

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY A
(EXPLAINING THE
MODERN WORLD)

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/02 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

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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. 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. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Subject information update

We have amended the Study of the Historic Environment component of OCR GCSE History A (J410) to fix the site studied from June 2019 (Castles) and June 2020 (Urban Environments).

Following consultation with and feedback from teachers, we are changing the way the Study of the Historic Environment will be assessed on GCSE History A. At the moment, the site to be studied changes each year of the qualification. From now on, candidates will study either Kenilworth Castle or an urban environment (South Shields in 2019 and Spitalfields from 2020 onwards).

What this means is that teachers of the Castles option, who are already preparing candidates to be examined on Kenilworth Castle in 2019, will continue to prepare each cohort of candidates for an examination on Kenilworth Castle in all future examination series.

For teachers of the Urban Environments option, they should continue preparing candidates to be examined on South Shields in 2019. For the June 2020 examination, and in future series, teachers should prepare candidates for an examination on Spitalfields.

We hope these changes will make the Historic Environment component of the qualification more straightforward for teachers to plan and teach. The teachers' site packs for Kenilworth and South Shields are already available on the website here: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/gcse-history-a-explaining-the-modern-world-j410-from-2016/planning-and-teaching/> and a site pack for Spitalfields will be available in Spring 2019.

The OCR set site will be reviewed after three years and may be subject to change. Each OCR set site will remain on the specification for a minimum of three years, unless the review process identifies a necessary change. If an OCR set site is to be changed and replaced with a new set site, centres will be notified in September two years prior to the examination being sat.

If you have queries about any aspect of these changes, please contact the History Subject Advisors at history@ocr.org.uk

Paper J410/02 series overview

This was the first examination of the new Specification A Paper 1. The new paper was very different from what has gone before, with a longer time frame for International Relations and also a new section on Historical Controversies. There was also a slightly different focus to the Depth Studies, with the relationship between people and state being at the heart of this.

Section A overview

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this new challenge. The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions. The range and quality of responses was extremely impressive, particularly in the questions on the Historical Controversies.

Question 1

- 1 Outline the impact of the worldwide economic depression on international relations in Europe in the 1930s. [5]

The majority of candidates found this question accessible and were able to reach Levels 2 or 3, mostly at 3 or 4 marks. Candidates who provided a framing statement which correctly outlined the effects of the depression usually went on to score 4 or 5 marks. The framing statement need not be particularly sophisticated. For example 'overall, the worldwide depression caused international relations to get worse' would have been acceptable. The high scoring candidates mostly made some such comment and then supported this with a relevant example. The most common examples were the erection of international trade barriers which led to rivalry and tension; or the emergence of regimes such as the Nazis in Germany which then went on to disrupt international relations with aggressive policies such as rearmament or the remilitarisation of the Rhineland.

A significant number of candidates did not gain more than 3 marks because they didn't recognise that the question asked about the effects of the depression on international relations. The most common example of this type of answer was a response which described how the depression led to high unemployment in Germany (sometimes moving on to describe the emergence of the Nazis as a result). These responses were valid effects of the depression, but not outlining the effects of the depression on international relations.

One common misunderstanding was the inclusion of the Manchurian Crisis in many responses. Clearly this was not an example of worsening international relations in Europe.

Advice for Question 1

The key to this question is to construct a statement which effectively and correctly outlines the main trends or impacts asked about, and to support with one or two examples of this trend or impact.

Question 2

2 Explain why the USA got more involved in the war in Vietnam in the 1960s.

[10]

This question was generally tackled well and candidates scored highly, with a large proportion gaining Level 4 and Level 5 marks (7-10). However, in keeping with the introductory statement, many candidates achieved this by unexpected and in some cases slightly unorthodox routes.

The question was phrased specifically as why the USA got 'more' involved in Vietnam in the 1960s. It was anticipated that most candidates would focus on the situation in Vietnam in the 1960s and describe or explain the escalation in US involvement throughout that decade.

Some candidates did take this approach and were rewarded for explaining how the US was drawn in to Vietnam in the early 1960s to support the Diem regime. Another valid reason why the US got more involved was that the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese supporters used tactics which proved increasingly difficult to counter and as a result there was an escalation of ground troops and indeed of bombing.

Many candidates took an unexpected approach in that they explained the US involvement in more global terms as part of the wider context of the Cold War. Examiners saw this as a reasonable if unanticipated approach to the question and gave candidates credit. Typical approaches involved the Domino Theory and the US fear of Communism spreading through South Vietnam to Cambodia and Laos. Some candidates took an even wider approach, seeing the US involvement in Vietnam in the wider context of the Cold War as a whole and the policy of Containment in particular. This was also acceptable.

Advice for Question 2

Candidates tended to reach Levels 4 or 5 when two factors were clearly and distinctly separated and in each case candidates explained what was happening and how this led to increased US involvement. In short, where they identified an event which saw as a reason and explained how or why it caused US involvement. However, many responses simply produced a narrative of events and examiners sometimes found it difficult to see where factors were being identified or explained. Candidates should be advised to think in terms of identifying reasons or factors, describing those factors and then explaining specifically why those factors, as opposed to any others, led to increased involvement of the US in Vietnam.

Question 3

3 Study Interpretation A.

Do you think this interpretation is a fair comment on the policy of Appeasement? Use your knowledge and other interpretations of Appeasement to support your answer. [25]

The outstanding feature of responses to this question was the generally excellent level of knowledge of the historiography of the issue of Appeasement. The great majority of candidates were extremely well-informed about the various ideas and approaches which historians have brought to the subject. Teachers and candidates should be congratulated on the success with which they have got to grips with this extremely challenging concept.

The question produced a wide range of responses. Most candidates sensibly began their responses by explaining their understanding of Interpretation A. Most responses were able to make clear that they understood the main thrust of Interpretation A, that it was anti-Appeasement and critical of Chamberlain.

Once they had achieved this they usually had little difficulty in naming a school of thought or historian(s) which either agreed or disagreed and so conclude that the Interpretation was fair or not. However, many candidates opted to name several schools of thought in this fashion without developing their response by explaining which details of the arguments of the schools of thought would support or contradict the general premise of Interpretation A (that it was critical of Chamberlain and Appeasement). Such responses reached Level 3 and there was a significant proportion of the entry who reached this level. Responses that simply correctly named critical or supportive interpretations but did no more than this were marked at the bottom of Level 3. Answers which specified what particular interpretations were agreeing or disagreeing with in Interpretation A were credited higher in the level.

Another way to reach Level 3 was to base responses solely on candidates' own knowledge of the period. There were some examples of this approach and the use of knowledge was usually effective. However, it was more common for candidates to attempt to use other interpretations in the limited way described above, as well as their knowledge, to respond to the question. Such responses still received Level 3.

Candidates who did develop their answers to explain in detail what other interpretations or schools of thought argued as support for their argument were able to reach Level 4. Responses at Level 5 had to engage with the specific details of Interpretation A rather than the general premise of being critical of Appeasement. There were many excellent and imaginative approaches at this level. For example many candidates argued that the Orthodox view would not have supported the contention in Interpretation A that Chamberlain was a flawed character. They rightly pointed out that while the Orthodox view was critical of Appeasement generally, it was on the whole sympathetic to Chamberlain and applauded his motives.

Although most candidates show a good knowledge of the various interpretations of Appeasement, there were numerous candidates who simply recited a list of the various schools of thought and interpretations they had studied but did not relate this knowledge in any meaningful way to the question. Such answers were marked at Level 2 for the most part. Some responses referred to particular viewpoints as 'the first interpretation, the second interpretation etc.'. Whilst this was presumably a reference to the textbook they had used it was often unclear to examiners exactly which view interpretation they were referring to.

Advice for Question 3

The key advice to candidates is to make clear their understanding of Interpretation A and then make sure they explain the views of opposing or supporting interpretations in order to support their argument about whether they believe the argument(s) contained in Interpretation A to be fair or not. It is not necessary to include every single interpretation candidates have studied into this question and time is better spent on selecting and developing a smaller number of examples than in comprehensive coverage of all views. It is also worth taking time to clearly identify particular schools of thought, ideally by referring to the time period in which they emerged and developed.

Question 4

4 Study Interpretation B.

Explain why **not** all historians and commentators have agreed with this interpretation. Use other interpretations and your knowledge to support your answer. [20]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology [5]

As with Question 3, examiners commented on the impressive quality of candidates' knowledge of the historiography of the Cold War.

Many candidates took the sensible option, as they did with Question 3, to demonstrate their understanding of Interpretation B. Again, the majority of answers did so very clearly and effectively. The stronger responses tended to conclude this opening paragraph by then stating their intent to explain which aspects of the interpretation would then be challenged.

The strongest responses were able to explain how at least **two** different schools of thought **from different time periods** would have disagreed with Interpretation A, whilst also explaining the reasons why one of those schools disagreed. This proved very challenging and a relatively small number of candidates were able to reach Level 5.

By contrast, many candidates successfully reached Level 4 by correctly identifying two schools of thought and explaining what these schools of thought believed and how it disagreed with Interpretation B.

Similarly, many candidates were able to reach Level 3. This was usually by identifying several schools of thought but only properly explaining one of them to the required standard (two such explanations would have reached Level 4).

A substantial number of candidates were also able to reach Level 3 by explaining why some schools of thought believed what they did. At first sight such approaches might appear to be addressing the question but in fact this was not the case. For example, some candidates correctly pointed out that the US Orthodox Cold War historians would have disagreed with Interpretation B because of the influence of the Red Scare in the late 1940s. While this is a valid point, it merely explains why the Orthodox historians believed what they did. It does not explain why they would have disagreed with the specific views raised in Interpretation B (i.e. what they think which would have caused them to disagree with Interpretation B). In addition, this point could be raised in relation to any interpretation of the Cold War. Thus, in order to move beyond Level 3 candidates need to explain how particular interpretations would disagree, as a higher priority than why.

As with Question 3, many candidates who had clearly taken great pains to make sure they knew the various interpretations of the period sometimes struggle to manage their knowledge and use it effectively. Some responses simply listed, often in accurate detail, the various interpretations but these were not related to the question. Most responses of this sort reached Level 2. However, as with Question 3 some responses were so unclear about which interpretations they were referring to that they were only given Level 1.

Another notable type of response was where candidates attempted to set out their own critique of the view rather than addressing the question of why other historians would have disagreed. Such responses were generally given Level 1 as they did not address the question.

Advice for Question 4

As with Question 3, candidates should make clear their understanding of Interpretation B. As with Question 3, it is not necessary to include every single interpretation candidates have studied into this question and time is better spent on selecting and developing a smaller number of examples than in comprehensive coverage of all views. Candidates should select a small number of examples of interpretations which disagree and explain how they disagree (i.e. what aspects of the topic they disagree with Interpretation B about). Once they achieved this securely, they can then explain why particular schools of thought held these opposing views.

Section B overview

This section was generally tackled well with candidates showing impressive in-depth knowledge of the period. The source question was tackled well and on the whole most candidates were able to produce a supported argument for Question 8. Centres should be congratulated on the performance of their candidates in this section.

Question 5

- 5 Describe denazification in Germany after the end of the Second World War. [2]

This question was generally answered very well. Most candidates were able to name one example of denazification policies and describe it. Perhaps the only note of caution here would be to advise against writing too much in response to this question. Some candidates did this and wasted time which could have been used on other questions.

Question 6

- 6 Explain why the Nazis persecuted some groups in Germany after 1933. [10]

This question proved quite challenging and resulted in a wide range of responses. The strongest responses were able to identify two reasons for Nazi persecution and explain those reasons. The most common approach to doing this was to identify two different groups and explain why the Nazis persecuted each one. Typically this involved identifying Jews and explaining Nazi anti-Semitic policies and beliefs or relating this back to Hitler's own beliefs as set out in *Mein Kampf*. A second group commonly identified were the disabled and mentally ill. Again candidates correctly explained that these groups were targeted because the Nazis saw them as a threat to their visions of an Aryan Master Race. Candidates who correctly explained two such examples were given Level 5 while for one such example they reached Level 4.

A substantial number of candidates attempted to tackle the question but either didn't identify specific groups or didn't explain the motivations behind the persecution even if they had identified them. Typically these responses set out that the Nazis had a racist ideology but then didn't explain how this ideology resulted in the persecution of particular groups. These general identifications of valid reasons without explanation usually reached Level 3.

Some candidates appeared to misunderstand the question and attempted to describe the persecution of particular groups. Others misunderstood the term persecution and concentrated on the ways in which the Nazis removed political opponents such as the SA in 1934. These responses generally reached Level 2 but no higher.

Advice for Question 6

Candidates should be advised that Question 2 and Question 6 are structured and marked in similar ways and so they should adopt the same type of approach. In this question candidates tended to reach Levels 4 or 5 when they took two ideological beliefs and explained how they manifested themselves or took two groups and explained why they were persecuted. Where candidates simply produced a narrative of events examiners found it difficult to see where reasons were being identified or explained. Candidates should be advised to think in terms of identifying reasons or factors, describing those factors and then explaining specifically why those factors, as opposed to any others, led to persecution.

Question 7

- 7 Study Sources A and B. Is one source more useful than the other about the lives of women in Nazi Germany? [10]

This question proved quite challenging, as questions with two sources often do. The challenge in this question was primarily to show understanding of how historians could make valid use of each source. Stronger responses were able to do this very effectively. Typically they were able to argue that Source A was useful as evidence of Nazi beliefs about the position of women in society, that they were home-makers and carers while the men were the workers and warriors. For Source B candidates were able to argue that the source was useful as evidence of the impact of Nazi policies on women, leaving them stranded in the home and feeling less valued and important than men.

The very strongest responses were able to move beyond the content of the sources and engage with what historians could learn about the very existence of the sources. In the case of Source A, some candidates shrewdly pointed out that the very fact that the Nazis were producing such material was indicative of the importance they attached to women in their policies. In the case of Source B some candidates indicated their surprise that such a letter would have been published at all in Nazi Germany and so it was useful as evidence of resistance to Nazi policies or that Nazi censorship was perhaps not as severe as they thought.

Some candidates were able to make inferences along the lines of those indicated above but they didn't support them in any meaningful way with reference to the sources. Typical examples of such approaches were when candidates argued that Source A was useful as evidence about Nazi ideas but then gave no indication of what those ideas were. Such responses reached Level 2.

Candidates could also reach Level 2 by attempting to evaluate the reliability of the sources. However, such responses rarely scored above 3-4 marks because for the most part they argued that the sources were unreliable and therefore not useful. Whilst some credit was given for these responses, the intention of this question is to focus on the positive ways in which historians make use of sources. Candidates who therefore argued that the bias of Source A was useful because it showed how the Nazis tried to persuade women were rewarded more highly.

Some candidates persist in engaging with sources at the most generic level, making comments which could apply to almost any source and not the ones in the question. Typical responses of this sort were that A was a visual and therefore limited or that Source B was just one woman and so might not be typical. These responses were generally given Level 1.

Advice for Question 7

Candidates should be encouraged to take a positive approach towards the sources and look for the ways in which historians would find them useful. A helpful way to approach this might be to identify elements within the source and then explain why a historian would find these elements interesting and useful as evidence of some aspect of the history of the period. Alternatively, they could study the source and make a direct inference (e.g. useful as evidence about Nazi policies on women; evidence of the effects of Nazi policies on women) but they must then make sure that they explain and support this inference with reference to the element of the source which gave rise to the inference.

Question 8

8* 'The Nazis were only able to take power because of the impact on Germany of the worldwide economic depression.' How far do you agree with this statement? [18]

The aim of this question was for candidates to assess the importance of the depression as a reason for the rise of the Nazis and then consider the relative importance of this factor in relation to other factors. On the whole candidates showed excellent knowledge of the impact of the depression and how this aided the Nazis. As a result the majority of candidates reached Level 3, 10 marks.

However, many candidates seemed to find it difficult to effectively identify other reasons for the Nazi rise to power and construct an effective argument around the importance of such factors which would have lifted them into Levels 4 or 5. There was no real shortage of factors, and the stronger responses did make good use of factors such as the Nazis use of propaganda, Hitler's charisma, disillusionment with Weimar democracy and the violence of the SA and the SS. A balanced argument with one example on each side was usually enough for Level 4 while a more developed argument with three or four relevant examples was usually enough to reach Level 5.

It was noticeable that many candidates effectively limited themselves to Level 2 by simply writing a narrative account of the events of the later 1920s and early 1930s. In many cases such accounts described the effects of the depression but didn't explain how these effects aided the Nazis. Similarly, when other factors were brought into play candidates generally relied on description and didn't explain how these aided the Nazis.

Advice for Question 8

Candidates should be encouraged to take time to think through and plan their response. They should certainly engage with the key factor in the statement, in this case the depression, and explain how it helped the Nazis. They should then consider other factors, one at a time. It is not necessary to provide a narrative of events. They should take another factor and explain the effects of that factor and how these effects aided the Nazis. They should ideally then take time to explain whether they felt this factor was more or less significant than the depression, or perhaps how the effects of this factor combined with the effects of the depression. This should be repeated for at least one other factor.

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