

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y315/01 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper Y315/01 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1	5
Section B overview	11
Question 2*	11
Question 3*	19
Question 4*	19

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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

Paper Y315/01 series overview

Y315 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 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 passages in relation to the question - were able to use contextual knowledge to test the passages, linking that knowledge directly to the passages using evaluative words - were able to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the passages using contextual knowledge - 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 both of the passages - did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the passages - did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the passage and therefore did not evaluate the passage - adopted a chronological approach in the essay questions - did not make links or comparisons even if events from different periods 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.

OCR support



You can find information on exam review webinars and other support events in **Training** on the horizontal menu within AS and A Level History A on [Teach Cambridge](#).

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 Y315 is focused on the generals on the Western Front.

Question 1

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

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the effectiveness of generalship on the Western Front. **[30]**

There were many good answers to this question with most candidates able to take a holistic view of the passages and recognise the key differences in their arguments about the effectiveness of generals on the Western Front. Candidates recognised that while Passage A took a more positive view that British generals were successful and ultimately achieved victory, on the other hand Passage B was critical of all generals and argued that their failure to learn led to large numbers of casualties.

The most successful responses dealt with each interpretation in turn and used knowledge to evaluate both their strengths and weaknesses using evaluative language such as 'this can be supported by' and 'this can be challenged by'. There were clear conclusions on which passage was more convincing and why, with stronger responses often seeing merits in both.

Responses which attempted a thematic approach were often confused and lacked evaluation, leading to an essay-like approach which did not focus on the views in the interpretations. Less successful responses also just explained the views in each passage and used phrases like 'fails to mention' i.e. evaluation by omission rather than engaging with the arguments that the historians were making.

Exemplar 1

1	Passage A argues that the British commanders have been too harshly judged in their actions during the Great War. It argues that the generals did what they could with the men they had against a far stronger enemy, which is substantiated by the means in which soldiers were recruited. The 'old' battalions did not conjure up highly trained soldiers, so many ended up at the Western front inexperienced. However, Passage B remains more convincing in explaining the effectiveness of generals as it argues that the the lack of change in tactics lasted too long for inexperience of the troops to be a significant factor. Although generals may have struggled with new troops in the initial year, the lack of tactical diversity from 1915 through 1917 showed the minimal effectiveness of generalship in the Great War, making Passage B more convincing. Passage B very quickly determines that the generals in the war had failed 'to learn'. This is a convincing argument when looking at the nature of warfare in the middle period of the war; early trench warfare in 1915 at Passchendaele looked very similar to battles like the Somme in 1916 and it took until 1918 for any significant change to be seen with the German Spring offensive. The passage recognises this, stating that the Ludendorff offensive was the first sign of 'any significant large-scale adaptation of these tactics'. the the
---	---

argument is once again ~~the~~ proven to be true, as the Germans' use of 'Storm troopers' with light machine guns and other new technological advancements led to a return to a war of mobility, and the Germans made it within 40 miles of Paris. This success highlights how unwillingness to change tactics in the last 3 years had been detrimental, and further proved that mobile warfare was more effective. This makes the passage more convincing, as the lack of new ideas ~~from~~ from generals led to less effective generalship. The passage continues, arguing that the use of 'more and more artillery' was detrimental to mobile warfare, hence limiting the options the generals had. The use of artillery in the Great War cannot be understated: 70% of all casualties came from artillery shells after all. However, each fatality by artillery shell required 1400 shells to be fired, rendering the passage more convincing, as not only did the artillery chew up the no-man's land, it also was wildly inaccurate and costly for the its effectiveness. This shows that the effectiveness of generals was limited - their choice to use artillery was misguided. Therefore making passage B convincing. However, passage B does also fall short in some occasions; the passage fails to mention that the generals did not have much choice in tactics during 1915 and early 1916, as the soldiers they commanded were inexperienced so could not follow

complicated tactics. The Passage also argues that 'only the Germans' ~~see~~ oversaw significant tactical change, when the Allies also changed to mobile warfare in 1918, pushing the Germans back until they surrendered. However, overall the Passage remains more convincing as it highlights how unhappy Generals were to adopt tactics.

Passage A argues that the British army made 'tremendous improvements' under the command of Generals, which can be backed up when one looks at the difference in the nature of warfare between 1918 and 1915. The Generals did manage to turn a group of untrained volunteers into effective enough soldiers to follow 'all arms warfare' tactics, which speaks to the effectiveness of the leadership. The Passage also argues that the lack of 'wonder-weapons' boxed the Generals in tactically, as they had no way to escape the war of attrition they were fighting. This is somewhat true; the one weapon the British could have used was the tank, however it was so slow and unreliable that it wasn't a viable wonder weapon. At Cambrai, 378 tanks were used, however their unreliable nature led to all progress being lost the next day. This makes Passage A more convincing as it highlights how few options the Generals had, stating that their effectiveness was limited by an external

rather than just themselves. However, the passage is significantly limited in some regards: the lack of a 'wonder-weapon' is not a significant factor when the success of the German army in the spring offensive is analysed. The Germans managed the jump to mobile warfare without the need for new technology. Even so, the British did have a wonder weapon; the tank - its rushed production did limit it initially, however the conservative nature of some Generals meant it was not used in its most effective scenarios, ~~thereby~~ which limits the argument that Generals had a 'readiness to take up new technology'. Overall, although the passage does effectively argue that the Generals were initially trapped into trench warfare by inexperienced troops and a lack of effective technology, it does not convincingly explain why the period of trench warfare was so long when new technology had appeared and experience had been gained. Therefore, Passage B is more convincing.

In conclusion, Passage A does explain effectively that Generals were more effective than what could be seen in the initial years of the war, however as it does not account for the next two years in which Generals could have moved away from trench warfare, capitalising on more highly trained troops and new technology, the passage becomes less convincing. Passage B, on

		The other hand highlights this shortcoming in the Generals' effectiveness, arguing that the Generals could have moved to a mobile war but did not. Therefore, Passage B is more convincing than Passage A.

The response in Exemplar 1 is a Level 6 answer that shows a good understanding of the main arguments of each passage and uses detailed evidence to evaluate them.

Assessment for learning



Candidates will benefit from taking an overview of the view in each passage in relation to 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*** How far did developments in weapon technology change the nature of land warfare in the period from 1792 to 1945? **[25]**

This was the most popular of the essay questions and generally showed a good understanding of developments in weapon technology over the period. The higher scoring essays linked these developments to changes in the nature of land warfare using themes such as strategy, tactics and nature of wars. Successful essays could either just focus on whether the new weapon technology changed warfare or not, or they could compare these developments to other changes such as transport and communication. Weaker responses tended to describe new weapon technology in the period, often adopting a chronological approach and not linking this to changes in land warfare.

Exemplar 2

2	weapons technology changed drastically in the period 1792-1945. When the war beg- At the beginning of the period, technology was very basic, and consisted of smoothbore muskets as the main firearm, while by the end of the period, bombs and aircraft helped to remove the need for as many pitched battles, and changed the nature of those that did take place. In this essay, I will explore the impact of weapons technology on strategy, tactics, and the mobilisation of the state for war, and I will conclude that, to a great extent, weapons technology had a major impact on the conduct of land war, but that it was in the area of tactics where this development was greatest. Firstly, in terms of tactics, changing weapons technology had the ability to make war
---	--

more mobile. This was the case in the Second World War, where the tank and the internal combustion engine had a major impact. This was seen at El Alamein (1942), where the 1000 British tanks under the British commander, Montgomery, were able to outmanoeuvre and encircle many of the German tanks, under Rommel. This ~~would have~~ was very similar to the encirclements seen in the early period, such as at Ulm in 1805, where the 200,000 French forces under Napoleon were able to encircle 50-60 thousand of the Austrian troops, due to the screening of the guard action by Mack's Cavalry. After years of static warfare, which will be discussed later, these developments in technology clearly changed the tactics that commanders could use, and allowed for the moving, Napoleonic Wars to return. eratactres to return.

Weapons technology did not just return wars to manoeuvrability, but brought back a more static nature of war. This was ~~firstly~~ seen in part at the battle of Mukden in 1905, where the Russians used machine guns for one of the first time. Because of this,

trenches were dug; and, for the first time, the Japanese used 'human bullet' tactics, which involved sending waves of men over the top, to attempt to overthrow the Russians. While this led to greater numbers of casualties than anything previously (c. 90,000 for the Japanese), the principle of large numbers of deaths due to troops storming defended positions had been seen before, most notably in the ~~1861~~ American Civil War (1861-65), in which, at Gettysburg, the new "Minie Ball" rifle ammunition, which had an improved accuracy and rate of fire of three rounds per minute, led to 6,555 confederates being killed in the first hour of fighting alone at Pickett's Charge. Once again, this is clearly an example of weapons technology (defensive firepower) changing tactics to frontal assaults, in a way that was also seen on the Somme in 1916, where 57,000 casualties for the British were caused in just the first day. It is clear therefore, that due to the propensity of weapons technology to both slow down and bring back manoeuvrability to war tactics in land warfare, tactics have changed significantly.

Strategy was also changed by weapons technology's development, as it became

more possible to attempt more complex strategic manoeuvres ~~these~~ and concepts, including the bombing and destruction of cities and civilian targets with very little warning, as part of the growing trend towards total war. This was most obviously seen in the Second World War, where Strategic Bombing was deployed to both deplete morale, and deplete industrial production. This was seen by British attempts at strategic bombing raids, such as those on Dresden and Hamburg (1944), in which the cities were firebombed (in the case of Dresden, over 40% of the city was destroyed). This did lead to a lowering of morale, but also of war production, with total German war production down 40% from its prewar level, which thus eased issues in war on land, and caused the Germans shortages. However, these bombing attempts were only possible because of developments like the Avro Lancaster, that had a range of 4000 km. It is possible to compare this with other strategic attacks on civilian targets, namely the Prussian bombing of Paris in 1871, with new Krupp shells. The ~~French~~ ^{Prussians} bombed Paris purely to attempt to deplete the morale of the people, and

2 Ctd.	6000-7000 shells were used. This meant that 15,000 houses and buildings were destroyed, and that morale was lowered. Despite this clear comparison however, it is clear that the development of weapons technology facilitated bombing over a wider range of targets, and in greater intensity, meaning that it impacted strategy greatly.
	Furthermore, in terms of large scale grand strategy, weapons technology can be said to have a large impact. In the French Revolutionary Wars, (1792-1802), strategic goals were highly limited, and this was much the same in the Napoleonic Wars, where, at the beginning of the coastline of the 5th coalition (1809), the only strategy to deal with the invasion of Northern Italy was the positioning of the armies, with the Army of the Centre moving to engage, and the army of Naples and Italy moving to prevent outflanking and encirclement. In contrast, the German strategy of "Blitzkrieg" in World War 2 was a key feature of war, with the 15% of the German army that was mechanised, including their tanks and Panzer divisions, being critical for the infiltration of strongpoints, and success, such as their conquering of France, Norway, and Denmark in

1940, allowing them to achieve large scale strategic gains in a short space of time. However, ~~it was not~~ However, technology and developments in weapons cannot always be seen as the sole reason for strategic developments, as was seen in the American Civil War (1861-65), where it was the railway (of which the North owned 71%), and the telegraph (of which the North owned 29%) that allowed for the coordination of different offensives in Sherman Grant's "Grand Strategy", suggesting that in terms of strategy, transport and communications had a vital role to play, too.

Finally, developments in technology changed the nature of the necessity of the mobilisation of the state for war, in terms of war production, and the requirement to have all of the resources of the state. This was seen in the American Civil War, where, to ensure that they could fund developments in weaponry, and ammunition, the government passed the 1862 legal tender act, to allow them to ~~purchase~~ give war bonds, as well as increase direct taxation. The idea of the whole state being involved in war can also be seen in the Second World War, where, in order to meet demand, the US became the

arsenal of democracy, accounting for 72% of GDP and spending \$90 billion USD. As well as this, in many areas, including the production of machine guns, ^{in world war one} the allies eventually outpaced the Germans, with the British producing 250,000 in 1918-18, compared to just 100,000 for the Germans in the same period. Thus, the war became one of production, due to the importance of these new deadly technologies. However, it is important to state that throughout the period, technology and its production were vital, and even in 1793, the French CPS had opened 12 new sword and bayonet factories, and 12 new musket factories, the largest of which was in Paris, and employed 5,000 workers, and made 700 muskets per day. Thus, while its importance increased, it is not possible to state that technological developments in weaponry always changed the nature of the mobilisation of the state for war as effective mobilisation therefore was always important.

In conclusion, it is clear that developments in weapons technology clearly increased the pace of change in both the mobilisation of the state, and in strategy, providing a wider variety of options to commanders,

		and allowing for more 'big picture thinking'. However,
		it is in the area of tactics where this development
		was greatest, with technology both slowing down,
		and increasing the mobility of tactics and war
		as a whole.

Exemplar 2 is a response in Level 5. It is focused, with clear synthesis but not developed enough to reach Level 6.

Question 3*

3* Assess the effectiveness of alliances in wars during the period from 1792 to 1945.

[25]

This was the least popular of the essay questions and elicited some very strong answers which showed a good understanding of the role of alliances in warfare across the period. Successful responses adopted a thematic approach which could include finance, manpower, transport and propaganda and often argued that alliances became more important in the Total Wars of the later period. The fact that the Ford motor company outproduced the whole of Italy in the Second World War was a popular piece of evidence. Some good essays also argued that while the alliance between the fascist powers was not much help to Hitler in the Second World War, there were also instances in the earlier period where an army still won without any allies such as the North in the American Civil War. Weaker responses often just focused on the alliances which were effective to produce an unbalanced argument and there were some who compared the role of alliances to other factors such as the role of generals while the question only required a focus on alliances. There was also often an unbalanced coverage of the period with the beginning and the end featuring heavily but little in between.

Question 4*

4* How far did victory in war during the period from 1792 to 1945 depend on the effective organisation of the state for war?

[25]

This was a popular question and there were some very strong answers which often effectively defined what the organisation of the state for war meant early in their essay. They could then either address the 'how far' aspect of the question by providing counter examples such as Germany losing in 1945 despite their organisation of the state and/or countering with the role of strategy, alliances and generals in final victory. Weaker responses were often confused about what the question's focus was, and many gave too much weight to the Total Wars of the twentieth century at the expense of balanced coverage of the period. It was also noticeable that as this was the final question on the paper those that chose a chronological approach sometimes ran out of time before getting to the two world wars.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is the exam paper builder platform for a range of our qualifications. [Find out more](#).

Free for all OCR centres with an Interchange account, it allows unlimited users per centre. We require an [Interchange](#) username to verify your centre's users for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account, please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username.

Once you have an Interchange username, use the form on [this page](#) to sign up for ExamBuilder, or ask an existing user at your centre to create an ExamBuilder account for you.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our resources.



Designing and testing in [collaboration with you](#) and your students



Helping young people develop an [ethical view of the world](#)



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are [part of everything we do](#)

Contact the team at:

☎ 01223 553998

🖥 ocr.org.uk

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Visit our Online Support Centre at support.ocr.org.uk



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

OCR is a Company Limited by Guarantee and an exempt charity. Registered in England. Registered office: The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number: 3484466.

We operate academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers.

We are committed to providing a fully accessible experience across all our products, platforms, and websites. Find out more about our [accessibility standards](#).

© OCR 2025. All rights reserved. We retain the copyright on all our publications. However, our registered centres are permitted to copy and distribute our material for their own internal use, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the publication. Find out more about our [copyright policies](#).

We update our publications regularly so please check you have the most up-to-date version.

We cannot be held responsible for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

When we update our specifications, you'll see a new version number and a summary of the changes. While we do our best to reflect these changes in all associated resources on [Teach Cambridge](#), if you notice any discrepancies, please refer to the latest specification on our website and [let us know](#).

Our resources do not represent any teaching method we expect you to use. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in our resources.