

GCSE (9–1)
Candidate Style Answers

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411
For first teaching in 2016

J411 - The People's Health

Version 1



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Introduction

This resource has been produced by a senior member of the GCSE History examining team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied. It illustrates how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provides some commentary on what factors contribute to overall levels.

As these responses have not been through full moderation, they have not been graded and are instead, banded to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

Question 2

Write a clear and organised summary that analyses people's living conditions in the Middle Ages. Support your summary with examples.

High level response

Living conditions in the Middle Ages were different depending on who you were and where you lived. In the countryside, the Lord of the Manor would live in a much larger house than the peasants who worked on his land. There was also difference between the types of houses peasants lived in. For some, their homes were basic huts with walls woven from sticks and covered in mud. Others lived in timber framed houses which were larger. These timber framed houses would keep a fire burning which could make the house quite smoky but provided warmth and a way of cooking (commonly pottage, a thick soup). Peasants had meat and bread to eat, the smoke from the fire would be used to preserve the meat.

However, whilst there were many similarities there were also a number of differences between life in the countryside and life in towns. Houses in towns were very different from the countryside as they were larger and only rich people could afford them. Often, the top floors would jut out to make more space in the house which meant the streets underneath would be very dark. Very few houses in the centre of towns had gardens but further out gardens were common and often had flowers to purify the air as well as growing vegetables to eat. The diets of people in the towns and countryside were very similar, however, there was more variety available to people in the towns due to the presence of the market. In towns water would be available from a wider variety of sources than in the countryside. As well as rivers and streams there would often be a conduit in the centre of the market square as well as water sellers going door to door. As this comparison has shown, medieval living conditions varied depending on factors such as wealth and location.

Examiner commentary

This answer is top level 3 because the candidate has included a wide range of characteristic features of the time which demonstrates thorough subject knowledge. The examples used by the candidate have been clearly explained rather than just identified. The summary has been well organised with clear indication of second order concepts (comparison between town and country) and there is a logical coherence to the answer by comparing different elements of living conditions in first the countryside and then the towns.

Medium level response

Life in the countryside was hard. Peasants lived in timber houses that had an open fire to cook food on. It could get really smoky inside and often there were animals inside as well. Water was collected from the local stream or river and cess pits were used for waste. However, in the towns it was quite different. Some of the houses were bigger and ones right in the centre didn't have a garden. Water came from a river or stream. Cess pits were used in towns too and sometimes people put their rubbish on the street outside their house. People in towns and villages ate the same types of food such as meat and vegetables. Living conditions in the Middle Ages were different in towns and the countryside.

Examiner commentary

This answer is mid level 2 because the candidate has shown a range of knowledge of the key features of the period. They have picked good examples to answer the question. This is not a top level answer because they have not developed or explained any of the examples in order to demonstrate what we can learn about people's living conditions from them. The candidate has made a comparison between town and country which shows a logical chain of reasoning.

Question 4

How far do you agree that the most important changes in public health in Britain took place in the twentieth century? Give reasons for your answer.

High level response

For several reasons it can be argued that the most important changes to public health in Britain took place in the twentieth century. The period 1900–2000 was one of really significant change across nearly all aspects of life – health being no exception. The Liberal Welfare reforms at the start of the century were the ground work for the welfare state. Lloyd George's National Insurance Act and Old Age Pensions had a positive impact on the lives of the working poor, not to mention the improvement of children's health due to the introduction of free school meals. These first steps were enhanced by the 1919 Housing Act which created Council Houses which had to meet new standards in space, water supply and drainage, these positive steps helped bring an end to the slums of the nineteenth century and improve the quality of life of the poor. As the century progressed the introduction of the NHS in 1948 is further evidence of really important change to public health. Now everyone, irrespective of wealth or status, had access to fully qualified healthcare. Not only that, but the government became increasingly involved in health issues such as smoking which has served to increase life expectancy. However, despite the progress made during the twentieth century change was often slow to come about and a lot of the government initiatives faced huge opposition. Several of the Liberal Welfare reforms were deeply unpopular, for example the National Insurance Act which employers thought went too far and the workers not far enough. Not only this but it can be argued that none of these improvements to public health would have been possible had it not been for groundwork laid in the nineteenth century.

Whilst the first half of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly one of a laissez faire attitude by the government key events and people brought this to an end. Due to the work of Edwin Chadwick, a Royal commission was formed to investigate water supplies. Dr John Snow proved that cholera was water-borne in 1854 (although it was not universally accepted immediately) and Joseph Bazalgette designed London's sewer system which had a dramatic impact on the quality of water in the capital. Had this essential work on improving the water supplies not taken place, the lives of the poor especially would have continued to remain threatened by disease. The impact of this work cannot be underestimated and had it not taken place the improvements in drainage and water supply introduced by the Housing Act of 1919 could not have taken place. Further evidence that the most important changes in public health did not happen in the twentieth century was the work of Louis Pasteur in proving germ theory. This was a pivotal turning point in public health as the cause of illness was understood and could, therefore, be prevented and treated. Additionally, during the nineteenth century, the role of government was crucial in bringing about improvements to public health. The Public Health Act of 1875 finally brought about compulsory improvements that had a significant impact on the lives of the working poor such as clean water supplies, sewer systems, rubbish collection etc. By the end of the nineteenth century both local and national government were spending vast amounts of money on providing clean water in towns. Clearly, without this government intervention in the nineteenth century, there would have been no platform for further improvements in the twentieth century.

In conclusion, I disagree that the most important changes to public health took place in the twentieth century. Whilst there were really significant improvements made, notably the Liberal Welfare reforms and the NHS, I would argue that this wouldn't have been possible had the groundwork not been laid during the nineteenth century. The improved water supplies, sewage systems, and government regulations for new housing had a direct impact on the lives of the working classes. Together with changing attitudes and a shift away from miasma thanks to Pasteur's germ theory the cause of illness could be understood and combatted which was the key to improving public health.

Examiner commentary

This answer is top level 6 because the candidate has demonstrated strong knowledge of the key features and characteristics of the period. They have done this by including several examples for both sides of the argument, all of which have been clearly explained in order to show how they help answer the question. The answer has been structured clearly to show a sophisticated understanding of second order concepts. The candidate has used the conclusion to demonstrate a well supported judgement on the issue in the question.

Medium level response

I agree that the most important changes in public health happened in the twentieth century. The NHS is a good example. Also, there were reforms by the Liberal government at the start of the century such as introducing pensions. As the century went on the government became more involved in public health such as campaigns to stop people from smoking. They have also passed laws to improve public health to do with housing and smoking.

On the other hand, there were really important changes to public health that happened at other times. The best example is during the Industrial revolution when lots of people moved into towns from the countryside. This led to overcrowding and eventually the government realised they would have to get involved. Water supplies were cleaned up and a new sewer system was built, first in London and then in other towns. Also, science was starting to be able to provide answers and so people were more willing to change.

Overall, I think that the biggest changes to public health happened during the nineteenth century. If the government hadn't started to get more involved then all of the other changes in the twentieth century wouldn't have been possible.

Examiner commentary

This answer is level 4 because the candidate has demonstrated sound knowledge of the key features and characteristics of the period. This is well structured and sets out a sustained and generally convincing explanation with the conclusion offering a supported judgement. This answer is not a higher level because the examples needed to be explained such as why was the NHS a good example? Also, to reach higher levels, the candidate needed to give more specific examples rather than generalised comments for example about government action – try to name specific laws etc.

Question 5

‘New technology has been the most important factor in improvements to public health in Britain’. How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

High level response

It can be argued that new technology has indeed been the most important factor in improvements to public health. Developments such as the printing press in the fifteenth century enabled information to be spread more quickly and accurately for example the Plague Orders of 1578. The development of microscopes was vital in enabling Louis Pasteur to develop germ theory which finally proved what caused illness, thereby also proving the importance of cleanliness and public health. Other technological developments in the Industrial period were also significant in improving public health, most notably the development of the sewer systems pioneered by Joseph Bazalgette in London. However, had it not been for the government commissioning these works, technology could have not have had this impact. Therefore, arguably, the role of government is more important with respect to the sewer system than the development of technology. In the modern era technology has enabled the use of media to raise awareness on issues to do with public health such as anti-smoking and healthy eating campaigns.

On the other hand it can be argued that there are other factors which played a more important role in improving public health. Throughout all the time periods government has had a significant impact on public health, on both a local and national level. Examples include the Plague Orders, Public Health Acts as well as a raft of other legislation at the end of the nineteenth century, Liberal Welfare reforms, NHS and AIDS awareness campaigns. The Public Health Act of 1875 was a turning point in England as it was the first time that the government made it compulsory for councils to clean up their towns, thereby improving living conditions. For example, the appointments of medical officers and local authorities taking responsibility for sewers and water supplies. The NHS is another significant event in the improvement of public health because, for the first time, everybody in the country had access to trained doctors. This meant that the very poor had the same access and entitlement as the rich, and, as a result, life expectancy has improved dramatically. Combined with this, the growth of democracy, particularly during the nineteenth century with the 1867 Second Reform Act, meant that there was increasing pressure for reform and the government had to respond to this. Additionally, a change in attitudes also played a role in improving public health. Since the Middle Ages there has been a shift away from the reliance of religion as an explanation and treatment of illness and people became more accepting of new, scientific ideas such as Pasteur’s germ theory.

In conclusion, whilst new technology has played an incredibly important role in improving public health, such as development of microscopes and the sewer system, by itself it cannot be considered the most important factor. Without the role of other factors such as government new technology would not have been able to have such a big impact. For example the new sewer system only came about because of intervention by the government. Therefore, whilst it clearly played a significant role in improving public health, I disagree that by itself it was the most important factor.

Examiner commentary

This answer is top level 6 because the candidate has demonstrated strong knowledge of the key features and characteristics of the period. They have done this by including several examples for both sides of the argument, all of which have been clearly explained in order to show how they help answer the question. The answer has been structured clearly to show a sophisticated understanding of second order concepts. The candidate has used the conclusion to demonstrate a well supported judgement on the issue in the question.

Medium level response

I agree that new technology has been the most important factor in improvements to public health. This is because new technology has enabled change to happen such as new sewers which helped clean up the water supply in London. Other examples include the development of microscopes which lead to important medical developments. Also, technology meant people were able to share their ideas more easily.

On the other hand there are lots of other factors that have helped to improve public health such as the role of the government. This has led to significant change, for example the 1875 Public Health Act and the introduction of the NHS. Individuals have also played an important role, for example if Pasteur hadn't discovered germ theory then people wouldn't know what caused illness. Also, across the time periods there has been a shift away from religion and people were more willing to accept new ideas which helped improve public health.

Overall I think that other factors are more important because even though technology has helped, by itself it's not that important. Technology needed to be helped by other things such as the government in order to have a big impact.

Examiner commentary

This answer is level 4 because the candidate has demonstrated sound knowledge of the key features and characteristics of the period. This is well structured and sets out a sustained and generally convincing explanation with the conclusion offering a supported judgement. This answer is not a higher level because the examples needed to be explained such as what were medical developments the microscope contributed to? Also, to reach higher levels, the candidate needed to give more specific examples rather than generalised comments for example what new ideas were people willing to accept? How would this impact on public health?



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