

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

**Y319/01 Summer 2023 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 answers 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 Y319/01 series overview

Y319 is one of twenty-one units for Paper 3 of the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an interpretation option on a named in-depth topic and two essays. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in-depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the interpretation. In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question</li> <li>• were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words</li> <li>• were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge</li> <li>• in answering the essay, questions cover the whole period in a balanced way</li> <li>• adopted a thematic approach</li> <li>• made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic</li> <li>• explained the links and comparisons</li> <li>• supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples</li> <li>• reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showed a limited understanding of one or both of the interpretations</li> <li>• did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation</li> <li>• did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation</li> <li>• in answering the essay, adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach</li> <li>• did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph</li> <li>• did not cover the whole period</li> <li>• did not focus on the precise wording of the question</li> <li>• made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.</li> </ul>

## Section A overview

To do well on Section A, candidates need to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

### Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the weak position of organised labour during the Gilded Age. [30]

Both passages were well understood, and many candidates were able to access the higher levels by clearly linking their own knowledge to interrogate the views on the reasons for the weak position of organised labour in the Gilded Age. Most were able to point to Passage A's focus on union divisions and Passage B's wider view of the negative role of employers and the failings of the Federal government. Many found Passage B the more convincing argument.

There is no need to bring in any other named historians' views and fewer candidates were tempted by this. Often candidates had good knowledge and were able to link this to the passages by using evaluative language such as 'supported by' rather than simply describing events. Less successful responses had limited knowledge and resorted to using the content of Passage B to evaluate Passage A and vice versa. Furthermore, where own knowledge was used for Passage B it was often outside the period, such as the Wagner Act of 1935 or the Equal Pay Act of 1963. There was also a reluctance to weigh up the limitations of each argument as well as the strengths. Too often responses fell back on 'the passage fails to mention...' followed by a descriptive list. A strong evaluation will weigh up the merits of the argument in each passage before coming to a balanced judgement based on strengths and weaknesses.

## Section B overview

To do well on Section B candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period, explaining similarities and differences between the events they are discussing in order to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons made may be either between periods within the topic or between regions. The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

### Question 2\*

2\* 'The roles of the Federal and State governments were the most important factors in the development of African American civil rights in the period from 1865 to 1992.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the most popular question. Many candidates found good synthesis by adopting themes such as political, economic, and social change or comparing the role of Federal and State governments with other factors such as African American leadership and organisations and World Wars. Those that took a factor approach sometimes achieved good explanation but treated it like a period studies essay and there was too little direct comparison to get synthesis. While some candidates had an excellent understanding of the sustained negative influence of State governments especially in the south, many only referred to them implicitly through Black Codes and Jim Crow. A few also misread the question and only focused on the role of government so only managed partial focus on the question. There was also often an unbalanced coverage of the period with the 1960s featuring heavily and little before the 1896 Plessy v Ferguson decision.

### Question 3\*

3\* To what extent did Union and Labour rights improve in the period from 1865 to 1992? [25]

This question led to the majority of candidates successfully adopting a thematic approach. The focus centred on things such as the Union right to strike and collectively bargain as well as Labour rights such as working hours and equal pay. There were a few excellent responses which had a section on the political role of Labour in this period, but this was not needed to score highly. Less successful responses were over-reliant on the information about Labour in the Gilded Age from the passages and often just covered this and the New Deal, so had weak coverage of the period. There was also some question drift into reasons why Trade Unions were weak in the period with the role of Union divisions, employers and the Federal Government as themes which again might have been inspired by the passages in Question 1. Many candidates knew about Reagan and the Patco strike in some detail but very little else in the post-World War Two period. The crucial decade of change in the 1960s was often ignored.

## Question 4\*

4\* 'The Roe v Wade judgement was the most important turning point in the development of women's rights in the period from 1865 to 1992.' How far do you agree?

[25]

There were some excellent responses that dealt very effectively with the impact of Roe v Wade. These were directly compared to other events across the period which often included the World Wars and the campaigns for temperance and the vote. However, there was a surprising number of candidates who dismissed Roe v Wade as being too late in the period to make much difference or that while it had a social impact in terms of bodily autonomy it had no economic or political importance. Some responses simply referred to Roe v Wade as a turning point without explaining why and then quickly went on to other turning points in the period. There was some question drift towards whether women were united in their campaigns over the period and some confusion over the difference between birth control and abortion.

## Exemplar 1

Women's rights in the period experienced significant development. By 1992, women had gained voting rights, made steps towards economic and employment equality, and removed many social barriers that prevented. The largest turning points for this progress was the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling, as it led to tangible to both women's social position and political rights, not yet seen in the period. However, the Equal Pay act of 1963 was most significant in regards to economic progress.

Firstly, it is clear that Roe v Wade made the most change to women's social position in period, as prior to it's ruling little progress had been made to social attitudes. The origins of these barriers, seen with 'separate spheres' in the Gilded Age, had restricted women's ability to pursue actions outside of the home and family. The influence of these ideas is clearly seen as they struggle to remove barriers during the 1920s 'flapper' era, where women themselves, as well as public opinion, were divided over the role of women - the movement also led to objectification of women and removed their autonomy - However, Roe v Wade showed these impediments to progress had been reversed as women were now being treated with respect and autonomy. It is clear this change was due to Roe v Wade as even later than in the 20th century, the onset of the Cold War led to social restrictions for women as gender roles were enforced in order to advertise Western Values, eroding gains made to women socially by their involvement in the Second World War. Overall, little social progress was seen until 1973 and Roe v. Wade, as women struggled to challenge traditional values around their role in society until the outcome of the ruling, showing that it was indeed the



most important turning point.

However, from an economic perspective, it is clear that *Roe v Wade* failed to provide the same sort of acceleration of progress as the 1963 Equal Pay Act. Pay discrimination was a feature of women's work for much of the period due to a lack of sufficient legislation to prevent it. This was clearly seen during the Gilded Age, when women faced significant gaps in pay to their male equivalents and were exploited by their employers. This was also seen during the Gilded Age, as female dominated industries such as domestic service were left out of legislation and pay gaps continued to be upheld. Despite the working improvements seen in both the First and Second World Wars, women continued to experience lower pay and only achieved short-term gains: in the case of World War Two, the continued prioritisation of male jobs led over 2 million women to be fired by 1947. However, the Equal Pay Act was the first significant example of Federal intervention to solve the issue of pay and employment, significantly improving women's position and leading to the policies of affirmative action under Nixon which cemented employment equality. As *Roe v. Wade* occurred after this change in government attitude and positive change can be seen, it is clear economic improvements cannot be attributed to it and it is therefore superseded by the Equal Pay Act as the most important turning point.

Finally, *Roe v Wade* solidified the political progress made by women in the 1960s period and was the largest turning point in this regard. Despite the 19th Amendment granting the right to vote, its actual impact on political

4.	<p>participation was limited: voter turnout remained throughout much of the 1920s, and many women continued to follow their husbands vote regardless. This showed little change from the Gilded Age, when organisations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union encouraged women's involvement in social reform, rather than political action. Changes from this trend were seen with the establishment of the National Women's Organisation for Women in 1966. However, women's organisations were able to experience the greatest impact as a result of Roe v. Wade, as women's issues were brought onto the National Political Agenda. The lack of a ratified Equal Rights Amendment, despite being debated by both Houses, meant this also failed to provide political advancement as significantly as the outcome of Roe v. Wade, as a lack of ratification had persisted and seen no change since it was first proposed by groups such as the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) after the 19th Amendment in 1920. Overall, it is clear that significant political progress failed to be made for much of the period, and improvement, such as the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro, were not seen until 1973 and Roe v. Wade, therefore making it the most important political turning point for women's rights.</p>
	<p>In conclusion, it is evident that the Roe v. Wade judgement led to both political and social advancements that had not been seen prior to 1973: women's role and political rights were certified by the ruling. However, the ruling failed to have as tangible an economic impact, and therefore it failed to be the most important turning</p>

point in this regard. Overall, the statement is supported to a large extent, recognising the role of the Equal Pay Act in economic gains & progress for women.

This is a good example of an essay marked at the top of Level 5 which achieves synthesis by adopting themes of political, social and economic change to directly compare Roe v Wade to the important events across the period.

### Assessment for learning



With a turning point question, it is hard to get synthesis across the period if the approach is to consider a different turning point in each paragraph.

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