

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY B**

## **(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)**

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**J411**

For first teaching in 2016

**J411/38 Summer 2024 series**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper 38 series overview .....	4
Section A: The Making of America, 1789–1900 overview .....	5
Question 1 (a) .....	7
Question 1 (b) .....	7
Question 1 (c) .....	7
Question 2 .....	8
Question 3 .....	10
Question 4* .....	11
Question 5* .....	12
Section B: Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535 overview .....	13
Question 6 .....	14
Question 7 .....	16
Question 8* .....	17
Question 9* .....	18

## 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 38 series overview

Paper J411/38 is The Making of America, 1789–1900 (Period Study) with Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535 (World Depth Study). Candidates need to show an ability to analyse evidence using second order concepts as well as displaying their ability to explain evidence in reference to the question. For the World Depth Study element of the paper, candidates need to be able to make inferences and evaluate historical sources and interpretations, alongside applying their knowledge to support and challenge a historical interpretation in an essay-style question.

Section A tests Assessment Objectives 1 and 2. To perform effectively, candidates are required to select and deploy relevant historical knowledge and analysis skills (Question 2) or explain (Question 3, 4 and 5) this in an effective manner.

Section B tests all four Assessment Objectives. Candidates are required to make relevant inferences from three sources and one interpretation. The extent to which the sources and interpretation were the focus of candidates' responses to Questions 6 and 7 were the main driver of the overall level awarded.

## Section A: The Making of America, 1789–1900 overview

To do well in the Period Study, candidates need to be able to:

- present a historical summary of an area of content they have learned.
- offer an explanation in response to a historical question (e.g. explaining the causes or consequences of something).
- recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a statement in an essay-style question.

Section A focuses on AO1 and AO2 – knowledge and understanding of key features of the period and the ability to analyse and explain this material. These AOs have equal weighting in this section. The specification is broken down into four chronological periods, and questions are framed around these. Candidates who had a clear understanding of these chronological periods were able to deploy relevant material on Question 3, 4 and 5 more effectively.

The vast majority of candidates obtained the available mark for 1 (a), although 1 (b) and 1 (c) required knowledge specific to one of the four time periods in the specification and while many candidates obtained marks these were more challenging questions for the cohort.

Question 2 was effectively answered by candidates, aided by the latitude they have to select their own second order concept(s), although some responses were too narrative to receive credit in Levels 2 and 3 of the mark scheme.

For Question 3, a large number of candidates' understanding of 'big business', as with Question 5 in 2023, was limited. Whether for 'big business' or the growth of cities, a significant number of candidates offered material that was too generalised and not specific to the time period specified in the question, therefore examiners were not able to credit such responses beyond Level 1.

Candidates choose whether to answer either Question 4 or Question 5 and instances where the rubric was ignored and an answer was offered to both were very rare indeed. Some very strong responses were seen to both questions, and these came from candidates who recognised the time period specified and offered relevant material. Question 4 was more popular as a choice than Question 5. For both questions, candidates who offered material on Native Americans relevant to the other question were fairly common, especially in Question 4 where candidates referenced conflicts involving Native Americans later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For all questions, the indicative content of the mark scheme gives a comprehensive range of material that could be credited, though this is not an exhaustive list and examiners rewarded any valid material.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recalled, selected and deployed material of specific relevance to the questions set in terms of topic and date range</li> <li>managed their time effectively, paying particular attention to the demands of each question in terms of structure and mark allocation</li> <li>organised their summary for Question 2 around one or more second order concepts (such as causation and consequence) which were then fully explained</li> <li>made clear analytical links to the proposition in the question for Questions 3, 4 and 5</li> <li>explained their evidence in reference to the question using specific impacts to enhance the quality of their response (Question 3)</li> <li>effectively used a range of knowledge in their choice of essay questions, including precise evidence to support their responses; they then explained this evidence thoroughly in reference to the question (Questions 4 and 5)</li> <li>recognised the need to construct a balanced argument in responses to Questions 4 and 5.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identified a second order concept such as change, within their summary, but didn't tie this into their analysis of the knowledge they had used (Question 2)</li> <li>did not have knowledge of specific impacts of big business and/or cities to explain these in reference to the question (Question 3)</li> <li>were less mindful of the date range specified in the questions, and so presented material that was irrelevant to the question set (especially in Questions 3, 4 and 5)</li> <li>produced narrative responses that either did not analyse one or more second order concepts (Question 2) or make explanatory links to the question set (Questions 3, 4 and 5)</li> <li>managed their time less effectively, spending too long on lower tariff questions (especially Question 1 (a) - (c) and so had insufficient time to spend on higher tariff questions</li> <li>omitted some questions completely.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Identify **one** way in which the Lakota Sioux used the buffalo.

[1]

The overwhelming majority of candidates obtained credit for correctly answering this question. The most common valid response was 'for food' but any relevant example was awarded the available mark. Examiners were impressed with some of the examples given, which revealed a detailed understanding of the relationship between the Lakota Sioux and the buffalo.

## Question 1 (b)

(b) Name a new technology or development that helped Homesteaders survive on the Plains after 1861.

[1]

Although many candidates obtained the mark available – wind pumps, barbed wire and the 'sod buster' plough were commonly seen – others offered material that was outside the time frame of the question set or clearly pre-dated it, for example the Homestead Act or imprecise references to 'wagons'. As with many questions for The Making of America, candidates are advantaged by having a clear understanding of the four chronological periods in the specification.

## Question 1 (c)

(c) Identify **one** way in which African Americans tried to improve their lives between 1877 and 1900.

[1]

Of the three 'short answer' questions, candidates found this the most challenging. A range of valid responses were seen, most commonly stating that African Americans moved out of the South (for example the 'Exodusters'). There was some very precise material used by some candidates (such as the roles of Ida B Wells or Booker T Washington).

However, a large number of responses were too generalised to credit since they could not be applied to the period 1877-1900 as stipulated in the question. Examiners were not able to credit responses such as 'jobs' without some sense of roles that opened up to African Americans in this period for example. Other candidates offered material before the question, for example, the Freedmen's Bureau, which was shut down in 1872, and these too were not credited. Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of the time periods broken down in the specification with their candidates.

## Question 2

**2** Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the American Civil War.

Support your summary with examples.

**[9]**

Most candidates attempted the question effectively. They clearly understood that a successful response to Question 2 involves more than writing a narrative account, and were able to build a response that examiners could identify as addressing one or more 'second order concepts'.

Commonly for this question, candidates structured their responses around causation (why the Civil War occurred) or consequence (the impact of the Civil War, most often on African Americans). Candidates who could successfully analyse one example of a second order concept were credited in Level 2, and those who could give two (or more) examples were credited in Level 3. When considering causation, examiners credited candidates who were able to show the existence of valid tension between the North and South by the 1860s; they did not need to move their responses to a specific cause of Lincoln declaring war on the Confederacy, although some candidates did so very effectively.

Candidates need not directly indicate which second order concept(s) they are analysing.

Effective responses (see Exemplar 1) often approached the response with a short paragraph focused on causation, followed by another focused on consequence or change (such as the changing role of African Americans in the North). Less effective responses provided a narrative account of the war itself, or attempted to argue that slavery was a cause of the war without analysing how this created tension between North and South by the 1860s.



## Exemplar 1

2		The northern states of America <del>were</del> had more <del>businesses</del> businesses and cities whereas the Southern States <del>toke</del> were thriving off of the slave trade, cotton production and therefore became much richer than the Northern states.
		This caused tensions between the North and South. The North wanted end slavery; but not because they disagreed with how inhumane it was, it was because they disliked how wealthy the South was becoming. The North believed slavery was unfair since the southern states had the perfect conditions to produce cotton.
		The southern states refused to end slavery since the slave trade and cotton plantations made up 90% of the Southern states wealth. This caused the Civil war between the North and South as they fought for slavery to either end or continue.

In Exemplar 1, the candidate has organised their summary around the second order concept of causation. They have used their knowledge of the economic differences between the northern and southern states to enable them to explain why slavery was a cause of the American Civil War breaking out. Their analysis of causation is well organised and explained through slavery being a cause of tension. This allows the candidate to achieve Level 2, 6 marks for a summary based on causation with one clear supporting example: slavery.

## Question 3

### 3 What was the impact of the growth of big business and/or cities during the period 1877–1900?

Explain your answer.

**[10]**

Question 3 requires candidates to explain one or more examples: in this case, the impact of the growth of big business and/or the growth of cities during the period 1877-1900. Given that explaining 'impact' requires a slightly different focus to explaining causes (such as in 2023, when the focus of the question was reasons for tensions in America between 1789 and 1838), Levels 2 and 3 of the mark scheme were revised. Candidates who validly described the growth of big business and/or cities in this period were credited in Level 2, whereas those who identified a valid impact of this were credited in Level 3. A valid description together with a clear statement of impact during this period were enough to credit candidates with explanation, and so access Level 4 (or Level 5 for the second explanation).

Candidates could focus their explanations of impact around either the growth of big business or the growth of cities; they were not required to do both in order to receive full credit.

Examiners saw a number of good responses. Candidates commonly offered explanations of impact based around hostility to industrial action, the decline of small farms due to the growth of bonanza farms, the experiences of European or Asian migrants in cities and worsening public health conditions.

Many candidates, however, found this question challenging and struggled to offer material rooted in the period 1877 to 1900. Generalised statements about migration, increased employment opportunities or overcrowding remained in Level 1 unless they were accompanied with knowledge of the period (for example from where migration occurred, or businesses who expanded and so increased employment). Responses based on 'big business' were all too often generalised. Centres are encouraged to revisit their candidates' knowledge and understanding of this topic.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* 'The main reason the USA expanded between 1789 and 1838 was because land was taken from Native American tribes in wars.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

Candidates have the option of answering either Question 4 or Question 5, and the majority of candidates chose to answer Question 4. Both these questions, and Questions 8 and 9 in Section B, have the same rationale for awarding levels and marks. Candidates who offer valid material for either the stated factor or other valid reasons are credited in Level 2, with candidates who can then explain why this material led to the expansion of the USA between 1789 and 1838 able to access Level 3 and beyond. Level 3 is awarded to candidates who offer one explained reason for either side of the argument (expansion as a result of land taken from Native American tribes in wars or expansion as a result of other factors). Level 4 credits candidates who offer two explained reasons which again could be on the same side of the argument, or one on each side. Level 5 credits candidates who offer three explanations providing there is some balance (e.g. two explained points for one side and one for the other) while Level 6 is reserved for candidates who offer four explained points covering both sides of the argument. The final mark – 18 – is reserved for candidates who in addition to reaching Level 6 combine or interact the factors in their response to offer a supported judgement (or 'clinching argument') about whether the candidate agrees with the statement in the question.

As the question relates to reasons for the USA's expansion, examiners were looking for candidates' responses to be rooted in the acquisition of land in order to credit them with explanation. For the stated factor, candidates commonly referred to the Battle of Fallen Timbers and subsequent Greenville resulting the acquisition of land in the Northwest and wars with the Seminole and Creek and the acquisition of land in the Southwest territory. While the Cherokee 'Trail of Tears' was not strictly a war, candidates who argued that this arose as a consequence of US aggression and used it to agree with the statement were credited, providing they also identified land lost by the Cherokee, or acquired by the USA.

To access Level 5, responses require some balance. Explanations that disagreed with the statement typically included material such as the Louisiana Purchase and the 500 million acres added to the USA as a result; the impact of the Indian Removal Act on tribes like the Choctaw and Chickasaw - who accepted its terms and resulted in the further acquisition of land since those tribes were moved westward; the role of Lewis, Clark and Sacagawea; the 'Trail of Tears' (more commonly used to disagree with the statement) and the impact of the cotton gin in the expansion of slavery and the acquisition of plantation lands in the South.

While many strong responses were seen, a significant number of candidates attempted to answer the question with material that was not relevant to the period 1789 to 1838. These candidates frequently made reference to Native American wars later in the study period (such as the Great Sioux War, which was relevant only in Question 5), the Homestead Act, the development of railroads and the California Gold Rush. The importance of candidates understanding the four periods into which the specification is broken down cannot be overstated, since material that falls outside the period stipulated in the question will not be credited.

## Question 5\*

- 5\* 'Between 1861 and 1877, Native Americans of the Plains had no success in challenging the US government and white settlement.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

This was the less popular of the two optional essay questions. Creditable material had to arise from candidates' understanding of the relationship between Native Americans and the US government/white settlement between 1861 and 1877. Question 5 allowed candidates to draw on a greater range of evidence. There were some very strong responses indeed.

Material agreeing with the statement frequently focused on Little Crow's War, the Sand Creek Massacre and the Great Sioux War. Candidates who were able to make a judgement about why these represented unsuccessful challenges by Native Americans were credited with explanation. Material was also seen that considered the impact of the railroads and homesteaders and while this was credited as description (Level 2) it was less often accompanied with a judgement considering the lack of Native American success.

To disagree with the statement, candidates frequently constructed explanations around Red Cloud's War and the Battle of Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn). The most successful responses offered a valid 'clinching argument', usually revolving around the short-term successful challenge of Greasy Grass but the ultimate Sioux defeat in the wider war.

As with Question 4, some candidates offered material that was outside the date range of the question (the Battle of Fallen Timbers, for example) and this could not be credited.

### Misconception



Given the number of candidates who offered material that fell outside the date ranges of Questions 4 and 5, centres are encouraged to revisit their candidates' understanding of chronology. Colour-coding material in lessons based on which of the four periods are being studied, separate exercise books or work folders for each period or regular retrieval work in lessons based on identified periods and issues within them could all help to overcome any chronological confusion. Above all, candidates should be encouraged to read questions carefully and, if necessary, circle the date range or write the date range at the top of their response in the script as part of their planning.

## Section B: Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535 overview

To do well in the World Depth Study, candidates need to be able to:

- make valid inferences from contemporary sources (and interpretations) to address a particular question.
- recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a statement in an essay-style question.

The Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535: Candidates generally showed a clear understanding of how to make inferences for Question 6. However, Question 7 tended to highlight a reliance on commenting on reliability of sources/interpretations which will keep the candidate at Level 2, or an attempt to cross reference sources/interpretations which is not required. The essay questions were generally answered with generic rather than specific supporting evidence throughout. Candidates needed to showcase specific knowledge throughout their responses to enhance their marks as well as ensuring that they were developing their explanation of evidence fully to showcase their understanding of how the evidence they were using answered the question being posed.

Candidates generally performed well on Question 6 where they made strong inferences from source content on what they could learn about the Aztecs from Source A. However, fewer candidates performed well on the essay-style questions. While most candidates were able to describe or identify points of agreement or disagreement for Question 4/5 and 8/9, few successfully explained their evidence in reference to the question resulting in many candidates achieving Level 2.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• made an inference or inferences from Source A and supported this with evidence from the content of the source (Question 6)</li> <li>• made two supported inferences from Source B, Source C and/or Interpretation D to explain how useful they were for a historian studying New Spain (Mexico) in the years after the fall of the Aztec Empire (Question 7)</li> <li>• effectively used a range of knowledge in their choice of essay questions, including precise evidence to support their responses; they then explained this evidence thoroughly in reference to the question (Questions 8 and 9).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used lots of own knowledge about the Aztecs rather than focusing their response on the analysis of Source A (Question 6)</li> <li>• described surface features of Source B, Source C and/or Interpretation D rather than trying to make inferences about why the sources and interpretation were useful for a historian studying New Spain (Mexico) in the years after the fall of the Aztec Empire (Question 7)</li> <li>• explained that Sources B and C and/or Interpretation D were not useful for the study of New Spain (Mexico) in the years after the fall of the Aztec Empire or explained what these did not tell a historian about the topic (Question 7)</li> <li>• described or identified the knowledge they had used for the essay-style questions rather than explained the evidence they used in reference to the question (Questions 8 and 9).</li> </ul>

## Question 6

### 6 What can **Source A** tell us about the Aztecs?

Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer.

[7]

The aim of this question is to encourage candidates to make inferences from the content of Source A.

The vast majority of candidates understood that the source showed that Aztec society had an embedded hierarchy and therefore achieved Level 2, 3 marks. Candidates who then supported their inference with source support, for example: 'The Aztecs distinguished between the noble chieftains and the warriors', achieved Level 2, 4-5 marks. Hierarchy was by far the most common inference that candidates explained within their response – as shown in Exemplar 1.

The most successful responses had additional inferences such as how important warriors were in Aztec society and how warfare was glorified. This was supported with a quote such as: 'these warriors also gathered at the 'House of Eagles' where they practised the use of weapons'. Two supported inferences enabled a candidate to achieve 7 marks on this question. Sophisticated inferences based around the provenance of Source A would also have achieved 7 marks.

Candidates who focused their response solely on own knowledge about the Aztecs rather than focusing on the source achieved zero marks.

#### Advice to centres

In this question candidates need to focus their response closely to Source A, rather than using own knowledge throughout the response.

Candidates need to make an inference and explain this in reference to the focus in the question, using the source's content to support their response.

## Exemplar 2

		The second paragraph suggests a
		hierarchy throughout the Aztecs.
		There are many important and
		sophisticated labels such as "warrior"
		and "noble chieftains". This shows they
		are the wealthy leaders of Tenochtitlan
		and then there are poor prisoners and
		"common people" at the bottom of society.

In Exemplar 2, the candidate has made an inference from Source A by stating that it 'suggests a hierarchy' within Aztec society. At this point the candidate would achieve Level 2, 3 marks for an unsupported inference. The candidate then goes on to support their inference using source support in the form of 'noble chieftains' and 'common people'. This would then see the candidate achieve Level 2, 4 marks. The candidate would then need to make an additional supported inference to allow them to achieve Level 3, 7 marks.



## Question 7

- 7 How useful are **Sources B** and **C** and **Interpretation D** for a historian studying New Spain (Mexico) in the years after the fall of the Aztec Empire?

In your answer, refer to the two sources and the interpretation as well as your own knowledge.

[15]

The aim of this question is to encourage candidates to make inferences from the content of Sources B, C and Interpretation D.

Successful responses had supported inference(s) from the content of sources B, C and/or Interpretation D. Two supported inferences enables a candidate to achieve 15 marks. The most successful responses included an inference from the source(s) and/or interpretation and explained why they are useful for a historian studying New Spain (Mexico) in the years after the fall of the Aztec Empire. They then supported their inference(s) with evidence from the content. For example, *'Source B is useful because it reveals tensions in these years between the colonists and the government in Spain. The source is reporting the "greed, disorder and laziness of the Spanish" to the government back in Spain, and accuses them of being uncaring about the "welfare or religious instruction of the Indians"'. This shows the concerns that the royal authorities had about the way New Mexico was being governed.* This example highlights an inference made from Source B and is supported from the content of the source which would enable the candidate to achieve Level 4, between 10 and 12 marks. The candidate would then need to make an additional supported inference from Source C or Interpretation D to enable them to access Level 5.

Weaker responses tended to include surface features of sources B, C and/or Interpretation D to explain why they were useful evidence, e.g. *'Source B is useful because it says that the Indians worked for the Spanish in service.'* Furthermore, responses that explained the provenance of sources B, C and/or Interpretation D and concluded they were not useful due to their bias or that their provenance indicates that they are trustworthy as they would have known what was happening or that the author would have completed research were not credited at higher than Level 2, 4 marks. Additionally, responses that explained what the source(s)/interpretation didn't tell us, limited attainment at Level 1. There were lots of attempts from candidates to cross reference Sources B, C and/or Interpretation D - this often resulted in a confused analysis.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should be encouraged to analyse each source/interpretation individually rather than cross referencing. They should not base their analysis of Sources B, C and/or Interpretation D on evaluation of the reliability of the source/interpretation; this often limits candidates to Level 2, 4 marks. Candidates should aim to make an inference from each and support this with evidence from the content of the source/interpretation.



## Question 8\*

- 8\* 'The main reason the Spanish were able to come to Tenochtitlán in 1519 was that they successfully gained local allies.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

Candidates who performed well on this question were able to explain whether they believed the main reason for the Spanish coming to Tenochtitlán was gaining local allies for example, their alliance with the Tlaxcalans or their allegiance with two translators in March 1519. Candidates were able to describe alliances in specific detail for example: Geronimo de Aguilar spoke Spanish and Maya, and Doña Marina spoke Spanish, Maya and Nahuatl, but then made sure they explained how this evidence allowed the Spanish to come to Tenochtitlán. Candidates who achieved the highest level for their response to this question explained four clear points in reference to the question and had an element of balance, for example three explained points to support the view that the main reason for the Spanish coming to Tenochtitlán was gaining local allies and one explained point to dispute the view and claim an alternative factor was more significant in gaining the Spanish access to Tenochtitlán such as the Cholula massacre.

In a number of cases, candidates simply described alliances the Spanish made or identified alternative reasons for why the Spanish successfully got to Tenochtitlán but did not explain these in reference to the question and this therefore limited these candidates to Level 2.

Weaker responses made very generalised comments about what an alliance is or how it helped the Spanish make friends without showing any specific awareness of the allies that the Spanish made. These responses were awarded Level 1.

## Question 9\*

**9\*** 'Moctezuma's mistakes were the most important factor in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

**[18]**

This was the most popular essay choice for this paper.

Candidates who performed well on this question were able to explain how mistakes Moctezuma made, such as his initial reaction to the Spanish arrival and allowing himself to be arrested, allowed the Spanish to conquer the Aztec Empire. Candidates were able to describe mistakes in specific detail for example, the gifts Moctezuma presented Cortés with, but then made sure they explained how this mistake allowed the Spanish to conquer the Aztec Empire. Candidates who achieved the highest level for their response to this question explained four clear points in reference to the question and had an element of balance, for example three explained points to support the view that Moctezuma's mistakes were the most important factor and one explained point to dispute the view and claim an alternative factor was more significant, such as Spanish tactics or the impact of Smallpox on the Aztecs.

In a number of cases, candidates simply listed mistakes that Moctezuma made, e.g. his reaction to the Spanish arrival, allowing himself to be arrested and the belief that Cortés was Quetzalcoatl, but did not explain how these mistakes led to the Spanish conquering the Aztec Empire and this therefore limited these candidates to Level 2. Candidates who just described their evidence and didn't explain these in reference to the question also remained in Level 2.

Weaker responses made very generalised comments stating that Moctezuma made mistakes but didn't identify or explain what these were. These responses were awarded Level 1.

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