

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y312/01 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 Y312/01 series overview

Y312 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 Y312 is focused on the causes of the Witchcraze in Southern Germany.

Question 1

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

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the Witchcraze in Southern Germany in the period from c.1590 to 1630.

[30]

Nearly all candidates were able to at least explain the views of the two interpretations and saw the clear difference in focus between them, with Interpretation A focusing more on the political and religious issues and Interpretation B on socio-economic issues and the Thirty Years War. However, many simply explained the views in the interpretations or used some contextual knowledge to help explain them, limiting their responses to levels 3 or 4. In order to reach the higher levels the views need to be evaluated, and responses need to consider, at a basic level, whether the responses are right or wrong given the contextual knowledge of the candidates.

There was also a significant number who produced imbalanced or uneven responses, focusing on one interpretation at the expense of the other. In evaluating Interpretation A many were aware of the large number of different states within the Empire and the Carolina law code which meant justice was a local issue. They used this to argue the interpretation was valid about the decentralisation of power which allowed hunts to develop and cited the failure of appeals to the emperor to stop individual persecutions. Some responses argued that the view was valid, as states with a stronger central authority, such as Bavaria, witnessed few hunts. Responses also considered the importance of the Reformation in bringing about the panic and the central role of prince-bishops, often able to support the evaluation with detailed examples and placing the interpretation in the context of the top-down approach.

In evaluating Interpretation B many were able to cite the problems caused by the Thirty Years War and the issue of recruitment, the numbers who fought and the damage caused. Responses also used evidence from the mini-ice age to support the view in the interpretation, but some were also able to challenge the interpretation by arguing that the hunts had started before the weather issues of the 1620s.

There was a range of material that could be used to evaluate both interpretations and it was the quality of the evaluation and supporting contextual knowledge that determined the outcome, with responses able to argue that either view was more valid.

Exemplar 1

1	Both interpretation A and B provide the political and economic background that led to the rea Witcheraze in Southern Germany. Roper's interpretation offered in passage A outlines the unique nature of witchcraft persecutions, isolating 'local conditions' that affected the hunts. As well as highlighting this, Roper states that the 'fragmentation of... authority' facilitated such hunts as 'nourished' by the 'intensity of religious struggle'. Therefore, the interpretation A outlines the corresponding factors that contributed to such persecutions, seen more intensely in certain areas of Southern Germany. Alternatively, Bullock's interpretation found in passage B outlines the role of the 'Thirty Years' War' alongside 'crop failures and inflation' in causing the Southern German Witcheraze. Within this, Bullock places the motivation of zealous prince bishops to fears of the climate. In this, the interpretation becomes ignorant to religious struggles, leaving Interpretation A as a more convincing argument for the Witcheraze in Southern Germany. Interpretation A begins in foregrounding the 'difficultly' of isolating it a sole cause of the Witcheraze in Southern Germany, reflecting
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The intense period of change from 1590 to 1630. As it continues, Roper states 'the very fragmentation of political and legal authority... made it possible'. This holds truth as Southern Germany was situated in the Holy Roman Empire, an area compiled of autonomous territories, typically holding small ecclesiastical courts. As well as outlining the lack of central authority that made witchcraft possible, Roper continues to state that coupled with the 'intensity of religious struggle' the climate for witchcraft was created. Being a territory of the Holy Roman Empire, Southern Germany was engulfed in religious conflict and persecution. Embodying such conflict was the zealous prince-bishops, promoting an ~~ant~~ a fiercely anti-Protestant message, reflecting the accuracy of Roper's interpretation. Furthermore, the strength of Roper's view is compounded in the address of geographical variations that characterised the Witchcraze. The passage relays the 'form' of witchcraft 'had a great deal to do with local conditions'. ~~states as~~ This outlines the fluidity of the Witchcraze unique to each territory. ~~Reflects~~ Roper's view is seen in Southern Germany states as while some were engulfed in persecution, including Bamberg and Wurzburg, not all

were involved in the witchcraze of 1590-1630, including Austria and Bohemia. Interpretation A continues to outline the role of religion in fueling the witchcraze. It states the 'legal framework for the hunt was provided by the Carolina'. This was introduced to territories in the Holy Roman Empire in 1532, holding time for its manifestation within Southern Germany before the persecutions began. As a legal framework, it determined that justice was a local matter and it permitted the use of judicial torture - the use of torture to obtain confession. Furthermore, aligning with Roper's view in Interpretation A is Levack who states that the reinvigoration of Roman law was central to witchcraft. The passage displays an accurate representation of an intense and changing climate here, offering conviction. In addition, enabled by the Carolina law stated in the passage, the interpretation acknowledges the acceleration of the witchcraze due to the work of prince-bishops. Roper relays 'the most remarkable... of the witchcraze were... Catholic prince bishops'. During this period, these were sent by Emperor Ferdinand II to re-Catholicise areas, alluding to the motivation of religion. The 'remarkable' nature of such figures is revealed in the figures of those persecuted - between 1590 and 1630, ~~8~~ 9 prince-bishops

were responsible for the death of 6000 witches - reflecting their impact as offered in Interpretation A. Recalling the unique nature of the witchcraze, Roper finally states that 'whatever the importance of individual witch hunters, an individual alone could not carry out such a hunt'. This solidifies the amalgamation of factors described with the Interpretation for the causes of the witchcraze, providing the most conviction.

Offering a different approach to Interpretation A, is that of Bullock outlined in Passage B. This interpretation isolates the role of the 'Thirty Years' War' at its forefront for the cause of the Southern German witchcraze. This war ~~occu~~ occurred from 1618-48, causing destruction and devastation. This is described by Bullock who outlines 'famine... caused by soldiers', 'towns were plundered' with 'men forcibly conscripted'. Instead of stating this as the sole cause, the Interpretation states that this 'combined with crop failures and inflation led to... fear of witches'. The role of crop failures holds some truth as many trials ~~held~~ held detail of this within their evidence. An example of this is the 1629 wine crop failure as relayed in trial manuscripts. Interpretation B continues to place the reason for fear with the 'fanatical

religious 'context'. This also holds truth as Catholics promoted the achievement of a 'godly' state through the eradication of the devil, whose presence was preached in society by ~~the~~ those involved in both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, seen in the introduction of Lutheranism in 1517 that continued into the period. Bullock's Interpretation continues in truth after outlining the socio-economic background, further developing it through the harsh climate. Bullock isolates the '1628' as being 'remembered as a year without summer'. These conditions describe outline the reason for crop failure and struggle, supported by Behringer who details the mini ice-age as a natural disaster, causing the Witchcraze. However, Interpretation B, while addressing the impact of prince-bishops, fails to acknowledge their true motivation, as alluded to in the conviction of Interpretation A. Bullock's view states 'it was the interest of prince bishops to carry out witch hunts to ensure that the frost did not return'. This suggests that the prince-bishops worked out of the climate of fears rather than religious zeal. Bullock's view fails to address the true motivation here as their sole purpose was the ~~achie~~ conquering of Protestant areas to re-Catholicise, aided by Jesuits who worked to promote the fiercely anti-Protestant message. Within this, Interpretation

B becomes too reductive of the Southern German Witcheraze in the period 1590 to 1630, simply outlining the climate of fear rather than the power of individuals and institutions. Therefore, Bullock's interpretation loses the conviction held by that of Roper.

Despite both accurately portraying the socio-economic conditions of Southern Germany that facilitated the Witcheraze, Interpretation A holds most conviction as an explanation in encapsulating the nuance of the period. Roper outlines the geographical variation that contributes to the intense pockets of persecution shown, acknowledging its complexity within religious conflict and legal disintegration. However, that of Bullock in Interpretation B ignores the religious zeal that categorised the time, failing to portray a full representation. Therefore, it is sensible to assume that Interpretation A holds the most conviction ~~and~~ as the explanation for the Witcheraze in Southern Germany.

Exemplar 1 was placed in Level 5 at 24 marks, providing an example of a thorough response where the evaluation would need to be further developed to reach Level 6.

Assessment for learning



Evaluate means give a value to the interpretation. In simple terms, is the view valid?

Assessment for learning

Responses need to identify the overall view of each interpretation about the issue in the question – in this instance, Interpretation A focused more on the political and religious issues responsible for the Witchcraze, whereas Interpretation B focused on socio-economic issues and the Thirty Years War.

Assessment for learning

Candidates might be helped by having a list of evaluative words and phrases displayed in the classroom.

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.

All three questions elicited a good number of responses.

Question 2*

2* 'Religious change was the most important challenge to popular culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Most responses were able to explain a number of factors that resulted in challenges to popular culture. However, responses ranged from very generalised knowledge about the importance of issues such as religious change, the withdrawal of the elite, the development of the printing press and new ideas and the impact of urbanisation and capitalism. These more general responses were placed in Level 3 as there was limited explanation. At Level 4, responses were able to provide specific examples to support the explanation offered, referencing issues such as the decline in the number of Saints Days, the banning of Christmas, and the Feast of Fools as examples of changing religious attitudes and the concern about promiscuous behaviour and the desire to create a godly society.

More successful responses were able to provide evidence of continuity and change, these often argued that initially Catholic regions, particularly in Southern Europe were less prone to such attacks on religious festivals and contrasted those regions with, for example, Cromwell's England. It was this evidence of comparison which took responses to the higher levels. Similarly in discussing a new elite culture, comparisons were often made between Southern and Northern Europe or between East and West, often reflecting this through the use of language or the development of masques and the tone set by activities organised by monarchs and their involvement. It was the comparison between regions and the awareness that changes varied over time usually according to region that led to more successful responses.

Misconception



Synthesis does not mean stating something is similar, there needs to be direct comparison and explanation as to whether something is similar or different, or whether there is change or continuity.

Question 3*

- 3* To what extent were witch hunts more common in towns than in the countryside during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

[25]

Although this was a popular question, there were a significant number of responses that simply explained or described a range of examples of hunts and did not really use them to pursue an argument but rather to show that there were hunts in both urban areas and the countryside.

More successful responses pursued a clear argument and explored a range of possible approaches. Many argued that hunts were more common in the countryside as the majority of people lived there, while others argued that the pattern changed over time and often depended on what sparked the hunts, others argued that hunts spread from the countryside to the towns as more were prosecuted. All of these lines of argument could be used convincingly.

Many responses argued that the intimacy of village life often started hunts from 'below' and that traditional beliefs in the countryside provided the ideal environment for them to develop. On the other hand, some argued that hunts associated with plague accusations, or the prince-bishops of South Germany were driven by urban areas, although some did also note that prince-bishops took advantage of hunts in the countryside and this led to their spread to urban areas. The issues of famine and food supply was also used to develop an argument. There were some responses which provided figures to show where hunts were more common and noted the rural nature of many in eastern Europe.

Question 4*

- 4* To what extent did the response of the authorities to witchcraft remain the same throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

[25]

There were a number of approaches taken to this question and although many approaches were possible, the more successful ones usually followed a thematic rather than geographical approach as the former allowed responses to compare the particular theme over a variety of regions.

The most common themes discussed included the issue of torture and this provided a rich variety of contrasts for candidates, often comparing England with South Germany, but also noting that when central authority was weak even England was susceptible to torture during hunts. Some developed this further and argued that once central authority was restored or there was strong leadership attitudes changed.

Candidates also considered the attitude of authorities towards witchcraft and again regional variations provided a valuable point of comparison, with regions which were not religiously challenged, such as Italy, Ireland and Spain witnessing fewer hunts compared with Germany.

There were also arguments about the use of evidence and the types of courts used and again comparisons between regions were made, particularly over issues such as the use of spectral evidence or confessions.

Responses also considered the growing scepticism towards witchcraft over time, although some responses did stress that this was later in Eastern Europe than Western. Most responses concluded that over the whole period responses did change as there was a decline in prosecutions, but within the period there was much variation, and this could depend on a range of factors.

Exemplar 2

views regarding torture and belief in witchcraft.

Torture was seen to change as a response and method as it gradually faded out of usage. In 1484, Pope Innocent VIII released the Summae Desiderantes Affectibus papal bull, declaring witchcraft to be an exceptional ~~own~~ crime and therefore prone to torture. This significantly influenced the response from authorities as the Holy Roman Empire had 25,000 ~~persecutions~~ trials and 12,500 executions out of 25,000 trials since torture was allowed and the chances of confessing under torture are 90%. This shows how early on the authorities supported witchcraft leading to higher rates of persecution, such as in the Swiss canton Pays de Vaud where 3000 were executed in one day due to confessing to avoid torture. Gradually, through the 16th century this changed as the Catholic Inquisition had low numbers of executions in southern Europe due to their hesitancy to use torture. They believed that torture would only lead to false confessions and they preferred to allow them

4	B	to return to the faith before deciding to and only using torture if they reverted back. Furthermore, attitudes towards torture also changed with the 1631 Cambré Criminal's work by Friedrich von Langenfeld, a Jesuit in Würzburg who regretted sending innocents to their deaths and he criticised the methods used to 'torture' confessions such as torture since thumb screws were often used in Germany. Additionally, the changing responses of the authorities were seen in states like France and the Netherlands banning torture shortly after the Thirty Years' War due to increased religious tolerance.
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Overall, this shows how gradually authorities became less willing to use torture. Overall, authorities gradually stopped using torture as they realised the brutality of the process.

The response of the authorities also changed with their belief in witchcraft. The ¹⁴⁸⁶book ¹⁴⁸⁶Malleus Maleficarum largely influenced the hunts as Heinrich Kramer created this urgency to cleanse the earth of Satan's agents, naming women as the ideal suspects of maleficia due to his belief that they were too ^{morally} weak to resist the Devil. This concept had great influence as 95% of victims in the

HRE and 90% in England were women. Therefore authorities believed in this female witch stereotype and in maleficia in general. This was further aided by Jean Bodin and his ¹⁶⁹⁵⁻¹⁶⁹⁶work 'On the Demonomania of Witchcraft'. He had considerable influence as a member of the Paris parlement and his message to resist Satan's gods kept the movement going for the ~~hunts~~ hunts. However, such belief gradually changed as through the works of ~~Alston~~ from the Scientific Revolution such as Thomas Ady's 'A Candle in the Dark' which criticised

The belief in witchcraft as there was no biblical foundation. Protestants also understood that God worked benignly and shouldn't be interfered with, therefore attempts to eradicate witchcraft stopped. Overall, the urgency of authorities to combat witchcraft shifted through the changes in belief brought by the Scientific Revolution.

Lastly, the responses of authorities politically remained the same ^{in most of Europe}. This can be observed through the ~~stable~~ ^{constant} consistency and low numbers of persecutions in France due to the parliament of Paris ruling ^{as} with a centralised government and dictating how to ~~play~~ ^{take} a role in witchcraft cases. This consistent approach, which influenced the other 8 French regional parliaments is why the French number of persecutions is as low as 300. This is again reflected in the Scandinavian countries in which the highest death toll was 500 in Denmark as most Northern European countries had a ban on torture and therefore regulated the trials well. However, an argument against the authorities having a constant political response was in Scotland under James VI & VII who ~~but~~ believed in witchcraft and wrote his own book on how to correctly battle and prosecute witches, 'Daemonologie' was released in 1597. His attitude created the Kirk-Session Commission of 1592 which sent commissioners

around Scotland, ^{empowering} ~~empowering~~ them to hunt
 witches. Additionally, his ~~pro~~ government propa-
 ganda ~~the~~ newspaper "News From Scotland"
 worked to create a public sentiment against
 witches. The political governance of King James is
 the reason why Scotland's ~~dee~~ persecutions was
 2500 although its population is much smaller
 than France. Ultimately, responses of authorities
~~remained constant~~ ^{changed} politically as even the Holy
 Roman Empire's legal code - *Carolina Criminalis*
Carolina - struggled to be implemented throughout
 all principalities as they would usually consult local
 universities, reflecting the ~~25,000~~ persecution number due to decen-
 tralisation. Overall, the response of authorities changed
 politically as the state with the highest death tolls failed to
 keep steady control onto the hunts.

In conclusion, the responses of
 authorities mostly changed as the continental
 use of torture decreased due to scepticism over
 its efficiency and belief in witchcraft wavered
 as the Scientific Revolution valued rationality over
 abstract magic. The political governance
 and attitudes stayed constant in most of Europe
 but it differed massively in the states of Scot-
 land and the HRE which experienced the highest
 persecutions due to different ~~of~~ responses
 and attitudes by their King James of Scotland and
 the HRE's HRE's semi-autonomous regions having
 different approaches depending on the prince-bishops.

Exemplar 2 shows a response where there is some limited synthesis and therefore the response was placed in Level 5 at 18 marks. However, the above shows that by comparing the responses of different regions over time to a number of issues synthesis should be able to be demonstrated.

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