

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y218/01 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction 3

Paper Y218 series overview 4

 Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii) 5

 Question 1 (b)* 6

 Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii) 8

 Question 2 (b)* 12

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 Y218 series overview

Y218 is one of twenty-four units in Paper 2 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about 100 years through a short answer essay question and a traditional essay question. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay. Candidates must answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short answer essay question, candidates need to consider the significance or importance of both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

To do well on the traditional essay, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. To reach the higher levels, candidates need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

Question 1 was far more popular than Question 2.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short answer essay - reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important - linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question - discussed at least two relevant issues in depth in the traditional essay question - gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question - made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question.	- considered only one of the two issues in the short answer essay or discussed one in a superficial way - produced a judgement that was not supported and was, therefore, assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response - were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question - showed a lack of understanding of the major issues relevant to the traditional essay question - were unable to support their response with relevant or accurate material - 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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Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii)

1

(a) Which of the following had the greater influence on developments in the Far East during the period from 1918 to 1941?

(i) The Manchurian Crisis

(ii) The war between Japan and China 1937–1941

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

The purpose of this question was that candidates should analyse both factors to decide which of them had a greater influence on 'developments in the Far East' between 1918 and 1941. Most candidates were able to provide knowledge of these two factors, but a significant number described what happened in the two events and did not go on to fully analyse what influence they each had on developments in the Far East.

More accomplished answers, when considering 'The Manchurian Crisis', went on to explain that the crisis led to the Great Asia Association in 1933 and the war with China in 1937. Some responses considered the effects of the failure of the West and the League of Nations to take military action. When considering the factor 'war between Japan and China 1937-41', a significant number of candidates did not refer to the 'New Order in East Asia' which was subsequently developed into the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' in 1938. Only a few responses considered the role of the war with China as a cause of the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should always read the question carefully. They should identify the key words and phrases, and it is advisable to use those words throughout a response. This should help to keep an answer focused on the specific demands of the question.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* 'Militarism was the main cause of the First World War.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

Most responses to this question addressed the question by analysing the causes of the First World War. The aspect of answers that differentiated them was the quality of the knowledge and analysis. All candidates addressed the given factor, namely Militarism, and when providing analysis, the most common example was the Anglo-German Naval Race. More successful answers also recognised that all the great powers were increasing their spending and size of all their armed forces. Also, most countries were undertaking military plans and there was a growing military influence on policy in some countries.

When considering 'other' causes, most candidates were able to provide knowledge of some causes, with 'Nationalism', 'Imperialism' and the 'Alliance System' being the most popular. More accomplished responses saw candidates use their knowledge to analyse which of these causes was the most important. Some responses provided a list of explained causes without the analysis, which meant that the responses could not attain the higher levels.

Exemplar 1

Ultimately, it is clear to see that militarism undoubtedly contributed to the outbreak of the First World War, but it was not the most significant factor. The alliance systems as well as imperialism proved significant in the causation of the war but if there were to be any cause pin-pointed as the most significant, it would be nationalism. This is because militarism stems from wanting to protect one's nation because they love it (which is nationalistic), the alliance systems also stems from

wanting to protect a nation's security and ensure support in the event of an attack (which is nationalistic) and imperialism stems from the belief that one nation is so amazing that it should dominate the world stage - which is nationalistic. All four causes are significant but nationalism lies at the root of them all which makes it the most significant cause of WW1.

Exemplar 1 is a good attempt to provide a concluding paragraph in answering Question 1 (b). The response attained Level 5.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2

(a) Which of the following was the more important reason for the outcome of the First World War?

(i) The role of the generals

(ii) The entry into the war of the USA

Explain your answer with reference to both **(i)** and **(ii)**.

[10]

There were relatively few answers to this question. The purpose of the question was for candidates to analyse which of these two factors was the more important reason for the Allied victory in the First World War. Of the two factors, 'the entry into the war of the USA' was the one that responses addressed using knowledge and analysis. In the case of 'The role of the generals', a significant number of the responses tended to provide generalised knowledge and the answers lacked specific examples of events and generals that influenced the result of the war, for example, the role of Foch and Haig on the Western Front or the role of Ludendorff's 1918 Spring Offensive.

Exemplar 2

2	a	The more important reason for the outcome of the first world war was the entry of the USA due to the boosted morale however the role of the generals throughout lead to poor leadership and outcomes, also reflected in the USA. Overall though, the entry of the USA replenished lines and turned the trajectory of the war. The entry into the war of the USA was the more important reason for the outcome of the First World War, Germany couldn't replenish lines as quickly as USA troops were sent weakening Germany's role. The German general Ludendorff miscalculated when USA troops would be sent as by mid 1918, USA troops were coming at around 10,000 a day in which at this point, German resources were depleted as a result of 4 years at war as well as the British Naval Blockade stopping resources. As well as this, USA troops boosted morale in the allies and
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ignited the belief they could win, especially once Russia left the war in 1917. Although US General Pershing made the same mistake of committing large numbers to failed attacks, the sheer mass of new, fresh troops made attacks much more powerful in which Germany couldn't resist leading to their surrender 6 months later. Therefore the USA's entry was the more important reason as it was the last blow to Germany, ~~also~~ ending the war quicker than if it was just the allies fighting.

The role of the generals was one lesser important reason for the outcome of the first world war as most generals lead failed attacks that cost thousands of men. For example, the stalemate from 1914 to 1915 lead to no country taking ground at a time marked failures of generals to make any gain speaking the deadlock use of technology to aid this was a failed attempt for example tanks in the battle of the Somme 1916

was successful to break into
 but Haig didn't follow through
 with infantry leading to 100,000
 soldiers dead on the first day
 of the war, earning Haig 'the
 Butcher'. Although the soldiers were
 somewhat used as cannon fodder,
 the Somme took pressure off Verdun
 in which 360,000 French troops died.
 The losses between 1914-1917 was
 largely a result of poor leadership
 from Generals that led to mass
 death, only when the USA came
 that tide turned. The 100 days
 offensive that cemented the end of
 the war couldn't have been done
 without the USA and all
 generals working together. On the
 Eastern Front, generals failed miserably
 leading to 6 million dead or
 injured by war end. At Tannenberg
 1914, only 10% of the 100,000 men
 were not captured or killed leading
 to General Samsonov committing
 suicide. Therefore, overall, the role of
 the generals mainly failed through-
 out the ~~per~~ war and only
 when the USA entered did the
 result seem promising.

		In conclusion, the entry of the USA into the war was the more important reason for the outcome, as men were not nearly depleted due to the poor tactics of generals amounting huge losses therefore the extra US troops and morale turned the outcome of the war quicker and more successfully.
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Exemplar 2 is a successful attempt to provide an answer to Question 2 (a). The response attained Level 5.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* How successful were the Locarno Treaties in the period from 1925 to 1935?

[20]

As with Question 2 (a), there were few responses to this question. It was the question that candidates had the most difficulty in addressing. Some responses did not demonstrate a detailed understanding of the Locarno Treaties and, therefore, were not able to fully analyse whether the treaties were successful or not in the period 1925-35. Some candidates made references, when analysing 'success', to the link between the treaties and Germany's entry to the League of Nations but few considered the link with the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 or events in the 1930s such as the Four Power Pact 1933 or the Stresa Front of 1935.

When attempting to analyse the failure of the treaties, some responses made references to the rise of Hitler but few responses analysed the links between the Locarno Treaties and the Treaty of Versailles and the Great Depression.

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