

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y321/01 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 Y321/01 series overview

Y321 is one of twenty-one units for Paper 3 of the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an interpretation question on a named in-depth topic and through two essays.

The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in-depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the interpretation.

In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question - were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words - were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both Interpretations using contextual knowledge - covered the whole period in a balanced way - adopted a thematic approach - made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic - explained the links and comparisons - supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.	- showed a limited understanding of one or both of the Interpretations - did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the Interpretation - did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the Interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the Interpretation - adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach - did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph - did not cover the whole period - did not focus on the precise wording of the question - made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

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Section A overview

There is one compulsory question in this section. This question requires candidates to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

Section A in Paper Y321 is focused on British policy towards Palestine at the end of the First World War.

Question 1

1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages.

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of British policy towards Palestine at the end of the First World War. [30]

Candidates were able to recognise the differences between the two interpretations. Rogan, in Passage A, sets British policy towards Palestine in the context of efforts to consolidate their 'unrivalled' 'mastery over the Middle East'. The mandate in Palestine, however, was almost doomed to inevitable failure because of the expectation that Britain would establish a state for the indigenous people of the region as well as a Jewish homeland. Bunton, in Passage B, offers a different view, one focused on the strategic value of Palestine to Britain due to its proximity to the Suez Canal. The British found an ally in the Zionist cause in supporting these interests in Palestine. Their ultimate goal, according to Bunton, was to keep foreign influence, notably of the French, out of Palestine.

In evaluating Passage A, candidates drew on relevant knowledge of British policy in the region during and shortly after the First World War. For example, it was noted that the terms of the Balfour Declaration, noted in the passage, but expanded upon by candidates, contradicted the promises made to the Arab people in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence only a short time before. In evaluating Rogan's claim about mounting nationalist opposition, the 1920 revolt in Iraq was often cited, while efforts to cede 'nominal independence' were linked to the installation of pro-British rulers in Iraq and Transjordan. 'Communal conflict' was evaluated against evidence of Arab-Jewish conflict, such as in Jerusalem in 1920 and Jaffa in 1921. A variety of evidence was used to support Rogan's contention that Palestine represented 'Britain's greatest imperial failure in the Middle East'.

The importance of the Suez Canal, noted by Bunton, was evaluated using data on the amount of shipping which passed through it, Britain's need to maintain contact with its possessions in the east, and the Empire's ongoing need for oil coming from Persia. Candidates demonstrated broad knowledge of Zionism and the influence of prominent Zionists on British policy, such as Rothschild. Some candidates even attempt to explain Bunton's reference to the Bible in the context of the restoration of a Jewish nation while others referenced the pogroms in eastern Europe. Candidates usually disagreed with Bunton's contention about British concern over French influence in the region. Knowledge of the Sykes-Picot agreement was usually demonstrated and the fact that Britain and France had been allies in the war was used to undermine the interpretation.

Some candidates, when addressing both interpretations, drew on later knowledge (which can be seen in Exemplar 1), such as increased Jewish immigration as a result of Hitler's policies in Germany and the persecution of the Jews during the Second World War. On occasion, such as when candidates tried to evaluate Rogan's suggestion that Palestine represented Britain's greatest failure in the region, it was appropriate to use later knowledge as further support. But the knowledge used throughout the answer needed to be focused largely on the period identified in the question, 'at the end of the First World War'. Exemplar 1 provides an example of an answer in which there is a good focus on the question with good evaluation even if it is not extensive.

Exemplar 1

A 1 Passage B provides a more convincing explanation of British policy towards Palestine at the end of the First World War. This is because it successfully identifies the value of Palestine as an economic and strategic buffer zone, as well as having a nuanced picture of the ideological aims for the 1917 Balfour Declaration. While Eugene Rogan is right to point out the conflicting aspirations of Palestinians and Zionists, his interpretation of British policy is ultimately overly pessimistic as it does not seem that the mandate was "doomed to fail from the start". This limitation makes Passage B the more persuasive.

Passage A has some strengths such as successfully identifying how the "cost of formal empire escalated" after the First World War with Britain experiencing resistance in Africa and South Asia following Woodrow Wilson's call for self-determination in Versailles. This made the handling of the mandate challenging as around 100,000 troops were ultimately required to maintain control over Palestine in the 1920's. Moreover, Rogan points out that Lord Balfour's clause that "nothing shall be done to harm the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" was impractical. This ~~was~~ is valid as Palestinian leadership from Hajj Amin Al-Husseini and Izz al-Din al-Qasbi were strongly opposed to Jewish colon settlers, who had already bought around 6-8% of land ~~by~~ from the First Aliyah. The Zionist ambition of establishing Eretz Israel based on the Biblical mandate for Jewish land would require even a considerably larger amount of land to be taken from the Palestinian making the Balfour hard to execute.

However, the weaknesses of Passage A outweigh its strengths as it overemphasises the extent to which Balfour was

significant in "condemning the whole region to conflict and violence". It was not clear that the Mandate "was doomed from the outset" and ~~at the time~~ that violence it. Taffar in 1920 and the Hebron Massacre of 1921 would occur. Arguably Sir Herbert Samuel failed to recognise how ~~the~~ allowing the Jewish Agency, founded in 1924, to make their own institutions like the Hagannah and their labour union would upset the Palestinians without their own representation. Furthermore, confused British policy like ignoring the findings of the 1931 Hope-Simpson report then allowing partition following the 1937 Peel Commission and then both the May 1939 White Paper limiting immigration to 75,000 over 5 years led to mass confusion and violence from the Irgun and Stern Gang. While Rogan would tie all of the later events failures to the "formula for communal conflict", it does not seem clear that Balfour inevitably meant later failure would occur and the failure to establish a consistent policy to achieve Balfour is more convincing an explanation of British policy towards Palestine. Therefore, Passage A's overemphasis on the inevitability of conflict limits the success of the interpretation.

Passage B also contains some weaknesses. Notably, it overemphasises the role of the French as an explanation of British policy in Palestine. While it is true that there was fear that the Anglo-French relation could suffer post-WWI with David Lloyd George allegedly afraid of a possibility of a war between the two empires, it does not seem likely that "Their main aim was to keep the French out". Though the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 does provide some support for this, British policy mainly seems practical in this period if not confused. The MacMahon-Hussein Correspondence of

1915 also promised the Hashemites Palestine in an attempt to foster an Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. This would suggest that, though fear of future post-war would have had some role, ultimately British motivation was multifaceted and the 'line in the sand' may just have been an attempt to have support in the war effort.

However, Passage B has considerable strengths in understanding the ~~old~~ importance of the Suez to the British Empire as, ever since it opened in 1835, it has given the British access to its empire in India. This is a source of important revenue for the British Empire and they had previously occupied Egypt to protect it meaning that it is not unlikely this was an aim. Furthermore, Dutton's argument that British "understanding of the Bible played a part" is valid as David Lloyd-George was a Christian Zionist who believed that Jesus would come back once the Jews were in the promised land.

In conclusion, Passage B provides a more convincing interpretation than Passage A as it recognises the multifaceted motivations and does not only support the interpretation that they were doomed to fail. A is overly reliant on hindsight and overlooks the influence of later events.

Exemplar 1 is an example of a Level 5 response, in which there is evaluation of the interpretations using relevant knowledge. This evaluation is less developed and there are some less effective comments relating to Passage A which make use of later knowledge.

Section B overview

Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three. To do well on Section B candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period of their study. They should explain similarities and differences between the events they are discussing to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period, unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons may be made across the period within the topic or between regions, depending on the topic. It is also important that the comparisons are explained - what is similar or different between the periods or regions.

The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2 was slightly more popular than questions 3 and 4.

Question 2*

2* 'Russia had the greatest influence of all the Great Powers in the Middle East during the period from 1908 to 2011.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Many candidates chose to address this question by looking at each of the Great Powers in turn, beginning with Russia, before looking at Britain and the US, and sometimes France. This approach tended to produce answers that explained the influence of each country, sometimes charting its ebb and flow during the period, often with fairly detailed relevant knowledge. But such an approach did not always allow for the development of synthesis.

Those candidates who adopted a thematic approach usually looked at political, economic and social influence. Where change and continuity was noted, candidates often drew attention to the growing influence of the US in the region during the latter part of the period, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This was reflected chiefly in the second war in Iraq. Russia's influence was seen as fairly limited throughout the period, reaching a peak in the 1950s through its close relations with Arab nationalist leaders such as Nasser in Egypt (the Czech arms deal, 1955). British influence was well known with many candidates demonstrating good knowledge of its gradual waning as the period progressed. The Suez crisis was cited as a clear moment of change in British influence, as Britain, together with France and Israel, were forced to withdraw. The role of the US in putting pressure on Britain also marked something of a turning-point, with US influence in the region gradually growing as a result. Where synthesis occurred, comments were often less developed. It is not enough simply to note change or continuity; for synthesis to be developed, explanation as to why that change or continuity has occurred is needed.

Misconception



Synthesis requires an explanation as to why change has occurred during the period or why there is continuity; it is not simply about noting that something has changed or stayed the same.

Question 3*

3* To what extent did the nature of the Palestinian issue change during the period from 1908 to 2011?

[25]

Some candidates attempted to trace the evolution of the Palestinian issue from the moment of British involvement and the creation of Mandatory Palestine to more recent events towards the end of the period. This approach, whilst often based on fairly detailed knowledge, proved less effective, since it was difficult to develop synthesis from a largely chronological approach.

Other candidates took a thematic approach by looking at such issues as land, politics (principally, relations with Israel) and religion, including the rise of extremism. Other themes addressed by candidates included social and economic factors. Some candidates argued that a shift occurred away from land as the key issue following the UN's decision to divide Mandatory Palestine in 1947 towards politics and the need to find peaceful co-existence. Change was also noted in relation to the theme of religion, with earlier Jewish terrorism giving way to Islamic extremism. Knowledge was often fairly detailed and many candidates demonstrated understanding of the Palestinian issue. Synthesis was not always apparent or sufficiently developed though.

Question 4*

4* 'Throughout the period from 1908 to 2011, Pan Arabism in the Middle East was weak.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

As in answers to the other two questions in this section, some candidates provided explanations of key factors relating to Pan Arabism, often with fairly detailed knowledge, but without offering any developed synthesis. Candidates who adopted this approach would often focus on Egypt and the role of Nasser in promoting Pan Arabism ('Voice of the Arabs', the formation of the UAR, and his policy towards the west). This often led into discussion of the achievements of Sadat and the impact of his decision to negotiate with Israel following the Yom Kippur war which alienated many Arabs who supported the Palestinian cause. Some candidates were able to comment on the significance of Nasser and Sadat in the context of Pan Arabism, with Nasser's presidency seen as something of a high point, while Sadat's ultimately contributed to its decline.

Other events discussed included the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. While this certainly worked against the development of Pan Arabism, many candidates appeared to see the war as a conflict between Arabs. The Iranians, however, are Persians, and not Arabs. Thus, whilst the war undermined Arab strength, its significance in relation to the question often needed more measured consideration. Candidates often focused on the weaknesses of Pan Arabism, as reflected in the failure to establish Arab unity (the collapse of the UAR), the limitations of the ideology, which often came second to national interests, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism at the expense of Pan Arabism. Candidates who adopted a thematic approach looked at such themes as religion (linked to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism), politics (notably, Sadat's decision to negotiate with Israel), society (the inability to develop a shared ideology), and military (Sadat, again, and the Yom Kippur war, and Nasser's success in the Suez Crisis). As noted above, many candidates provided explanations of factors without developing synthesis.

Exemplar 2 provides an example of an answer that adopts a thematic approach, includes explanation with fairly detailed and accurate knowledge, and some less developed attempts at synthesis which pushed the answer into Level 5.

Exemplar 2

4.	Throughout the period 1908 to 2011, pan-Arabism's influence fluctuated and its goals slowly adapted to suit geo-political changes across the world. Pan-Arabism proved to be weak overall in uniting the Arab world ^{from a political aspect} and also opposing a Jewish state. In terms of expelling foreign influence, pan-Arabism persisted but also had its limitations. At Across the time period, pan-Arabism was ultimately weak. When we consider whether pan-Arabism successfully achieved its goal of uniting the Arab world from a socio-political aspect, we see that ultimately it failed. This can be seen early on in the time period where Arab states were dominated and separated by British and French mandates. The British mandate of Palestine saw Transjordan be carved out in order to suppress Arab unity. Furthermore, in Lebanon, pan-Arabism was weak due to political order set up of Maronite Christians dominating. The Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 had made it difficult for Arabs to unite under a shared ideology due to asymmetric rights across the region and pursuits of nationalist interest. The closest pan-Arabism came to uniting the Arab world was under Nasser and many would argue the formation of the UAR and Nasser's strong influence of the Nasser with the 'Voice of the Arabs' meant pan-Arabism was strong. However, this ultimately failed in 1961 due to Syrian population opposing many social and economic policy. This therefore proves pan-Arabism was weak as the collapsing the UAR proved pan-Arabism was difficult to achieve from a social aspect. Furthermore, Arab unity came at a complete loss during the Iran-Iraq war (1980) and this proved that pan-Arabism was weak despite as the Arab world became increasingly divided. Khomeini called for the people of Iraq to rise and take down Saddam which shows how Arab unity became dysfunctional by the end of the time period. The British and French mandates, failure of UAR and Iran-Iraq war prove pan-Arabism was weak from a socio-political aspect as societies became
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marginalised and politically pan-Arabism either failed or was damaged. This is the most important factor as socio-political failures proved to have damaging long-term effects as seen in the failure of the UAE which was pan-Arabism at its' strongest but still ultimately a failure.

From a military aspect, pan-Arabism was weak as they failed numerous times to expel and destroy a Jewish state. Destroying a Jewish state was a unifying goal of Arabs up to 1973 and this can be seen in the 1948 war of independence where countries like Syria, Jordan and Egypt all contributed to helping the Palestinians. The other Arab-Israeli war such as the 1967 6 day war, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War could potentially prove pan-Arabism from its' military goal of destroying Israel was strong and the 1973 oil embargo proves this. However, whilst destroying a Jewish state was a strong factor, it ultimately broke down later on in the time period as Arab states began to focus on pursuing national interests. This was the case for Jordan in 1948 whom had the strongest Arab army, the Arab legion, but the Hashemite kingdom was focused on gaining land in the war such as East Jerusalem rather than joining the unified Arab force. Furthermore, post-1967 Arab nations began to pursue national interests. Anwar Sadat sought the 1973 war in order to bring America to the table and was therefore only fighting in pursuit of nationalist interests. This was then proven in the 1979 Camp David Accords where Egypt recognised Israel and passed UN resolution 242. This resulted in Egypt's expulsion from the Arab league. The Palestinian issue and Jewish state proved pan-Arabism was weak as both Lebanon and Jordan expelled the PLO for carrying out operations on Israel. By the 1990s, pan-Arabism was very weak as Jordan officially recognised Israel and the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 were signed which the PLO condemned terrorist attacks on Israel. Therefore, pan-Arabism was weak as it failed in its' goal to destroy Israel.

In terms of expelling Great Powers from the region, pan-Arabism was relatively strong, however influence still persisted in the region. This persistence be seen throughout the time period initially with Britain and France during the mandate period where Britain had control over Palestine, Iraq, and Jordan. ~~Further into the~~ British puppets were imposed in Iraq and Jordan such as Faisal and they too had great influence. The 1953 Mossadeq, Coup proved Great Powers still held influence as the CIA removed anti-western leader from Iran. Later on in the time period, US influence and involvement in the 2003 Iraq War proved pan-Arabism was weak as Great Powers could easily intervene and many Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia held close relations with the US. Although Nasser and Khomeini were able to expel Great Powers as seen in the Suez Crisis and Iranian revolution*. However, Nasser became increasingly dependent on the USSR as seen in the 1955 Czech Arms deal**. Pan-Arabism was ultimately weak due to Great Power ease with interfering in Arab states.

In conclusion, pan-Arabism was weak throughout the time period as it failed to achieve its' goals of a unified Arab world through political agreement, it failed to destroy a Jewish state and failed to expel big powers. Therefore pan-Arabism was weak and although under Nasser there were signs of positivity, this ultimately failed.

* As well as early on in the time period the unity to expel the Ottoman empire with the Great Arab Revolt.

** Furthermore, the Great Arab Revolt simply allowed France and Britain to dominate the region and many Arabs felt they had exchanged their Ottoman rulers with French and British ones.

Exemplar 2 is an example of a Level 5 response in which the candidate has adopted a thematic approach. There is a good focus on the question with generally accurate and detailed knowledge. The candidate has made some attempt at identifying change and continuity, but the comments are less developed.

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