

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y212/01 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 Y212 series overview

Y212 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.

Question 2 was by far the more popular choice.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• were clear about terminology and names, particularly British military leaders in Question 1 (a) • had a clear grasp of chronology and, therefore, relevance • could structure their ideas successfully • could marshal relevant evidence effectively.	• confused terminology and names • 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 a greater threat to the British in North America in 1740?

(i) French colonies

(ii) Spanish colonies

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

[10]

Candidates mostly had difficulty getting beyond basic generalisations. In most cases there was some attempt to distinguish between the two rival colonial powers in terms of their economic activities and geographical threat. Religion was only tackled confidently by a handful of more able candidates.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* How serious were the problems facing the early Republic in the period from 1783 to 1789? **[20]**

Better responses recognised the importance of the early Republic's financial problems, as well as the challenge of forming a federal government with genuine authority. Foreign relations and internal rebellions were also worthy of discussion.

Exemplar 1

b	The Early Republic was plagued by serious political problems and social unrest. The economy was also in shambles, and ^{exacerbated} those two factors exacerbated the problems. Politically, the Articles of Confederation rendered the Early Republic impotent. Powerless to compel states to comply with its requests for money. They were powerless to tax or compel the states to comply with their requests, and indeed the Articles of Confederation themselves (which only bound the states to a 'firm league of friendship') were only ratified towards the end of the war. In 1783, the the Early Republic obtained the quorum (9) of 13 state delegates with difficulty to ratify the Treaty of Paris, and state squabbles. The rotating presidency meant that there was little executive continuity, and state squabbles were exceedingly fierce. In Virginia, NY, and Massachusetts squabbled with other states over their land claims, and Connecticut raised high duties on these Massachusetts goods, in Britain. The powerlessness of a rotating Executive Congress meant weakness on the global stage. The British kept the forts south of the Great Lakes and misled Indian tribes, and Congress were unable to meet their demands Treaty of Paris demands for pre-war debts and restoration of loyalist property. They could only 'eventually reconquer' and remove 'lawful impostants'. The solution to this crippling powerlessness, the 1787 Constitution, also created
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problems. States such as Virginia and NY passed to ratify the constitution with only a narrow majority, and there was intense debate and conflict from both sides. The Federalists had to publish 85 Federalist Papers to convince New York, and Anti-Federalists like Samuel Adams attempted to oppose it. This both created sociopolitical divisions (paving the way for formal 'parties' between the two in the 1790s) and it carried the danger of a constitution being rejected: which would keep the USA in its counterproductive, powerless, decentralized state.

The Early Republic also faced deep social unrest. From 1776-1786, Massachusetts raised its property tax by 60%. Whilst merchants demanded immediate repayment of farmers' debts, unable to pay them (many were veterans, with contracted payment in arrears or deeply devalued), the 1786-7 rebellion under former Captain Daniel Shays threatened Northampton, where 600 men prevented foreclosures being issued, and Springfield, where 1500 got grand jurors failed to access the Federal Arsenal. The Congress' plea for a temporary levy of troops was rejected by the states, so Governor Bowdoin raised a 4400-strong militia himself, funded by Boston businessmen. This shocked conservative, with George Washington exclaiming 'Good God! There are combatants in every state'. Indeed, in 1786, debtors stormed into the Rhode Island legislature to force the printing of paper money, and a similar attempt in Mass. New Hampshire failed. In Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a crowd released debtors from prison and the militia did not intervene. Events such as this threatened the social fabric of the US Early Republic - the relationship between backcountry farmers,

hidewalk elites - and ^{between} the state. One reason why Rhode Island did not attend the 1787 Grand Convention, ~~and~~ and rejected the Constitution, was the personal satisfaction with its debt relief policies.

The underlying reason for these social problems - economics - also was seriously problematic for ^{the Early Republic} Congress. \$79 million in debt, with \$42 million owed by the federal government, it had no power to raise taxes to pay the. ~~Only~~ From 1781 to 1786 only 1/6 of the money demanded by Congress was given by the states, who were \$25 million in debt. Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance from 1781, attempted to gain French and Dutch loans by advancing his own fortune - but he resigned in 1785 in despair. The right to tax was therefore one of the key rights given to the ~~the~~ Congress in 1787's Constitution. ~~At~~ The domestic economy itself was in shambles: the Congress had shown the country over with \$400 million in 1779 and the Continental dollar was worthless by 1781. The collapse in demand after the ^{wartime} ~~past~~ boom brought tobacco crops down by 75% in price, and in 1784-5 crop yields were blighted by bad weather. In fact, 60,000 slaves had been carried off by a British in 1776-1783, were dire effects for the Southern economy. ~~The~~ Congress' attempts to rectify these problems was far from an attempt to alter the constitution. Action in favor of ~~the~~ the power to grant a 5% tariff was repeatedly rejected by Rhode Island. This tariff was a more significant because Britain, since 1775, had blocked the Americans from trading with it or the West Indies, which had initially brought down trade by ~~a~~ 95%. Congress, unable to retaliate, saw, however, the smuggling of

		British goods vs the US - which undercut colonial manufacturing, i.e. wages and the balance of payments.
		Then the <u>problems</u> facing the Early Republic from 1781 to 1789 were very serious - hence why the 1787 Constitution was such a centralising Union from the federation of the Articles. Conservatives, creditors, and commercial interests had suffered enough social, economic and political problems to completely change tack.
		The stagnant domestic economy exorbitant national debt, with no one to foot the bill, and the economic damage done by many links with Britain, meant unrest from farmers and old debtors. They threatened political and legal proceedings, which Congress was utterly powerless to respond to. It could not compel the states to do anything, and membership became lax and disorganised. This damaged its credibility abroad, especially among the English and Spanish, who criticised American settlement and indeed directly fought wars. The scale and extent of these problems was very serious.

Exemplar 1 is a well-organised, well-informed response. Detail is accurate and very well used. The response is clearly structured, lacking only consistent evaluation and analysis in order to reach substantiated, developed and sustained judgements; hence it was given 16 marks; the top Level 5 mark.

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

2

(a) Which of the following was of greater importance in bringing about the defeat of the British in the American Revolution?

(i) The quality of British military leadership

(ii) The role of George Washington

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

[10]

An overwhelmingly popular question, most candidates showed an appropriate grasp of the required material and a good number were able to reach a substantiated judgement. Weaker responses often suffered from factual confusion, particularly in regard to the Battle of Saratoga..

The roles of the generals

Candidates who muddled the roles of the generals, for instance crediting Washington with victory at Saratoga, or confusing British generals Howe, Clinton and Cornwallis, struggled to answer this question convincingly.

Exemplar 2

2a	Whilst the quality of British military leadership was not as significant as the role of George Washington in the defeat of the British in the war, it should still be credited as impactful. Throughout the American war of independence, it is clear that the British leaders lacked strong enough leadership. For example, Although General Howe's Army won the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775, Howe's weak leadership led to heavy losses of 1000 men. This is further evident through the Battle of Saratoga 1777 whereby Burgoyne's army were heavily defeated leading to American victory and even French entry to the war in 1778. This was highly impactful because it gave the Americans a morale boost, proving that they could stand up to the British troops and that the British Army were weak and fighting in foreign land, giving the Americans the upper hand. Although it could be argued that weak British military leadership was impactful and allowed George Washington to successfully lead the continental Army, this argument is limited and
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the role of George Washington overall proves to be the most impactful in defeat of the British.

Appointed commander in chief of the continental Army in 1775, George Washington's role in the war proves to be the most significant in the defeat of the British. Washington's key military strategies, such as his surprise attack in the Battle of Trenton leading to the capture of around 900 British troops, along with his ability to uplift the American troops morale was the most significant in bringing about British defeat. Despite heavy losses and failures, such as the American failure of the previous Battle of Bunker Hill 1775, Washington kept his men fighting. This was the most impactful because without constant morale support the colonists would have accepted their defeat against the powerful British army and surrendered neglecting any chances of independence. Therefore Washington enabled the troops to continue fighting for independence despite hardships. This was more impactful

		than the quality of British military leadership because, by 1777 the British Army were arguably already liquidating and becoming weak, therefore Washington's strengths overruled British military weaknesses.
		Conclusively, whilst the quality of British military leadership was significant in the defeat of the British, it was not the most impactful. The role of George Washington proves to be the most significant reason for the defeat of the British because the British military were already decreasing in power by 1777, and Washington's leadership overruled this.

Exemplar 2 is essentially a sound response with accurate, but not full, support in evaluating both factors. A lapse into generalisation on page 4 indicates 'unevenness' hence Level 4, 6 marks.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* Assess the reasons why relations between Britain and the American colonies deteriorated in the period from 1763 to 1775. [20]

This question was tackled well by many candidates. The best responses were able to distinguish differing degrees of deterioration of relations so that a sense of proportion could be reached in assessing the impact of, for example, the Stamp Act, set against the later, more inflammatory, Coercive Acts. Factual and chronological accuracy was important for the higher levels, as was coverage of the full period to 1775.

Exemplar 3

2	6	1763 marked the end of salutary neglect and the beginning of meaning escalating tensions between Britain and the colonies. The principle cause of this deterioration in relations was the implementation of provocative British policies that denied Americans their liberties. It is equally true that in many instances, the American response was disproportionate. Finally, misunderstanding was a vital element yet ultimately the trigger was British policies. British policy was the greatest factor in the worsening of her relations between Britain and the colonies. Colonists were unrepresented in Westminster given they were 3000 miles away, hence in taxing them, there was no consent. The colonies fundamentally believed that they had the same rights as Englishmen as outlined in Patrick Henry's Virginia Resolves. Regardless, despite a legislature protesting against the 1764 Currency Act which ensured colonies had
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to pay British merchants in pounds or Spanish dollars, Grenville proceeded with the Stamp Act.

This universal tax blatantly compromised American liberties, resulting in a huge backlash. Furthermore, despite warnings from Edmund Burke and the fact that the Townsend Duties would only raise £20,000, Parliament passed it again and a huge reaction was once again elicited. British policies demonstrated a profound lack of appreciation for colonial autonomy and liberties. MPs wanted to punish colonists for colonial defence costs increasing 5 fold and should have anticipated at least to some extent the unpopularity of these measures given it was taxation without consent. For this reason, inflammatory British policies were both the catalyst and main cause of deteriorating relations.

Excessive American reactions also played a key role in deteriorating relations. The Sons of Liberty and subsequently, Sons of Liberty, led by Sam Adams, acted as professional

rebels who stoked the flames across the colonies. In response to the 1765 Stamp Act, rather than simply following the intellectual approach, led by Patrick Henry, mob action soared with effigies of Oliver and Bute burned on the liberty tree. Moreover, Thomas Hutchinson's mansion was attacked whilst Andrew Oliver's (the Stamp Act distributor) office was torn down. This violence spread across the colonies resulting in the resignations of the Stamp distributors. Although effective, this degree of violence was shocking to Britain and potentially resulted in them feeling the need to reassert supremacy through the 1767 Townshend duties. This again provoked a visceral reaction which exceeded John Dickinson's intellectual arguments in his 'Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer'. British soldiers were consistently harassed and even those who didn't comply with the Sons of Liberty were tarred and feathered, highlighting a nasty side of American resistance. The extent of the violence was particularly disproportionate given all revenue from the taxes

would be spent on the colonies and the financial burden was also extremely low. Therefore, whilst it was British thoughtless British policies that instigated the enabled a furious colonial backlash, the excessive violence escalated the tension further and led to further British policies.

Finally, a deep level of misunderstanding at the others intentions underpinned the period between 1763 and 1775. This was clearly seen through the 1773 Tea Act which was an attempt to save the East India Company from bankruptcy by giving them a monopoly on the American colonies through duty cuts. The effect would have raised British revenue but crucially lowered prices for the colonists. Given the Act would clearly be mutually beneficial, an American rebellion was completely unjustified. Burke correctly stated that it no longer mattered what policy Britain imposed, the colonists were

going to protest. By contrast, in both the Stamp Act and Townshend crisis, Britain failed to appreciate the ideological debate against taxation. Instead, they viewed the colonists as intending to rebel against Parliamentary authority. However, at this time the colonists remained far from united or close to independence, viewing their allegiance to the King above their bond with the other colonies. Evidently, there was strong misunderstanding of the other's intentions throughout the period which contributed to a worsening of relations.

In summary, whilst each factor was indispensable in worsening British-colonial relations between 1763 and 1775, it was above all the inflammatory British policies that were the main cause. Not only did they initiate the rift but they symbolised a complete disregard for the colonist natural rights. Of course, the American response was exaggerated and misunderstanding was present

		through throughout yet Britain had
		ultimately overstepped its power in
		tightening control over the colonies,
		beginning the ensuing events.

Exemplar 3 is an assured response with an easy command of the essential material, a clear structure and some interim judgement; so it was given 17 marks, Level 6.

Relations following the Boston Tea Party

Candidates needed to appreciate the importance of the much more serious deterioration of relations that followed the Boston Tea Party and take this through to 1775 and the outbreak of hostilities.

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