

Examiners' report

GCSE

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

**OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
History B (Schools History Project)**

J411

For first teaching in 2016

Britain in Peace and War, 1900–1918

J411/13, J411/16 and J411/19

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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Britain in Peace and War, 1900–1918 overview

Britain in Peace and War, 1900–1918 is one of three British Depth Study units in the Component Group 1 British History GCSE paper. The focus of assessment for the British Depth Study is knowledge and understanding, and understanding interpretations.

To do well in the British Depth Study, candidates need to be able to identify and explain how producers of interpretations portray historical events, utilise second order concepts to develop an enquiry (Question 6 (a) and 6 (b)), analyse and compare historical interpretations (Question 7) while recalling and applying their knowledge in an essay-style question from either Question 8 or Question 9.

Most candidates performed reasonably well on Questions 6 and 7 and were able to pick out relevant parts of the interpretations to support their answers. However, many answers contained irrelevant descriptions of the topic, rather than focusing on the question being asked. This has been referred to in previous reports and the importance of focusing on the interpretations still needs to be communicated to candidates.

There was a difference in the performance of the essay questions with Question 9 being slightly more popular than Question 8. However, candidates who answered Question 9 performed better as they were more able to use their knowledge to address the question. Meanwhile, those who answered Question 8 performed less well as they wrote lengthy descriptions of the topic but did not use their knowledge to address the question.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• picked out a general feature in Interpretation A in relation to how the text showed readers the strength of support for the Boer War, and then supported this with two points of development – Question 6 (a) • used Interpretation A to ask a historical question (i.e. based on a second-order concept such as causation, consequence or change), and gave some kind of indication of how that might help us to further understand attitudes in Britain towards the Boer War – Question 6 (b) • compared the overall message about women's suffrage in Interpretations B and C, and went on to give a reason that they differed, on the basis of these specific interpretations (e.g. given the purpose/audience of B or C) – Question 7 • effectively deployed a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their answers – Questions 8 and 9.	• pointed out different features/methods in Interpretation A instead of focussing on one way the passage showed readers the strength of support for the Boer War – Question 6 (a) • didn't actually ask a question or tell us something they wanted to find out from Interpretation A; and/or told us lots of things they knew about the Boer War – Question 6 (b) • summarised Interpretations B and C separately, or pointed out smaller/individual points of similarity and/or difference – Question 7 • wrote about the different kinds of attitudes people had about social class, wealth or poverty, but did not use this to address the question; and/or focused on the lifestyles of particular groups – Question 8 • wrote a great deal about the Home Front during the First World War but did not use this to address the question – Question 9.

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Question 6 (a)

- 6**
- (a) In **Interpretation A**, the historian tries to show the strength of the support for the Boer War in some parts of Britain.

Identify and explain **one** way in which he does this.

[3]

The aim of this question is to get candidates thinking about the methods used by writers, artists, film-makers, etc. to put forward a particular interpretation of a historical figure, period or event.

The vast majority of candidates were able to access the interpretation and they understood the question. Most were given 2 marks by selecting a quote from the text (e.g. 'Lloyd George who opposed the war was "in danger of losing his life."') and then developing their answers to explain why this showed strong support for the Boer War (e.g. 'This demonstrates the anger of the crowd towards Lloyd George's views about the Boer War'). However, a number of candidates did not make a second point of development about their feature.

The most successful answers picked out a general feature or technique used by the author (e.g. "The author presents support for the Boer War through the patriotism in the crowd."), which was then supported by a quote from the text and developed with an explanation.

The weakest answers simply paraphrased the entire text in their own words instead of selecting a particular feature or quote to explain. These answers were unable to go past 1 mark.

Assessment for learning



In this question, candidates should aim to pick out just one method used in the interpretation, and go on to make two points of development about that to address the question asked.

Question 6 (b)

- (b) If you were asked to do further research on **one** aspect of **Interpretation A**, what would you choose to investigate?

Explain how this would help us to analyse and understand attitudes in Britain towards the Boer War. [5]

The idea of this question is to test candidates' ability to come up with a genuine historical enquiry, using the interpretation as a starting point.

The majority of candidates were able to ask a question that was based on a second-order concept such as causation, which was given Level 2. The most frequently asked questions asked were linked to causation, e.g. 'Why were people so violent against Lloyd-George?' Others asked why they were not even prepared to hear him speak. However, candidates did not explain how this would help us to understand attitudes towards the Boer War.

Candidates at Level 1 often limited their enquires to wanting to find out more about individual points within the text such as 'Who was in the crowd?' and 'What type of people were in the crowd; were they lower or upper class?' without an explanation that focused on a second-order concept. Some candidates tried to use the wording of a second-order concept but asked a question based on an individual feature of the text such as 'Why were they waving Union Jacks?'. The most common of this kind was 'Why are the crowd against Lloyd-George?' when this was already stated in the provenance of the interpretation.

There was still a significant number of candidates who do not understand the demands of this question by not coming up with any kind of enquiry. Instead, candidates thought about an area of enquiry and proceeded to demonstrate their own knowledge in this area, usually around the beliefs of different political parties and their attitudes to the Boer War.

Exemplar 1

b	If I was to investigate one aspect of interpretation A it would be the reaction of the crowd to Lloyd George's speech. This was could help us understand the cause of why the liberals won the vote in 1906. In 1906 the liberals won the General election because they did not support the empire and displayed the system as it did not aid the majority of people. As well as this they may have won because of the 'big loaf, little loaf' advising the liberals did. This came about as the Conservatives put taxes on imports from places outside the empire which lead to an increase in food prices.
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This response is an example of a candidate who is very knowledgeable about the subject but who did not understand the demands of the question. At the beginning of the answer, they state an area of enquiry based on the interpretation but do not identify a question or something they would like to find out. Instead, they come up with an historical enquiry that does not focus on 'attitudes in Britain towards the Boer War' and therefore this is not creditable. For the rest of their answer, they demonstrate their knowledge by answering their own question, instead of the one being asked.

Exemplar 2

6	b	If I were asked to further research an aspect of Interpretation A, I would want to research why the crowd did not let Lloyd George speak. I am curious to know what evoked the violence and the hatred towards this liberal MP in 1901 from the crowd.

In this response, the candidate clearly identifies an enquiry based on a second order concept of causation and it is clear what they want to find out. For Level 3, the candidate needed to explain how this question would help them to understand attitudes towards the Boer War.

Assessment for learning



Candidates need to remember that this question is not about what they know. They need to remember to refer back to the second part of the question and explain why they have asked that specific question and how it will help them to understand X.

Question 7

7 Interpretations B and C both focus on the campaign for women's suffrage.

How far do they differ and what might explain any differences?

[12]

This question offers candidates the opportunity to show that they can identify the different ways that historical events, periods or figures are presented, and explain why they may differ.

The interpretations in this question, about women's suffrage, were accessible to most candidates, the vast majority of whom were able to at least pick out individual points to show how they were similar or different. These were given Level 2. Most frequently, this was pointing out the similarity that both interpretations were celebrating female suffrage or the difference in tactics between the suffragists and suffragettes. The other difference commonly noted was that one interpretation was pleased about the statue for Millicent Fawcett while the other was not. However, a number of candidates did not make inferences beyond this. Instead, there were many candidates who stopped answering the question and instead started to explain their own extensive knowledge on the suffragists and suffragettes. This is not a requirement of this question which needs candidates just to focus on the interpretations.

The more successful responses in this question were able to make inferences from both of the interpretations which were then supported by a selected quotation. Most typically, this involved comparing how each author portrayed the relative importance of Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst in achieving female suffrage. Often candidate's noticed B's portrayal of Pankhurst as a 'courageous leader' with a significant impact while C criticised that it was only Fawcett was receiving recognition as Pankhurst sacrificed more in achieving female suffrage.

There were few candidates who weren't able to compare details of the interpretations but still a number who only compared the provenance of the interpretations and therefore were given Level 1.

Only a small number of candidates were able to move beyond the impressions of the interpretations to explain why they were different. Lots of candidates did attempt to focus on the provenance of the interpretation but often ended up repeating details they were already given. For example, many noted that interpretation B was from the Fawcett Society and therefore that it would show Fawcett in a positive light. But few went beyond this to recognise that this was an article to celebrate the founder of the charity. Similarly with C, candidates noted that the author had written a biography on Pankhurst and therefore, this would show Pankhurst in a positive light. Or they made simplistic remarks that the historian would have 'done more research' on the life of Pankhurst which made her account 'more reliable'. Responses would have been more successful if they had connected the work of the historian with their message in interpretation C to explain why she did not want the work of Pankhurst to be forgotten.

Exemplar 3

		In Interpretation B Fawcett is presented as a courageous leader who gave up her life for the Suffrage cause. The website explains that Fawcett's help played a 'significant role in securing the first extension of voting rights'. This suggests that it was through her techniques techniques and the NUWSS that women gained the vote. This strong view is opposed with Interpretation C as the historian writes that it was not Fawcett that gained the vote but rather Emmeline Pankhurst. She explains Pankhurst suffered '13 imprisonments... where she went on hunger strikes'. Through this the historian is suggesting it was Pankhurst's militancy which gained the vote.
		The difference between both interpretations is effected by the provenance of the extract. Inter Interpretation B is written by a website called the 'Fawcett society'. They are biased to place Fawcett in a positive light which causes causes exaggeration of her use in the Suffrage movement. Their ^{Their} aim in the piece would be to display the importance of Fawcett. This contrasts to Interpretation C as it was written by a historian who was had already devoted time to writing about Pankhurst. Her aim would have been to display Pankhurst in a more positive light.

In this response, the candidate clearly outlines the impressions of both interpretations which are supported by quotations from both of the interpretations (Level 3) and then goes on to explain the impression of C; therefore this answer achieves Level 4.

Firstly, they begin with the message of B and Fawcett's sacrifices to achieve female suffrage, which is then support by specific detail from the interpretation. This is then directly contrasted with the message of interpretation C (the significance of Pankhurst's role in achieving female suffrage), which is also supported by specific detail from C (Level 3).

In the second paragraph, the candidate begins with simplistic provenance by recognising that the Fawcett Society will be 'biased' towards Fawcett (Level 1). However, they then go on to recognise, after writing a biography, why the historian would want to portray Pankhurst in a positive light (Level 4).

Assessment for learning



Candidates need to be reminded that this question is not about what they know and just to focus on the interpretations. Long paragraphs about the topic in the question are not credited as they do not answer the question.

It will help candidates to outline the message/impression of the interpretations before they start to select quotes to support their answers.

Candidates should include the provenance they are given in the exam paper in their answer. But they then need to go beyond this and consider specific reasons that a particular organisation or individual might want to give us that impression.

Question 8*

- 8* The website 'historictimes.com' argues that there was a 'significant change' in people's attitudes towards social class, wealth and poverty in Edwardian Britain.

How far do you agree with this view of Britain between 1900 and 1914?

Give reasons for your answer.

[20]

This question was generally not answered as well as question 9. However, this was not for the lack of knowledge, rather for misunderstanding the demands of the question.

There were many incidents of candidates having a decent knowledge of wealth, social class and poverty during this time period but then not explaining whether or not this was evidence of a change in attitude. For example, candidates could describe in detail a number of the Liberal Reforms, but not explain how this showed a change in attitude away from laissez-faire. Another popular description was the findings of the Rowntree Report and the conditions of poverty. However, candidates did not then explain the impact this report had on people's attitudes. The responses that were successful never lost sight of the question being asked and at the end of each paragraph considered the change or continuity in attitude.

Another pitfall on this question was the inclusion of the First World War. While the time period for this question was 1900-1914, candidates drew on knowledge after 1914; for example, by explaining how trench conditions changed attitudes towards social class after the war, or by referring to how attitudes to female suffrage changed during and after the war. These explanations could not be credited.

Finally, there were a number of candidates who gave detailed descriptions on living conditions of different classes in Edwardian Society and it is clear that this is taught in detail. However, these detailed descriptions could not be used to answer the question and were given Level 1.

Exemplar 4

		To begin with, when discussing poverty we can tell there was a greater involvement to those in the lower classes with other people. For example, the within the city of York a man called Seebohm Rowntree visited 11,500 families to educate himself about poverty. He discovered the 'poverty line' this is a line in which people have the en right amount of material goods to survive on. He found out that the average salary of those in York was £1 and that majority of them were suffering from this. Therefore I agree with the website as this is a clear example of why people are trying to gain an understanding of the lower classes in poverty (roughly 80% of Britain were in the working class). Having action to understand their lives could lead into a change to understand what people in power have to do to make it better.
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In this response, the candidate starts by outlining a clear change, i.e. how people's concerns about the lives of the working class grew in this period. They then go on to give a detailed description of the Rowntree Report and its findings such as the 'poverty line'. They also include some statistics related to poverty (Level 1). After this evidence, the candidate then refers back to the question 'Therefore I agree with the website...' to explain the change in attitude that the Rowntree Report led to (Level 2).

Assessment for learning



Candidates may have an excellent understanding of the topic and the events around the Edwardian period, however, unless they use this knowledge to address the question being asked then they will not gain above Level 1. When studying particular events, it is important to not just know what happened but to consider how this knowledge can be directed towards answering different types of questions. This will allow candidates a better chance of accessing the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 9*

- 9* The website of the National Army Museum claims that the British public 'supported' the war effort for the First World War with 'enthusiasm'.

How far do you agree with this view of **men and women's responses** to the First World War (1914–1918)?

Give reasons for your answer.

[20]

Question 9 appeared to be the more popular choice of the two essay-style questions. Unlike Question 8, there was much more variety in the quality of the responses. This concept of enthusiastic support for the First World War was well understood and the quality of responses depended more on the evidence provided by the candidates.

Candidates were able to draw on a range of relevant content surrounding the war effort. To support the interpretation, candidates often referred to men joining the army in 1914 (and the role of propaganda in this), very often stating one reason for men's enthusiasm was the belief the war would be 'over by Christmas'. They also recalled the role of women during the war with a range of knowledge including the organisations they joined such as VAD and WLA as well as the suffragists and suffragettes suspending their campaigns in order to focus on the war effort. In order to challenge the interpretation, candidates mainly drew upon their knowledge of conscientious objectors and the introduction of conscription in 1916. Some tried to argue solely that as the war continued, support waned from men and women as more people became injured. However, these points tended to be generalised and lacked specific knowledge of turning points during the war, such as the Battle of the Somme and they therefore stayed in Level 1.

However, the vast majority of candidates who answered this question were able to explain at least one point to support or challenge the interpretation and many recognised that the levels of enthusiasm changed as the war progressed.

Exemplar 5

9	I partially agree with the statement as there is lots of evidence and reason as to why men and women responded enthusiastically to war. However some views that were not as common as meant that not everyone responded ^{with} in a similar enthusiasm. Women supported the war effort enthusiastically by taking up very physically demanding roles in order to keep the country, running for example 80,000 women joined the Womersland army with ^{with} the slogan 'digging for victory' which helped increase fruit and vegetables despite the German attacks on the sea u-boats. Many women worked in factories, making ammunition as they were vital for war and some even took up on necessary roles in government departments.
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Women ~~as~~ such as the suffragettes and suffragists showed support by dropping their campaigning to help in the war. And nationalistic values were embodied through women in the white feather campaign, where they would place white feathers as a sign of cowardice and selfishness on those not fighting. To outlive women did all they can in their limited positions to show enthusiasm in helping with the war.

Men also showed immense enthusiasm for the war when in 1914 at the very beginning it was declared that ten thousand volunteers were needed at ~~75~~ seventy-five arrived and tried to be part of the army. The opening of the War propaganda bureau helped to encourage men, making it appear vital to show strength and loyalty shown in the slogan 'we need you'. It was also publicised as a fun adventure ~~and~~ and men signed up with their friends and lied to meet the requirements due to excitement and enthusiasm as it was commonly said 'it will be over by Christmas'. 70% of the working class ~~wanted to~~ made up the army, and it did unite people as they were in the same position. To summarise men showed enthusiasm as it was downplayed and publicised in a positive

9	light.
	However the when conscription was introduced in 1916 there were 1400 conscientious objectors. They had to appear in front of a board to be assessed to see whether what they claimed would not allow them to fight. They were labelled as selfish coward and over 200 were fully rejected and sent without their agreement to war. Many rejected because of religious reasons and pacifist beliefs but 3 in 4 Socialists claimed it was a capitalist war they did not want involvement in. The objectors were less common but they still represented those who did not support war neither show enthusiasm.
	To conclude the majority showed support for war as at the time, Britain paraded loyalty and nationalism. However some growing beliefs that were not fully understood showed a different perspective of war not enthusiasm.

In this response, the candidate begins with a brief introduction. In their first main paragraph, the candidate recalls the role of women during the war with a range of evidence from statistics, the jobs they had during the war and the actions of the suffragettes and suffragists. This candidate clearly uses the words of the question ('support enthusiastically') and then demonstrates this with detailed evidence. At the end of the paragraph they then refer back to the concept of enthusiasm to achieve Level 2.

In the next paragraph, they focus on men joining the army by explaining the role of propaganda and how it encouraged men to join the war effort. Once again, at the end of the paragraph they refer to the 'enthusiasm' shown by men (Level 3).

In the final paragraph the candidate challenges the interpretation with evidence of Conscientious Objectors. This is supported with detailed statistics throughout the paragraph and a final reference to the question and 'enthusiasm' at the end of the paragraph (Level 4).

Given the clear and specific evidence used throughout the answer, alongside the clear references to the question, this answer achieved the top of Level 4. The conclusion could not be credited as they did not offer a fourth explained point.

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Question 8, OCR is aware that third party material appeared in this exam but it has not been possible to identify and acknowledge the source.

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