

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

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

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**J410**

For first teaching in 2016

**J410/06 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 6 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 responses was impressive, and candidates showed a flexibility of 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 asked</li> <li>• did not provide explanations relating to the question asked 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

#### **International Relations: the changing international order 1918–1975**

- 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 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 <del>is</del> interpretation would <del>see as</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</p>
		<p>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>

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 ~~viewed~~ 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.

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 candidates to focus on knowledge and source-based questions relating to their study of the USA in the period 1919-1948. Candidates had a clear understanding of the period and were able to make distinct separation from relevant information from Section A.

### Question 5

#### The USA 1919–1948: The People and the State

5 Describe **one** example of the beliefs of the Republican Party in the 1920s.

[2]

Candidates were largely very clear in their knowledge and understanding for this question. A large number of candidates were able to cite the Republican belief of a 'Laissez Faire' approach and expand on this identification with development of an understanding of the term, regularly citing 'the government staying out of business or people's economic interests'. Other candidates gained full marks by highlighting protection of Prohibition laws or low taxation. A small number of candidates confused the 1920s Republican beliefs with those of the Democrats during the New Deal era. Most candidates attempted this question, and a good level of knowledge was generally shown. However, a sizeable number of candidates left this question out.

### Exemplar 3

5		One belief was Laissez faire. It was
		the economic belief that the government
		should not become involved in peoples
		lives or the economy unless
		intervention is drastically needed.

The candidate is able to succinctly identify Laissez-faire as a belief of the Republicans and accurately describe what it means in the context of the policy approach.

## Question 6

6 Explain why many Americans did **not** prosper during the 1920s.

[10]

This was generally a well answered question in that many candidates were able to identify two groups of people who did not prosper, usually identifying the struggles of farmers and African-Americans and less frequently rural women and workers in older industries. The best responses were able to expand on their identified group and explain the reasoning behind their lack of prosperity in the 1920s, specific to the period. A large number of candidates were limited to Level 3 by the general nature of their descriptive answers, while some were able to tie the lack of prosperity of groups to the specific conditions of the 1920s. Common themes were the continuation of lynching and the establishment of the KKK in the south, the emergence of the oil industry impacting on coal and lumber industries and the experience of overproduction in farming. Less common, but still notable, were candidates who were able to identify or explain only one group of people who did not prosper. A small number of candidates misinterpreted this question and thought it was asking about the New Deal and the Depression and some candidates referred to the impacts of the Wall Street Crash, misidentifying the period.

## Question 7

7 Study **Sources A and B**.

How similar are these two sources?

[10]

Candidates mostly identified the messages of each source accurately and were able to effectively infer from the source content. Many candidates were able to draw on key similarities, identifying that both sources address the issue of race in the US armed forces and that both sources encourage an integrated approach to race in the US armed forces. A small number of candidates were able to also identify the differing purposes of the two sources and how this made them dissimilar. However, this was an uncommon thread and limited many candidates to Level 2 where candidates had focused on similarities of message. The more able candidates were able to make direct comparison and accurately identify both message and purpose to develop an argument regarding the similarity of the two sources. However, some candidates dealt with the two sources separately, limiting themselves to Level 1. This question was not answered by all candidates and was sometimes answered poorly or candidates outlined a large amount of contextual knowledge as opposed to focusing on the sources themselves.

### Highly recommended

In this question, candidates are asked to provide an analysis of how similar the sources are. In doing so, they should be aiming to provide similarities and differences, where possible. These can come from the message and the purpose of the source material.



## Exemplar 4

7		Source A implies that during the war, Americans became united regardless of race. This is shown by a white man and a black man working together. At the time, there was great discrimination in the military, as executive order 8802 had to be introduced to stop this discrimination. The fact this source was published by the US government also means it is biased, as the government wouldn't have wanted to highlight the weaknesses in the military.
		Source B suggests the contrary, and is not similar at all to source A as it suggests that black people in the military self-discriminated against <del>and</del> and the US wasn't united. This is evidenced by

The candidate response shown here outlines both the message and purpose of each of the two sources, outlining the contrasting aims of the purpose of the two sources as well as considering the similarity and differences in the message given by the context of the source. In this example, accurate contextual knowledge accentuates the quality of the response.

## Question 8\*

8\* 'The people of the USA regarded the First New Deal as a success.'

How far do you agree?

[18]

Candidates answered this question, in the large, by presenting a coherent and developed discussion around the key elements of the First New Deal. Candidates were able to accurately identify key elements of the First New Deal, often focusing on FDR's key alphabet agencies and their impacts. Common threads were the impact of the AAA on the farming community, the CCC on youth unemployment, the Emergency Banking Act on trust in the economy and the TVA on the southern economy. For the opposing argument, candidates identified key areas of opposition from the political left and right, exposed the cost of the First New Deal and associated the ending of the Depression with other key factors, such as the Second New Deal and/or the Second World War. Candidates were generally familiar with the narrow focus of the question on the First New Deal, although some candidates were limited by reference to agencies and actions of the Second New Deal, commonly focusing on social securities and pensions, as well as the work of the WPA. Many candidates were able to provide a balanced and developed answer outlining both sides of the argument and supporting with at least three explanations to reach Level 5. Some candidates were, however, limited by their lack of supporting knowledge for the opposing argument and were only able to discuss opposition to the New Deal in a very general sense. These candidates were often much stronger on the supporting argument and spoke confidently about the impacts of alphabet agencies etc. A very small number of candidates were able to achieve full marks by outlining a clinching conclusion to support their balanced argument, however. A small number of candidates misinterpreted this question as asking about the 1920s and a similar number of candidates were only able to answer this in a very general sense, limiting their answers to Level 1. Few candidates left out this question and a sizeable number of candidates answered this question first, alongside Questions 3 and 4.

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