

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

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

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**J410**

For first teaching in 2016

**J410/01 Summer 2024 series**

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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

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## Paper 1 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 again candidates performed particularly well in the interpretations section, and schools 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 did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deployed examples, issues and events relevant to the time periods examined by the questions</li> <li>• managed their time effectively, balancing their answers proportionally to the mark allocations for each of the questions (especially important for Question 1 and 5)</li> <li>• showed good knowledge and understanding of historical interpretations</li> <li>• established clear explanatory links back to the issues in Questions 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8</li> <li>• made effective use of the historical sources to draw out similarities and differences and so addressing the question given (Question 7)</li> <li>• had a clear grasp of the key concepts required from study of the specification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• displayed less secure historical knowledge, for example about the impact of war on Germany</li> <li>• described and identified issues without explaining them fully or without linking back to the issue in Questions 2, 6 and 8</li> <li>• left insufficient time to offer a fully developed response to Question 8</li> <li>• showed weaker or confused knowledge and understanding of historical interpretations</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• made simplistic comments about the historical sources in part B rather than addressing their value and looking at similarities and differences (Question 7).</li> </ul>

## 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, <del>Lt</del> Lloyd George <sup>and</sup> 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, <del>the</del> 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 awarded. 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 very well for the exam. Marks were given across the entire mark range for all four questions, although especially at Levels 3 and above. Some candidates performed less well on the questions requiring use of sources, however performance was still strong, thanks to effective teaching of the skills required, and the high calibre of candidates entered for this option.

### Question 5

- 5 Describe **one** way in which Dazhai Commune was used by the Chinese government between 1966 and 1976. [2]

This question was answered very well. Candidates needed to identify one 'way' in which Dazhai was used by the Chinese government and develop it with supporting knowledge and detail. This ranged from use of Dazhai as a model commune, which led to the pilgrimage of the Red Guard eager to see collectivisation in action perfectly, to its use to promote communes and collectivisation in general, including it featuring on posters and in Communist Party propaganda. Alternatively, candidates could be rewarded for 2 separate identifications of its use. Most candidates achieved 2 marks.

## Question 6

6 Explain the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese people between 1966 and 1976.

[10]

This question focuses on AO1 and AO2, where candidates use their knowledge and understanding to explain, in this case, the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese people.

To achieve Levels 4 and 5 candidates needed to identify a specific impact and then develop it sufficiently. Many focused on the role of the Red Guards in destroying China's cultural heritage, prompted by Mao's campaign against the Four Olds. The breakdown of filial ties was also explained, especially in relation to children reporting on their parents, and being encouraged to believe that loyalty to Mao was more important than to their own kin. Some focused on the damage done to education, medicine, and medium term economic development as a result of the closing of schools and universities and the campaign to humiliate intellectuals and teachers.

Most candidates achieved Level 4 or above as they generally had a good amount of accurate knowledge. However, what was not always clear were the distinct impacts that were being identified and developed. It was quite common for an impact to be explained, but the answer to drift into telling the story of the Revolution, identifying other impacts along the way, but not fully focusing on the question. To help focus their responses, candidates could be encouraged to make a very brief plan of which two or three things (which impacts) they are going to concentrate on.

The very few candidates who achieved below Level 4, usually managed to achieve Level 3, with details about what happened in this time, which made clear one or more impacts, but each was not sufficiently developed to be rewarded at Level 4.

### Focus points

Candidates responses to this and other questions show they have excellent knowledge, and many are adept at focusing on the question when answering. However, not all. Centres are encouraged to practice answering this question. Each paragraph should clearly identify a specific point which can stand alone as a coherent answer to the question (in this case a specific impact). Support and development should then focus on that, without deviating and getting lost in huge detail. Two explained points are sufficient for the top of Level 5.

## Exemplar 2

06	<p>The Cultural revolution impacted <del>the</del> people and society in an extremely negative way. For example, the Red Guard were indoctrinated by Mao to become the main force of aggressive change. They smashed paintings, fought street battles, and committed 6,600 acts of vandalism to <del>for</del> scare the population into support for the CCP. <del>The red guard</del> This impacted the population negatively as they were</p> <p>in constant fear of their homes and belongings being ruined, therefore leading to support through terror. Furthermore, teachers were made to kneel on broken glass and education overall was halted as all the young children were out ruining property in their new role as red guard. This negatively impacted the people as education barely existed anymore, and all the teachers were killed or forced away due to the red guard's violent act. Therefore, the children became a <del> forgotten</del> 'lost generation' as they lost their knowledge and respect.</p>
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This response achieved Level 5, 10 marks overall, including Level 5, 9 marks for this powerful explanation of negative impact. Both the language the candidate uses ('smashed' 'vandalised' 'violence'), the examples of what happened (damage to art, street battles) as well as the quality of the explanation (the Red Guard were indoctrinated) together merits top of the level marks by the time the candidate identifies support through terror.. It is quite succinct, but very clear.

The candidate then goes on to explain the negative impact of the Red Guard leading to education changes and achieves L5/9 here. The fact that this second explanation is not as well-structured and explained, left this extended paragraph at Level 5/9.

## Question 7

### 7 Study **Sources A and B**.

How similar are these two sources?

[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 similarity. This involved evaluation by comparing their content, audience, message, provenance, and context.

Candidates performed well on this question. Many were able to achieve the upper two levels by comparing in detail, and focusing on the purpose and/or message, as well as explaining how the differences were explained by their differing audiences.

Few candidates remained in Level 1, where the comparison is very general or focused on surface features of the source content. Most could see that there was a very similar message to the two sources, about the danger of political opponents (bandits/counter revolutionaries). This type of comparison would be rewarded with Level 2.

At Level 3 candidates needed to go beyond message and make clear that they understood the purpose of the sources. Many achieved this by talking about the encouragement to take action, and the 'Campaign for the Repression of Counter Revolutionaries' was often cited as the backdrop to the production of both pieces of evidence. For Level 3 candidates also needed a more developed comparison, and usually cited the difference in audience to explain the differences in force and action that the sources recommend. Candidates are clearly well prepared for this type of question, as performance was very high.

## Question 8\*

8\* 'Between 1976 and 1981, Deng Xiaoping's main use of propaganda was to attack his political enemies.'

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 slightly less well than is often the case for the final essay question. It wasn't a matter of timing, but that candidates struggled to focus their answer on propaganda. Many knew large amounts about Deng's social, economic, and political reforms, but tying these into how propaganda helped him was more difficult. In desperation some threw in comments about 'posters', but something more explicit was needed to pin the answer to how propaganda was used to help achieve his goals.

Many started well, as seen in the exemplar below, by clearly articulating how propaganda helped Deng against the Gang of Four. Many knew of the caricatures used to vilify them that helped to persuade that they were criminals and a danger to the state. This resulted in their removal as a threat, and Deng's ultimate control. Arguments could also be made around Deng's use of propaganda against Hua Guofeng. As a result most candidates achieved Level 3.

Propaganda was also widely used by Deng to promote his socio-economic goals, and a large number of candidates were aware of the posters promoting the One Child Policy, picturing happy, one child families in their comfortable home with enough space and for everyone, to reinforce the benefit of fewer children. Some answers talked about the slogan 'Go West' that Deng publicised using propaganda to encourage candidates to take up higher education courses abroad. Others talked about the need for such propaganda because it was a break with Maoism. This was also acceptable as an explanation of the type of propaganda described was rather limited (i.e. '...posters were used...'). Equally, some looked at political reforms being promoted as they changed some Maoist approaches.

However some candidates found it difficult to connect reforms to propaganda, and therefore did not achieve as highly as they could have, given their knowledge of other aspects of Deng's changes. This is an area that centres could look at covering in more depth, as it is a highly visual theme in many cases it would be memorable and equip their candidates better to address this area of the specification.

That said, even with a low knowledge of the propaganda, the vast majority of candidates achieved at Level 2 or above, as they could identify a use for the propaganda (i.e. promoting the One Child Policy), if not the form of it.

## Exemplar 3

8	<p>SOME evidence of Deng Xiaoping's use of propaganda was to attack his political enemies, such as his use of posters and pictures painting the Gang of Four as convicts and wrongdoers. This allowed Deng to influence the peoples opinion by depicting them as negative and evil, therefore <del>encour</del> encouraging Chinese citizens to view them as bad too, allowing them to think they have formed their own opinion of the Gang, but really have been influenced by Deng's propaganda. Additionally, this lead to <del>the</del> increasing <del>pop</del> popularity that the Gang of Four should be put on trial and executed, which they later were. This proves Deng's main use of propaganda was to attack political enemies as he illustrated the Gang of Four in a negative light.</p>
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This response achieved Level 5, 16 marks overall, but Level 3, 8 marks for this first paragraph explaining Deng's use of propaganda to attack political enemies. The response clearly identifies the propaganda used; 'posters and pictures' and their purpose, to degrade and humiliate the Gang of Four, who were his political enemies. This is accurate and refers to the caricatures used to undermine them prior to and during their trial. This vilification certainly contributed to their demise, which the candidate says. Unlike in many responses, propaganda was centre stage in this example.

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