

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY A (EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD)

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/02 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 2 series overview

This component saw a range of candidate responses to all questions; teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this comprehensive paper. The majority of candidates attempted to respond to all the questions. The range and quality of some responses was impressive, and candidates showed a flexibility of application of their skills when analysing source material, interpretations and examining knowledge. This year candidates performed particularly well in the interpretations section, and centres have clearly devoted time and energy in helping candidates understand the processes historians go through in coming to conclusions about the past. It was also notable how much knowledge and understanding candidates have of international relations to support this study, especially notable in responses to Questions 1 and 2. This year also sees some improvement in how candidates handle historical sources.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deployed examples, issues and events relevant to the time periods examined by the questions • managed their time effectively, balancing their answers proportionally to the mark allocations for each of the questions (especially important for Question 1 and 5). • showed good knowledge and understanding of historical interpretations • established clear explanatory links back to the issues in Questions 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 • evaluated the historical sources' reliability using contextual knowledge, content, or provenance (Question 7) • had a clear grasp of the key concepts required from study of the specification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displayed less secure historical knowledge, for example about the affect of the war on German people • described and identified issues without explaining them fully or without linking back to the issue in the question • left insufficient time to offer a fully developed response to Question 8 • showed weaker or confused knowledge and understanding of historical interpretations • offered answers to Question 8 that were unbalanced, whether by looking at only one side of the argument or offering more generalised answers that lacked specifics on one side of the argument • made simplistic comments about the historical sources in part B rather than addressing their reliability (Question 7).

Section A overview

In order to perform well on this International Relations period study candidates need to show understanding of the unfolding narrative of developments and issues between 1918 and 1975. This includes the clash of ideologies between the East and West, and how commentators and historians have viewed these differently. These skills focus on Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 4, showing knowledge, understanding and the ability to explain, as well as analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations.

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this part of the course. The overwhelmingly majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions, and many wrote with excellent or very good knowledge and understanding. The range and quality of responses was impressive in the questions on the Historical Controversies, as well as the overview Question 2.

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.

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.

Exemplar 1

		Another reason Germany was unhappy with the ToV
		was because lots of land was taken away from Germany.
		For example, the Lloyd George ^{and} Britain got lots
		of the German colonies in Africa. Furthermore, the
		Rhinelands were completely de-militarised as it was now
		a buffer zone between France and Germany. The
		Germany lost power over the Rhineland and the Saar,
		this made Germans unhappy as the fertile soil there was
		used for mining and mineral extraction, so when this land
		was confiscated from Germany, the a big economic
		source of income was lost. Therefore Germany was unhappy
		with the ToV due to the economic losses they faced
		due to land taken away from them.

This candidate response achieved Level 5, 9 marks overall, including Level 4, 8 marks for this paragraph explaining why Germany was unhappy with the Treaty of Versailles. It is focused on land lost, specifically the German colonies which were given to Britain. At this point, Level 3 was given. The land lost is identified and then described. The Rhineland is mentioned as another area of land affected but this is not a relevant part of the explanation. The explanation is about the mineral riches the land contained which, now lost, would mean an economic loss for Germany. The answer is specific and developed, clearly showing why Germany would be unhappy.

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.

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

In order to perform well on the non-British Depth Study, candidates need to display an understanding of the relationship between the people and the state and how key political, social, and economic developments affected the people. Candidates' learning is examined through questions asking for knowledge and understanding and ability to explain and analyse, as well as use and evaluation of historical sources. These skills focus on Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3.

As in previous years, centres had prepared their candidates well for the exam. Marks were given across the entire mark range for all four questions, and knowledge was significantly improved when answering Question 6, which was flagged last year as an area to note. Some candidates performed less well on the questions requiring use of sources, however again here performance was better than in previous years, thanks to centres effective teaching of the skills required.

Question 5

5 Describe **one** way in which the Nazis used propaganda after they achieved power. **[2]**

This question was answered well. Candidates needed to identify one 'use' of propaganda and develop it with specific knowledge. A wide variety of uses were acceptable, as shown by the mark scheme. Many candidates focused on Goebbels' control of the media through censorship and especially radio. This included the illegality of listening to the BBC, and the affordable price of radio to ensure replays of Hitler's speeches were heard. Some described control of film and cinemas, and a good number commented on *The Eternal Jew* and culture celebrating Aryan superiority. Most candidates achieved 2 marks, with relatively few mistakenly commenting on the posters which helped secure them power in the first place.

Question 6

6 Explain how the Second World War affected German civilians (Germans who weren't fighting).

[10]

This question focuses on AO1 and AO2, where candidates use their knowledge and understanding to explain, in this case, impact or change in the period. The focus on the 'Second World War' was wide enough to allow many candidates to achieve the higher levels.

To achieve Levels 4 and 5 candidates needed to identify a specific impact or change and then develop it. Many focused on the impact of bombing, either exemplifying with Dresden, or the bombing of Hamburg and other industrial centres, and how this led to mass homelessness and loss of life. Others identified the varied nature of rationing during the war and could identify that this was not such an issue in the early stages of the war, as a result of supplies from the occupied territories, but how shortages and more severe rationing hit home at the end when the war was going badly. Some were able to develop an explanation about the difficulties for many women with men away at war, and mixed messaging about replacing them in industry, having only recently been encouraged to stay at home as the ideal Aryan mother. A few centred their explanation around the idea of total war, and Speer's direction of the economy which led to shortages of some everyday items. A number of candidates focused on the growth of opposition as a result of the war going badly, or the fate of the Jews and others who didn't fit into the Nazi vision. Others identified the refugee situation at the end of the war as Germans fled back to Germany from the occupied territories which were liberated by the Soviets.

Some candidates wrote too generally to achieve the higher levels. At Level 3 an impact or change needed to be supported with knowledge that rooted their answer in Germany's wartime experience, rather than a more general impact of war in Europe at this time, or 1930s Nazi life. Candidates who tried to develop an explanation without this secure knowledge would only achieve Levels 1 and 2.

A sizable group of candidates wrote about the impact of the war on life in Germany once the war had ended. This was acceptable as the question was not time-bound to the end of the war. In this case, explanations of the division of Germany and the different experiences of post war life were creditable, and some achieved well using this approach. It was notable that this approach was often taken by less able candidates.

Exemplar 2

10.		<p> The second world war led to a loss of morale for German citizens due to bombing. After the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1942, the tide turned on Germany as they started to lose the war, and the number of bombing raids increased. For example, a bombing raid in Hamburg in 1942 1943 led to the destruction of the industrial centre, meaning that people had to flee their homes in order to escape the violence of this attack. The bombing of Dresden in 1944 February 1945 also led to a very hard devastating effect on German citizens. Between 35,000 and 150,000 people died during this bombing raid, which would have led to a loss of morale as people lost their families, livelihoods and homes, as a result of this bombing. </p>
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This candidate response overall achieved Level 5, 10 marks, and the first paragraph is shown and achieved Level 4, 8 marks. There is a clear identification of impact, of bombing lowering morale. The candidate correctly explains that bombing increased as the war went on, and then provide specifics of two examples of bombing, on Hamburg and Dresden. The impact on people is very clear throughout the answer, displacement, loss of life and livelihood and lower morale. This is a very secure Level 4, top of the level.

Question 7

7 Study Sources A and B.

Is one source more reliable than the other about why Hitler became Chancellor in 1933? [10]

This question focuses on AO3 analysis, evaluation, and use of historical sources. Candidates were presented with two historical sources and asked to evaluate their reliability for why Hitler became Chancellor. The sources were a Nazi leaflet effectively advertising their election manifesto, and a comment by the ex-commander of the German army describing the backroom dealings involved in Hitler being made Chancellor.

Reliability could be evaluated using contextual knowledge, the provenance of the source or its content. Most easily this would usually be through comparing the content to what the candidate already knows. In this case, the fact that in 1929 the depression hit and by 1932 plunged Germany into economic crisis and unemployment; therefore the messages in Source A would resonate and explain Nazi election success. Equally, Source B alludes to the elites' machinations that finally brought Hitler to power; some reference to that would be perfectly acceptable to evaluate Source B. However, it was notable that many candidates did not take this approach, and tried to evaluate using provenance, which was often less effective, as evaluation was more generalised, and not focused on why Hitler came to power. These answers often ended in Level 2.

Many candidates answered as if the question was about utility, and some even used the word useful in their evaluation. These answers were rewarded but kept in Level 2. Clearly candidates are less experienced at answering this type of source question. However, what was an improvement on previous years in that candidates definitely handled the sources evenly, giving equal time to each source, and addressed each individually.

Most candidates achieved at least Level 2 by evaluating both sources. Often this was by commenting on the nature of Source B as more reliable because it was based on the notes of someone involved, whereas Source A was Nazi propaganda. These answers usually developed argument about the notes being private, with no reason to mislead. Or they might have commented on Hammerstein's position which made it credible he would have this sort of information. A good number compared the anti-Nazi stance of Hammerstein to what he said, to explain that in fact it made his comments even more reliable, which was impressive. However, to achieve Level 3 this needed to be linked to its value for telling us about how Hitler came to power, not assessing the reliability of the source generally. A good number achieved at Level 3 using contextual knowledge to evaluate Source A, but appeared not to know about the elites' deal to evaluate Source B.

Exemplar 3

7		Source A is a form of propaganda that was written by the Nazis in 1929 to help them gain popularity with German workers by offering solutions to problems caused by the Great Depression. This is proven as the source states that the Nazis demand "work and bread for every productive German citizen" which was part of Hitler's Twenty-Five Points that he hoped would gain him support. Therefore, Source A is reliable as it shows that the Nazis policies were directly targeted at trying to win over the working class and we know that policies such as 'work and bread' and 'more pay'
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		appealed to German workers, because by 1932, the Nazi Party had gained 230 seats in the Reichstag and by November had become the largest party, making way for Hitler to be appointed Chancellor in 1933.
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This candidate response demonstrates very effective use of contextual knowledge to evaluate Source A. It starts by identifying this source as election propaganda, shows understanding of the content by quoting from it and identifying its purpose, and then evaluates it by referring to it as part of the Nazi 25 Point programme which would be appealing at a time of depression. It then goes on to make this specific to Hitler coming to power with reference to the increase in Nazi seats in the Reichstag. This response received Level 3, 8 marks for this paragraph. Full marks was not achieved as the evaluation of Source B was not as strong.

Assessment for learning



Assessing the reliability of sources is a common way to evaluate, and candidates appear to need more practice and exposure to this approach. Using contextual knowledge is a straightforward way to assess reliability and candidates are encouraged to do this.

Highlighting the difference between utility and reliability would also be advisable.

Candidates should also focus on the 'reliability for what...' part of the question, as this will direct and improve their responses.

Question 8*

8* 'The Nazis' economic policies benefited the German people in the 1930s.'

How far do you agree?

[18]

This question focuses on AO1 and AO2 and requires candidates to use their historical knowledge and understanding to write an extended answer (an essay) in response to a statement prompt. The essay should include at least three explained examples covering both sides of the argument which then opens up the highest mark band.

This question was answered well. In terms of beneficial policies many answers focused on the employment opportunities the Nazis created, Strength through Joy, Beauty of Labour, help for farmers or Marriage Loans and child grants. The more negative policies focused on were those removing workers' rights, removing jobs from some women, and excluding Jews from business.

Many candidates achieved Level 3 and above by identifying policies and explaining what they were and how they were beneficial, or not. There was much knowledge about Strength through Joy and policies for farmers, and some candidates explained them very well, using detailed and accurate knowledge. Equally many understood the downsides for workers with the DAF, and women being forced out of employment in some professions. Others had less detailed knowledge, for example omitting the names of unions, or farming laws, but understood what they did and their impact, and these achieved lower in the level.

Other answers focused more on a group of people and gave examples of the many policies that did or didn't help them. Often this also achieved Level 3 or above. However, this approach could be less successful unless the benefits were very clear and developed into explanation, as the answers often tended towards description and some appeared very like lists of policies with very brief detail (Level 2 not Level 3). These answers, at times, talked about the positives and negatives for a group in the same paragraph, which unless clearly focused on the question can again be very descriptive.

Candidates who identified policies but detail about them or explanation of their benefit was too undeveloped remained at Level 2, and there were many of these. Some candidates clearly ran out of time, but for others, their knowledge seemed to not be deep enough. That said, the quality of answers was on the whole quite strong.

Interestingly, many candidates missed one of the most obvious benefits of Nazi rule for workers; a relief from crushing unemployment through jobs. Some did mention it but did not connect it to where those jobs were in either public works (autobahn) or the military.

Few candidates answered out of the time frame.

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