

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y216/01 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 Y216 series overview

Y216 is one of twenty-four units in Paper 2 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests a coherent period of non-British history 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 have to 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.

There was approximately an even split in terms of question choice.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• were clear about terminology • had a clear grasp of chronology and, therefore, relevance • could structure ideas successfully • could organise relevant evidence effectively.	• confused terminology in the questions • had a muddled sense of chronology and, therefore, relevance • did not give form to their ideas • were short of relevant evidence.

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

1
(a) Which of the following was the more important reason for the destruction of Native American societies?

(i) Natural resources

(ii) Americanisation

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

[10]

This question was successfully answered by most candidates. For part (i) reference was usually made to loss of land to settlers and to miners, as well as the loss of the buffalo herds. Most candidates appreciated for part (ii) the significance of various government initiatives to force Native American societies to adapt to the lifestyles of European settlers. Judgements could tilt either way, most preferring part (ii) as it struck at the roots of Native American culture.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* How far does the ability of Confederate military commanders explain why the Civil War lasted so long?

[20]

There were a good variety of responses to this question as candidates looked for alternative ways of explaining the duration of the Civil War. Popular choices for this were the incompetence of Union commanders and the sheer practical difficulty of reducing the South to defeat. Inevitably, accuracy of detail was at a premium. A good number of candidates muddled commanders' names and the battles at which they fought.

Exemplar 1

1	b	The ability of confederate military leader can be seen as a valid reason as to why the civil war lasted so long. Jefferson Davis did not change his military generals nearly as much as Lincoln did, leading to consistency throughout the army. Robert E Lee was a key figure who the union viewed as a strong force that at some points seemed invincible. There were confederacy victories at Fredericksburg even though the confederacy only had 75000 men compared to Meade's 100000. It wasn't until the Battle of Gettysburg and then Vicksburg, that the union thought they had a chance against the large confederate force. Therefore, the great leadership of Lee especially did play a role as to why the war lasted so long as in 1861 and 1862 it seemed as if the confederacy had the upper hand, they won the first battle of the manassas. Another factor which affected why the civil war lasted so long was due to Lincoln's constant change of leadership. It wasn't until later in the war that Lincoln found Grant and Sherman who ended up being the team to bring about union success. Initially, Lincoln chose Generals who were consistently unsuccessful. McDowell lost the first manassas. McClellan tended to think that he was too often outnumbered so restrained from attacking far too often. Pope was also unsuccessful. Grant brought successes like at the battle of Gettysburg which was a significant turning point in the war and later Sherman with his marches on South Carolina and Georgia. Therefore it is clear to see that Lincoln's initial leaders prevented the union from having a successful start to the war, making it last so long.
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A third reason as to why the civil war lasted so long was due to other southern strengths. The South, being farmed had a more physical build and stronger fighting abilities. This would have initially helped them but could not be kept up due to the small number of 9 000 000 in the confederacy compared to 22 000 000 in the union. This may be why they were initially successful in 1861 and 1862 but in the later years they crumbled whilst trying to protect Richmond. The north was full of industrial workers who had less experience in areas like physical fighting. However, it can be argued that most of the US Army sided with the union so they had their strength. Also the Southerners were fighting on home soil. This would have given them more motivation and a clear advantage in protecting their land. The Southerners did not have to try to invade or capture the North, they only had to defend the South until the North were worn out.

In confederate victories, early in the war, they then did not follow them up due to a lack of direction and resources. After the first major wins, the confederates could have marched to Washington and won the war but a lack of resources meant the Union was then able to fight them again. They had poor military tactics by the end which ultimately led to their downfall such as by attacking on the third day at Gettysburg, leading to Union victory. Therefore this shows how if the South maintained their military tactics that they began with the war may have ended differently showing how military strength of the South caused the war to last so long.

		In conclusion, the main reason the civil war lasted so long was due to military commanders and their abilities. Their successes in 1861 and 1862 are clear evidence of this. Lee's offensive-defensive strategy can be seen as a key reason for the downfall of the confederacy. It led to their defeat at Gettysburg which filled the union with confidence and higher morale. If Lee kept to the same strategies as earlier in the war they may have been more successful but it did help them to keep in the war as long as possible. Other contributory factors did play a role, especially Lincoln's original poor choices in generals but it can be argued, the union was always going to win even with these weaknesses. The south did also have strengths like physical labourers and fighting on their land which would have given them an initial advantage so can also be seen as a contributory factor.
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Exemplar 1 is a little uncertain initially but, by and large, has sufficient understanding and structure to maintain a line of reasoning with some judgement, resulting in it being given 13 marks, Level 5.

Determination of the Confederacy

Candidates should not underestimate the importance of the absolute determination of the Confederacy to fight to the end, despite a lack of resources.

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

2

(a) Which of the following was the more important reason for the defeat of the Confederacy?

(i) The Wilderness Campaign

(ii) Naval blockade

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

[10]

Most candidates had some outline knowledge of part (ii), the naval blockade. Part (i), the Wilderness Campaign, proved to be harder for students to write about.

Exemplar 2

2	a	The Wilderness Campaign was an important reason for the defeat of the Confederacy as it was the final campaign in the Civil War. Furthermore, it showed how the Union's much larger army would be the downfall of the Confederacy as Grant could launch frontal assaults causing high casualties on both sides but this would impact the Confederacy more. In addition, the Wilderness Campaign ended with Lee's surrender at Appomattox showing that it was the final deciding reason for the defeat of the Confederacy. The naval blockade was an important reason for the defeat of the Confederacy as it stopped the South from transporting men, guns and food. This meant that the South, who already only had half of the population of the North, were even more scarce for resources. This led to Union tactics such as Sherman's March to the Sea completely depleting the South of their resources. Therefore, the naval blockade was an important reason for the defeat of the Confederacy as it led to an even
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		greater disadvantage for the South.
		In conclusion, the Wilderness Campaign was a more important reason for the defeat of the Confederacy, as, although it led to high Union casualties, it led to the South losing so many men that they had to surrender. Whereas, the naval blockade led to the South having less resources but it was too early in the Civil War to be an important reason for their defeat.

Exemplar 2 does understand the basics of both factors and reaches a reasonable judgement. The response does lack detail, however, and this means it was given 5 marks, Level 4.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* 'Economic gain for settlers was the most important consequence of Westward expansion.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This question offered a lot of scope and variety in how it might be approached. Economic gain was relatively easily assessed by most candidates with reference to farming, mining and the general exploitation and population of the West. Better answers then considered major cultural and political consequences of Westward expansion, such as its impact on Native American societies and its role, most obviously in Kansas and Nebraska, in triggering the Civil War. The role of religious migrants, such as the Mormons, could also be used. Weaker responses lost focus on the term 'consequences', resorting to a description of causes of Westward expansion.

Exemplar 3

2	b	There were many consequences of moving westward, mostly done because of the availability of land, and the perceived creation of infinite opportunity brought about by the American dream. Overall, consequences include economic gain for settlers, political ^{changes} and social changes. Overall, political changes are the most important, due to their impact on the US brought about by the question of slavery. Therefore, disagreeing with the statement.
		Economic gain was a common consequence of westward expansion, with more job opportunities and a less dense population, as well as access to key resources such as gold. In 1800 the population in the US was 5.3 million by 1820 it was 12.9 million, as a result many saw westward expansion such as the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 for 828,000 miles of land as a chance for economic gain. Firstly, there were greater job opportunities with revolutions such as communications which created post offices between 1815-1830 by 5000 (3000-5000), as well as the ability to build on the land and create their own businesses. Such was the level of economic gain that dangerous ^{journeys} trails such as the Oregon trail were commonly taken with 69 pioneers taking the trip in 1841, this was despite 1 in 17 people dying during the journey. This shows that

economic gain definitely occurred with many ^{willings} ~~able~~ to risk their lives over, however, its importance comes from the fact that in search of economic gain, cities were developed with permanent settlement in key areas such as California during the California Gold Rush in 1847-48. This also led to industrialisation, which was vital in the Civil War especially in the border states that had slavery and industrialisation, such as Kentucky, Maryland and Arkansas. Overall, economic gain for settlers because it helped to modernise the country and built stable economic markets outside of slavery, making it very important.

Another important consequence of westward expansion was changes to the political landscape. This can be seen clearly by the free soil party getting 0 seats in 1852 whilst the Republican party won the 1860 election, winning all Northern seats except New Jersey. This highlights a clear change in politics, its importance stems from its impact on sectional tensions and the resulting Southern Secession and Civil War. Key political decisions such as the Gadsden land purchase in 1853 exacerbated

Sectional tensions by acting as evidence of a Slave Power, this had begun since the Missouri compromise in 1820 drawing up the 36,30 line. Whilst this might suggest that Slavery was the most important consequence, its impact on politics by polarising the US on the ideological lines, e.g. the Wilmot Proviso in 1846 which passed in the house but failed in the Senate where there were more Southern Senators (enter Florida, Texas and California as free states). Whilst Economic factors are important, political decisions such as the Dred Scott 1857 by Roger Taney (over 36,30 line unconstitutional) increased sectional tensions leading to the Civil War which reshaped the US, therefore making it more important.

There were also social changes. The attack of Sumner showed the difficulty of US citizens to function together following the speaking out of the Kansas Nebraska case, whilst the Compromise Crisis in 1857 further showed that they could no longer function side by side. These problems were worsened by differing views on Slavery, while important its impact was influenced by polarisation in politics therefore making it less

		important overall.
		Overall, whilst the Economic gain was an important consequence with industrialisation and more land earned as a result, its impact on the future of the US was not as great as the Political changes, which reshaped the US with key decisions such as the 13th Amendment ratified on the 18th December 1865 being most important to its future. Ultimately, Political changes are the most important, so disagree with the Statement strongly.

Exemplar 3, while appearing a little rushed towards the end, maintains a line of reasoning and shows good understanding, particularly of economic gain for settlers and the link to the outbreak of the Civil War. It was given 14 marks, Level 5.

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