

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y316/01 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 Y316/01 series overview

Y316 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 interpretations by using evaluative words - covered the whole period in a balanced way in the essay questions - adopted a thematic approach - made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic - 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 two of the interpretations - did not go beyond a limited understanding of part of the interpretation - did not link any contextual understanding directly to the interpretation - adopted a chronological rather than a thematic approach in the essay questions - did not make links or comparisons even when 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 Y316 is focused on the causes and nature of Emmet's Rising.

Question 1

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

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the causes and nature of Emmet's Rising (1803).

[30]

The interpretation question was well answered, with many candidates understanding the clearly different views expressed in the two passages on Emmett's Rising and then using their detailed own knowledge to evaluate those arguments. Most candidates successfully identified the argument in Passage A, that the rising was a disaster for Britain as it showed that the Act of Union had not achieved peace in Ireland. Candidates also identified the argument in Passage B that not only did the rising fail to achieve its goals, but it also left the United Irishmen in no position to attempt a further rising.

The key differentiator was that successful candidates were able to use their own knowledge to both support and challenge the views in the passages using evaluative language (see Exemplar 1). Weaker responses often contained lengthy description of the events of 1803 without linking them to the views in the passages.

Weaker responses included a lengthy narrative about the rising in 1798 and/or focused on risings later in the period, perhaps because they did not anticipate a question on Emmett's Rising.

Exemplar 1

1		These two passages offer contrasting interpretations of the causes and nature of Emmet's rising in 1803. Passage A states that it was "a rebellion against a British administration in the brand-new United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland", thus suggesting that it came about as a result of the Act of Union (1801) and represented "a complete disaster for Britain and Dublin Castle". However, in complete contrast, Passage B states that the 1803 rebellion was "the last gasp of the United Irishmen" and an "abortive rebellion carried out under the leadership of Robert Emmet", thus suggesting that the rebellion was a futile fiasco as opposed to any serious threat to British administration in Ireland. Overall, passage B provides a more convincing interpretation as to the causes and nature of Emmet's rising as it places more emphasis on its military failure and poor planning. Passage A is certainly strong in stating that "the rebellion was not started by dissatisfied Catholics, but by a talented young man who came from Ascendancy Protestant privilege". Indeed, it is true

that Robert Emmet was of ascendancy background with his father Thomas Addis Emmet being a prominent ascendancy member to take part in the 1798 rising. Also, Emmet and most other participants in the 1803 rebellion (such as Thomas Roberts) were protestants as opposed to Catholics. Passage A is also strong in its suggestion that there was a "threat of French invasion". Robert Emmet had visited France twice in 1800 and 1802 to try and garner support from the French and although he never met with Napoleon, he had supposedly made a 'tacit agreement' with him that ~~the~~ France would provide support if the Rebellion got off to a good start. Thus, it is completely valid to suggest that there was a genuine threat of French invasion as part of the nature of Emmet's rebellion.

However, Passage A is weak when it states that the 1803 rebellion was a "wide-ranging Irish conspiracy". Emmet had seen the success of British counter-insurgency in the suppression of the 1798 rebellion and so part of his plan was actually to keep the rebellion very secretive with only a handful of people knowing

the full plan; Emmet hoped that people would spontaneously rise up if they saw the rebellion begin. Thus, it is not entirely correct to suggest that it was a wide ranging conspiracy; it was quite the opposite. Passage A is also weak in its suggestion that the rebellion "sent shock waves reverberating through Dublin castle and the London parliament". In actual fact, suppressing the rebellion was not difficult; only 500 people took part (many of whom had been drinking during the day) and, with the help of the yeomanry, the rebellion was suppressed ~~on~~ extremely swiftly. Also, considering the futile nature of the rebellion, to suggest that his rebellion was symbolic because it meant that Dublin castle feared that the Act of Union (1801) "might actually intensify" the Irish problem is also weak as, compared to the 1798 rebellion pre-Union, 1803 got far less support and was far easier to suppress.

In complete contrast, ~~Passage~~ passage B is certainly strong in stating that "the rebellion bore very little resemblance to the way that it had been planned".

Indeed, Emmet had an arms store blown

up in 1803 on Thomas Street which meant he ~~the~~ was forced to bring the rebellion forward. He had also hoped for people to storm Dublin Castle but of the 80 people that were headed there, 60 got lost along the way. Thus, it is valid to suggest that his rebellion didn't exactly go to plan. Passage B is also strong in its suggestion that "Emmet's plans for the use of sophisticated weaponry perplexed many of the United Irish leadership". As part of Emmet's rebellion, he had planned for a three part assault on the castle which involved people abseiling down the castle and the firing of rocket propelled grenades which undoubtedly perplexed his leadership and all those involved, thus contributing to the futile nature of his rebellion.

However, Passage B is weak in stating that "the United Irish leadership had abandoned" the plan to involve the French. Whilst they did start early, making it a rushed rebellion, the plan had remained that if the rebellion got legs and made progress then the French would join, never that the French would be involved from the start. Therefore, it is not entirely

		accurate to suggest that they "abandoned" their plan to involve the French. Also, Passage B is weak in stating that the rebellion had "poor planning"; Emmet had actually drawn out a very detailed plan of how the rebellion would work and its failure was more so a consequence of people not following that plan and Emmet's inexperienced leadership (he was just 24 years old).
		Overall, Passage B certainly provides the more convincing explanation as to the causes and nature of Emmet's rising in 1803. It focuses on the "chaotic" nature of the rising and that it came about as a "last gasp of the United Irishmen" following the failure of the 1798 rebellion. Passage A, however, places too much emphasis on the Act of Union's role in the lead up to the rebellion and exaggerates the impact of his rising on the British government's position in Ireland.

This response was placed low in Level 6. It shows a good understanding of the main arguments of both passages and uses detailed own knowledge effectively to evaluate them.

Assessment for learning



Candidates will benefit from taking an overview of the argument in each of the passages in relation to the issue in the question.

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*

2* 'Irish revolutionary nationalism was unsuccessful throughout the period from 1791 to 1921.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was the most popular question and there were some very good answers. Stronger answers adopted a thematic approach in order to compare the revolutionary nationalists across the period. The responses often argued that they were largely a failure until towards the very end. An effective approach was to define both who the revolutionary nationalists were and what their main aims were early in the essay.

Weaker answers sometimes spent too long on the beginning and the end of the period, while others leaned heavily on the information in the passages from Question 1 to talk at length about Emmet's failed rising in 1803. There were also a significant number of essays which read the question as a comparison to the constitutional nationalists and while a brief mention could be credited, especially at times such as the Land Wars when they can be argued to be working together, too often candidates compared the two strands at some length.

Exemplar 2

2	There can be no doubt that Irish revolutionary nationalism was unsuccessful
	in the period 1791 - 1916, but following the turning point of the Easter rising in 1916, it did achieve success, With regards to achieving its main aim (to break the link between Britain and Ireland) as it achieved an Irish Free state following the Anglo-Irish treaty (1921). With regards to garnering mass popular and electoral support, revolutionary nationalism was successful between 1791 - 1798, but following the turning point of the Act of Union (1801), there was a continuous pattern of poor support up until the second turning point of the 1916 rising when it was became successful at at garnering mass and electoral support again up until 1921. Gaining foreign support also was continuously relatively successful throughout the whole period, but as a metric for the successfulness of revolutionary nationalism, achieving main aims and getting mass support are far more important. Overall, revolutionary nationalism was largely unsuccessful at between 1791 and 1916 but following the turning point of the Easter Rising (1916) it became successful.
	Revolutionary nationalism was unsuccessful at achieving its main of breaking the

		link between England and Ireland from the period 1791 - 1916, though it was from 1916 - 1921. Between 1791 and 1916 Prior to 1916, there was a clear continuous pattern of revolutionary nationalism failing to achieve its main aim. Both the 1798 and the 1803 rebellions failed and the 1798 rebellion even worsened their own main aim as the subsequent Act of Union in 1801 strengthened the British position in Ireland. Similarly, following the great famine (1845 - 50), both the 1867 Fenian uprising and the 1848 young Ireland rebellion were major failures, with the 1848 rebellion involving only 60 participants and being almost immediately shut down by the local constabulary. By comparison, following the 1916 rising (which also failed miserably to achieve its main aim), the execution of the rebels proved to be a major turning point as Sinn Féin Sinn Féin and the IRB under De Valera and Michael Collins respectively, got enough backing to commence the anglo-Irish war (1919 - 21) with the consequence of this being that the consistent main aim of revolutionary nationalists throughout the period (which Wolfe Tone outlines is to "break the link between England and
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Ireland) was achieved through the Anglo-Irish treaty (1921) which established an Irish free state. Thus, between ~~1798~~ 1791 and 1916, revolutionary nationalists consistently failed to achieve their main aim but after the turning point of the execution of the rebels in 1916, they were then successful in achieving their main aim.

Revolutionary nationalism successfully garnered mass and electoral support at the start of the period (1791-1798) and at the end of the period (1916-1921) but not in the middle part (1798-1916).

From 1791 to 1798 revolutionary nationalists clearly got significant support as evidenced by the fact that approximately 250,000 people took part in the 1798 rebellion and upwards of half a million were members of the society of the United Irishmen in 1796. By comparison, following the turning point of the Act of Union (1801), Robert Emmet's 1803 rebellion had just 500 participants, the Fenian uprising in 1867 had just over 1,000, and the Young Ireland rebellion in 1848 had only 60. Similarly, when compared with these rebellions, the 1916 rising had

		extremely little mass support and was actually shunned by the people of Dublin.
		an Also, electoral support follows a similar continuous pattern of failure in this period (1798-1916) as evidenced by the dominance of the constitutional IPP over the revolutionary Sinn Féin in the 1885 election which saw the IPP win a staggering 86 seats. However, in complete contrast, following the turning point of the execution of the rebels in 1916, revolutionary nationalism became very successful in garnering mass and electoral support, as evidenced by the 74 seats won by Sinn Féin in the 1918 election and also the mass public support for the IRB in the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21). Therefore, it is clear that, whilst revolutionary nationalism was extremely unsuccessful at getting popular and electoral support in the middle part of the period (1798-1916), it had great success in both the early part (1791-98) and in the later point (1916-21) following the major turning point of the execution of the rebels in the 1916 rising.
		Irish revolutionary nationalism was consistently successful in garnering support from overseas

in the period 1791-1921. It achieved very significant support from America following the turning point of the Great Famine (1845-1850) which saw 1.5 million emigrate (many to America) and made New York the city with the highest population of Irish people in the world. This is clearly evidenced by De Valera's many trips to America both in the 1890s and during the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21) where he was able to raise significant funds for the revolutionary war effort. This pattern of American support is further extended by the establishment of the Fenian Brotherhood in America in 1858 who were then responsible for the rebellion on English soil in 1867. Similarly, in the early part of the period (1791-1845), revolutionary nationalism garnered fairly continuous support from France; in 1796, general Hoche arrived with a fleet of 45 ships and over 15,000 men at Bantry Bay but was not able to land. Similarly, in 1803, the French had made a 'tacit agreement' that they would provide support for Emmet if it started well. Thus, it is clear that in the period 1791-1921, revolutionary nationalism was

		consistently successful at garnering foreign support from both France and America, particularly after the turning point of the Great Famine in 1845-50 which saw 1.5 million people emigrate.
		So, was Irish revolutionary nationalism unsuccessful throughout the period from 1791-1921? With regards to achieving its main aims, it was largely unsuccessful, up until the turning point of 1916, after which, they achieved great success, establishing an Irish free state from the Anglo-Irish treaty (1921). With regards to garnering mass or popular support, it was successful at the beginning (1791-1798) and the end (1916 to 1921) but the there was a clear continuous pattern of failing to get mass and electoral support in the middle part (1798-1916). It consistently succeeded in getting foreign support throughout the entire period (1791-1921). Overall,

This response was placed low in Level 6. It has a good focus on the question and adopts the themes of aims, mass support and foreign support to achieve synthesis.

Misconception



This question only required a focus on the success or failure of revolutionary nationalism and no comparison to constitutional nationalism was expected.

Question 3*

- 3* 'The Anglican and Presbyterian Churches were the most significant source of support for the Union throughout the period from 1791 to 1921.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was the least popular question. Those that did choose it often wrote very good answers and compared the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches with other factors such as the support of Ulster, political parties and leaders such as Gladstone, and the British electorate in general. However, a balanced coverage of the period proved an issue for even the more able candidates. Weaker responses were often confused in their understanding of what the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches were and some drifted into a discussion of the role of the Catholic Church without linking it to the question.

Question 4*

- 4* 'Reforms to the Union were effective at maintaining stability throughout the period from 1791 to 1921.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This was also a popular question and generally well understood with many candidates adopting a thematic approach and looking at political, economic, and religious reforms to the Union over the whole period. However, there was a general reluctance to address what maintaining stability might mean and some, otherwise, good answers decided to ignore Home Rule, perhaps not thinking that it counted as a reform to the Union. Weaker answers often took a chronological approach and moved from Catholic Emancipation to Land Acts with very little else, and weak coverage of the period. Indeed, few candidates included anything beyond 1903, and the beginning and end of the period were generally neglected.

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