in the military.

A notable number of candidate responses remained within Level 2 as they were unable to develop beyond a basic understanding of the terms but were able to discuss military reductions or set economic fines in a more general sense. There were few Level 1 answers and fewer still who confused this Treaty with Munich or Yalta/Potsdam. The highest attaining candidates here were able to make a clear link between the term and the impact on the people, with no time frame set in the question, some candidates were quite expansive in their scope of the impact on Germany.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should ensure that they are expanding on initial identified points with explanations that relate directly to the question. In this case the question was regarding why Germany was 'unhappy'. Candidates should focus on the request of the question and not on just describing key knowledge.

## Question 3

### 3 Study Interpretation A.

Do you think this interpretation is a fair comment on the British policy of appeasement?

Use other interpretations of the events of 1937–1939 and your knowledge to support your answer.

[25]

This question was generally answered well. Candidates used their knowledge of events and other interpretations sensibly and effectively.

The majority of candidates sensibly set out the main argument of Interpretation A. Most candidates clearly understood that it was mostly critical. Many candidates highlighted the term 'mistaken theory' or that Chamberlain misunderstood Hitler. Some candidates argued that the extract was in part generous to Chamberlain but on the whole this line of argument was less convincingly made. A significant number of candidates tried to place Interpretation A with a particular school of thought. It should be stressed that they do not need to do this. In some cases, candidates found it useful to do this, however, a substantial number distracted themselves with an elongated debate about which school the interpretation belonged to. As a result, they wasted time and effort on addressing this issue instead of the main issue in the question, i.e. whether Interpretation A was a fair comment. As a general rule, centres should probably advise candidates against this.

It was encouraging to see relatively few Level 1 and Level 2 responses. These were mostly candidates who were making broad, general assertions or who simply described the various schools of thought on the issue of appeasement.

Many candidates achieved Level 3. This was probably a roughly even split between candidates who correctly cited relevant interpretations as being in agreement with or opposition to the generally critical thrust of Interpretation A. However, a significant number of candidates used their own knowledge to reach Level 3. There were many well-argued responses of this kind and it was often unfortunate that they did not introduce their knowledge of other interpretations which would have given them the opportunity to reach Level 4 or 5.

Clearly many candidates had been well-prepared for this question and quickly reached Level 4 or Level 5 with clear use of other interpretations in addressing the issue of whether the critical tone of Interpretation A was a fair comment. These were generally done well, often with good use of contextual knowledge to clarify and support the central claims made through other interpretations about whether Interpretation A was fair. Occasionally, some candidates got rather muddled when they tried to argue that Interpretation A was partially sympathetic and therefore interpretations such as the Orthodox interpretation would have supported it. It was not impossible to do this, and some candidates succeeded, but many ended up with a rather confused line of argument.

Probably the most helpful reflection for candidates in the future is to concentrate on making clear which aspect(s) of Interpretation A they are claiming to be fair or unfair. Where such clarity was provided, examiners were usually able to award Level 4 or 5.



## Exemplar 2

3	<p>The school of thought shown in this extract is the orthodox view, published by Churchill, and <sup>was the</sup> widely accepted <sup>view</sup> in the late 1940s to early 1960s. This is a quote that the interpretation would <del>seem</del> agree is a fair comment is "Chamberlain's policy of <del>app</del> appeasement was based on a completely mistaken theory" and "he believed the German leader would settle down peacefully". This is because this view argues Chamberlain had good intentions such as avoiding war, however simply miscalculated what he was going to do next. Events that would prove this interpretation are the Munich agreement in 1937, where Chamberlain fully believed that he had prevented war, and also the pact Germany made with England to allow her to have 25% of the size of her navy. This interpretation viewed Hitler wanted this to feel less vulnerable.</p> <p>An interpretation that would in part agree with this view is the revisionist view, which was popular in the 1960s. A quote from the extract that this interpretation would deem as partly fair is "a basic mistake". This interpretation <del>viewed</del> stated that Chamberlain did the best he could in a situation with limited choice. Events that would prove this view is the Munich agreement, which allowed Britain to have time to rearm and unite as it wasn't united and a war can't be fought if the nation was undivided.</p>
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		An interpretation that would disagree with the view is the guilty men view in the early 1940s, published by CATO. This view would deem "he believed <sup>the</sup> German leader would settle down peacefully" as an unfair comment. This is because this interpretation <sup>felt appeasement</sup> was a cowardly, foolish and immoral act, with no consideration
		of the consequences to other nations. Events that would prove this view is that Germany left the peace setting organisation, LON, in 1933, which indicated Hitler never desired peace.
		In conclusion, I think that this was a fair comment as Chamberlain was pressurised to make a decision as quick as possible, so he did the best he could, but just simply got it wrong.

This candidate is able to accurately, and succinctly, identify and explain one school of thought agreeing with the extract given and is able to develop an explanation of the historiography shown in this school of thought in comparison with the interpretation. They further develop this argument with two further schools of thought that are well explained and compared with the source to show disagreement. As a balanced answer with three explanations this is able to access Level 5.

## Question 4

### 4 Study Interpretation B.

Explain why **not** all historians and commentators have agreed with this interpretation.

Use other interpretations and your knowledge to support your answer.

[20]

() Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology

[5]

This question was answered well. Candidates had a good understanding of the interpretations of the reasons for the Cold War, and many were able to outline key thinkers within each interpretation area. They could develop reasoning for why the interpretation developed, and the key historical context behind the thinkers in each area. As a result, most candidates were able to reach Levels 3 or above: they could identify and explain the basis of at least one historical interpretation in direct comparison with the argument put forward in Interpretation B.

Interpretation B was clearly critical of the US and as such was a revisionist argument, which almost all candidates stated. Most then went on to identify that both orthodox historians (or Feis, Kennan, and Bailey) and post-revisionists (for example, Gaddis) would disagree. The vast majority could then identify and at least begin to explain these historians' views or how the context they wrote in affected them. With this development many were rewarded with Level 3 or above.

Most candidates achieved Level 3 and 4 by offering detail about the alternative viewpoints. Fewer were able to explain how their context would have impacted historians and commentators. For example, in the case of the orthodox view, many could place it at the time of the Red Scare and strong anti-Soviet feeling in the USA. However, this needed to be securely linked to how that would impact those individuals, in order to move up the levels. Simply saying the Red Scare made them biased was not enough to merit explanation. Stronger responses focused on the role of Feis and Kennan in the US government, meaning their views could be an attempt to justify their decision making. Alternatively, candidates could have focused on the self-censorship that was happening, to prevent accusations of pro-Soviet views at a time of heightened fear of communism.

Likewise, for the post-revisionists, identifying détente and the Helsinki agreements was a basis for argument. However, an explanation then needed to be made that this new mood of willingness to understand led historians to view the origins of the Cold War in this light, as a series of overreactions and misunderstandings of basic differences in ideology. For some candidates the context seemed more of an afterthought.

That said, many candidates did manage to achieve at Level 3. Those in Level 2 tended to have misunderstood the main thrust of Interpretation B or were muddled when describing different views to compare it to. There were fewer of these than in previous years.

Far fewer candidates are now confusing the various groups of historians or talking generally in terms of 'some historians think that...', rather than specifying a time period, nationality, or group. This is essential to achieve above Level 1.

## Section B overview

This section asked candidate to focus on knowledge and source-based questions relating to their study of the USA in the period 1945-1975. Candidates had a clear understanding of the period and were able to deliver complex historical answers utilising differing knowledge from that used in Section A.

### Question 5

5 Describe **one** feature of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

[2]

Candidates were largely very clear in their knowledge and understanding for this question and most candidates gained at least 1 mark by identifying the role of Rosa Parks in the Boycott. A smaller, but sizable number of candidates were able to develop a feature of the Boycott such as the impact on the Montgomery Bus Companies or the resulting desegregation of public transport. This question was answered by most candidates and a good level of knowledge was generally shown.

### Question 6

6 Explain the impact of African American civil rights protests during the early and mid 1960s. [10]

This question elicited a wide range of responses. The majority of candidates were able to achieve Level 2 and above by identifying features of African American civil rights protests. Most candidates were able to access Level 3 and above by developing what they had identified about specific impacts of protests, including the Civil Rights legislation of the period, largely identifying the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. Some candidates developed this into explanation and were able to make direct links between specific marches such as Birmingham and Washington and the resultant impacts. A common approach was to use the example of the Greensborough Sit-Ins. The higher attaining candidates developed two of these explanations. Candidate knowledge was of a good level regarding such events but was less developed in terms of the impacts regarding the desegregation of lunch counters. Some candidates wrote about 1950s events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Brown Vs Board of Education, so were unable to access the levels on this question.

#### Misconception



Candidates should ensure they focus on the key word in the question to direct the development of their examples. In this question, the focus is on the impact of the protests, so candidates needed to develop identified examples of protests with their resultant outcomes to reach Levels 4 and 5.

## Exemplar 3

6	<p>One example of African American <sup>civil rights</sup> protests is the March on Washington. 200,000 African Americans and 50,000 white Americans marched to Washington protesting. This is also where Martin Luther King made his famous 'I have a dream' speech. This protest included no violence and led to the <del>Voting</del> <sup>Voting</sup> Rights Act 1964 being passed. This shows the progression and impact African American civil rights protests were having<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the March on Washington left an impact during the 1960s.</p>
	<p>Another example of the impact of African American civil rights protests was the Birmingham march. This involved Martin Luther King and <del>many</del> many children. However, Chief Bull Connor ordered dogs and powerful fire hoses on the African Americans. This led to high media attention and public outrage in the USA. It caused Chief Bull Connor to be sacked. Therefore, the Birmingham march led to a huge impact.</p>
	<p>In conclusion, many African American civil rights protests during the early and mid 1960s caused an impact, for example, the passing of the Voting Rights Act.</p>

The candidate correctly identifies the Washington March and the Birmingham March and, in both cases, outlines descriptive evidence of the events. However, they are limited by their misidentification of the Voting Rights Act as a result of the March on Washington and so unable to specifically develop the Birmingham March beyond a simple outcome.



## Question 7

### 7 Study Sources A and B.

How far do these sources agree about attitudes of Americans towards the Vietnam War? [10]

Most candidates developed simple inferences from both sources regarding attitudes towards the Vietnam War and identified that the two sources were both critical of the government's approach towards the war. Good levels of source analysis skill were used in analysis of each source and many candidates were identified the message of each source, drawing similarities between the criticism in Source A of the government's draft while not protecting the people of Vietnam, and the criticism in Source B that the high government spending in Vietnam is unmatched in much-needed US urban needs..

Most candidates were able to make basic comparisons of the similarities of the messages of the two sources and reach Level 2. Fewer candidates outlined the disagreements of the sources in reference to their purpose. As a result a vast majority of candidates were limited to Level 2. Commonly, candidates made no direct comparison between the two sources and dealt with the two completely separately. These responses were limited to Level 1.

#### Misconception



A notable number of candidates misunderstood the meaning of the question and should be directed towards the keywords in the question, in this case whether the sources 'agree', which is asking them for direct comparison of the two sources.

## Question 8\*

8\* 'Between 1945 and 1954, the American people supported actions to prevent the spread of Communist influence within the USA.'

How far do you agree? [18]

Candidates were mostly able to outline and describe the actions and opinions of McCarthy and the anti-communist actions of the post-war period and could draw on a range of examples, such as the Rosenbergs, Alger Hiss, the Hollywood Ten and the work of the HUAC. Some candidates were able to develop a number of these to explanation and link their reference directly to the question, regarding the public support of the policies and actions of those responsible for attempting to prevent the spread of communism. A small number of candidates were able to argue a supporting and opposing viewpoint relating to this question and responses were largely limited to Levels 2 and 3, where descriptive understanding and explanation of a single argument linked to the question were rewarded. Within Level 2 a wide range of accurate identifications of the period were shown, developing social cultural ideas such as 'reds under the beds' and the use of comic books and wider media propaganda to prevent the spread of communism among the public.

A small number of candidates confused this question with referring to the 'red scare' period after World War One. A larger number of candidates were unable to develop their identifications and descriptions of attempts to prevent the spread of communism to accurately answer the question of whether the American people supported these actions.

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