

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

**Y315/01 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.

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

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## Paper Y315/01 series overview

Y315/01 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>• covered 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 success of French armies during the Revolutionary Wars of 1792–1802. [30]

Both passages were largely well understood and many candidates were able to access the higher levels by clearly using their own knowledge to interrogate the views on the reasons for the success of the French armies in the Revolutionary Wars. Most were able to point to Passage A's focus on tactics and Passage B's wider focus on a 'planned war economy' and the majority found Passage B more convincing.

The knowledge shown was often impressive and linked to the passages by evaluative words such as 'supported by' rather than falling into description. However, weaker responses are still using the information in Passage B to evaluate Passage A and vice versa. There was also a tendency to focus on the positives of each passage and where there was an attempted evaluation of their relative weaknesses it often included words such as 'the passage fails to mention'. Candidates should avoid evaluation by omission and try to weigh up the views in each passage in a more balanced way.

## 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 an hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

### Question 2\*

- 2\* 'The work of military theorists had little impact on the conduct of war in the period from 1792 to 1945.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular question. Some very good responses selected theorists and applied their ideas to the theatre of war across the period and then often decided that other factors such as generals and technology had more impact. However, even the stronger responses struggled to find examples of military theorists in the twentieth century and were over-focused on the beginning and middle of the period. Weaker responses attempted to make generals into military theorists and referred to tactics in a more general way without linking it back to the question. There were plenty of chronological responses that could provide some good explanation but were weak on synthesis.

### Question 3\*

- 3\* 'Military plans were more important in determining the outcome of wars in the period from 1866 to 1945 than in the period from 1792 to 1865.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the most popular question and many responses used the Anaconda plan from the American Civil War, the Schlieffen plan from the First World War and D-Day from the Second World War as their key examples. However, this often led to a discussion of the outcome of battles rather than wars and a failure to focus on the question of whether plans were more important in the early period than the later. There was also sometimes a drift into why plans were more important, for example later in the period due to technology. A few candidates misread the question and compared military plans to other factors which could then only be given as a partial focus on the question.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* 'Public opinion had a greater impact on the First World War than any other war in the period from 1792 to 1945.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

This was again a popular question and the best responses developed a thematic approach so they could compare the impact of public opinion on wars across the period using themes such as starting wars, conscription and finishing wars. Alternative themes of propaganda, censorship and confidence in the government also worked well and led to synthesis through comparing wars and often arguing that the Second World War was more impacted than the First World War. There was tendency from less successful responses to over-focus on the First World War with long descriptive passages about DORA and Kitchener and only a few responses referred to the effects of public opinion on Germany and Russia. Some were also too reliant on the material in the passages to explain the effect of public opinion on the French Revolutionary Wars and few responses were able to use the American Civil War and Crimean War effectively.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should try to avoid taking a war-by-war approach as that makes it harder to get synthesis across the whole period.

Exemplar 1

4		Public Opinion	
		Propaganda	
		1793 - Levée en masse - High impact	
		Middle period less so	
		WW1 - Increase in effectiveness	Board Volunteers
		WW2 - Increase in use → Volunteering	Simon - Johnson
		WW2 → helped make → victory	Mass media Most increase
		Censorship	
		1793 - High use of CPS	
		Crime - W. H. Russell → Times	
		Zenon vs - 18th century → Pious duty	increase
		WWs, less censorship	
		Censorship	
		1793 - High censorship	
		Crime → Abolition gone	increase
		WW1 → G. gov collapse	
		SW → gradual	
		WW2 → High control → Churchill go G. gov	



4. 'Public opinion had a greater impact on the First World War than any other war in the period from 1792 to 1945.' How far do you agree?

Public opinion's impact on wars grew throughout the period. This is shown as public opinion initially had a low importance in the outcome of wars in the period, however it grew throughout the period, as communications improved. This can be seen in the factors of propaganda, censorship and confidence in the government, which all began with a moderately high importance in the French Revolutionary period, but reduced in the middle of the period, before becoming more important in the latter half. This indicates that contrary to the question, Public opinion was not of its greatest impact in the First World War, but actually it was at its most impactful in the end of the period, during the Second World War.

The use of propaganda increased throughout the period, beginning with a high use in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, before becoming less impactful in the middle of the period. However by 1860 it saw an increased use of Propaganda to influence public opinion, and this increased more throughout the later wars of the period, with its highest influence during the Second world war, indicating that it was not at its most important during the Great War. In the early period, the French revolutionary government used propaganda to great effect. This is seen in the use of the *Levee En Masse* ordering veterans to praise younger men for fighting and encourage them to serve. This indicates an early use of oral propaganda, important in motivating troops to fight without the presence of the king as a rallying figure. This indicates a clear use of propaganda during the French revolutionary wars. As the period progressed however, wars became more limited and did not require the mass motivation of the French Revolutionary Wars. The use of propaganda was limited to manufacturing civilian consent for war, shown in the use of Newspapers in Great Britain to

encourage the Crimean War. This indicates a lack of use of propaganda during the limited wars in the early-middle of the period. The use of propaganda increased as wars became more total, seen in the use of rallying cries of both the Union and Confederacy in the American Civil War. This saw the South use patriotism and the protection of the homeland in songs such as Dixie, while the North was able to use propaganda surrounding freeign slaves subsequent to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This indicates an increase in the use of propaganda to influence public opinion as wars became more total. In the Boer War, the ideology of Volksreich was implemented by the Boers to better motivate the war against the British. This war saw the entire Boer republics' economies geared to fighting the war, indicating it was a total war for them, explaining why there was an increased use of propaganda, and showing as wars became more total, there was an increased use of propaganda to influence public opinion. Propaganda was used extensively in the total wars of the 20th century. In the First World War, propaganda was used to not only manufacture consent for the war, shown in the USA through the use of the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 and the Zimmerman telegram to exploit fears of Mexican invasion to petition congress to enter the war in 1917. It was also seen as a way to encourage fighting, as shown in British propaganda at the time, such as the Kitchener "Your Country Needs You" poster. This indicates that in the total wars of the period, propaganda was used more and in more complex ways, not only influencing public opinion on going to war, but also encouraging recruitment. This only increased as the period went on however, with the Spanish Civil War having the famous "If you tolerate this, your children will be next" poster, showing a dead child. This influenced public opinion through encouraging both sympathy for the republican

forces, but also warning of facism, indicating a more complex use of propaganda. By the Second World War, propaganda had a place in the life of nations at war, with it not only sparking fear of the enemy and encouraging fighting as seen in the Great War, but also instructing people on what to do, such as "Keep Calm and Carry On", and "Loose lips sink ships". These indicate a highly intrusive form of propaganda unseen in the rest of the period. This demonstrates that as the period progressed, propaganda increased in its aggressiveness and breadth of control it exerted on everyday life, having a clear impact on public opinion. This proves that while public opinion was important in the first world war, propaganda was more impactful in the second World War.

Censorship also increased as the period progressed. It was present in the early period, but only grew in importance as it became more total. In the early period, censorship was seen very little, limited to only the French revolutionary wars. This was seen in the seizure of telecommunications such as the LeVeve En Masse's acquisition of horses, meaning only the government could transport information quickly. The government also built the French optical telegraph system, indicating some control over communications in the early period. This did decrease as the period progressed however, as seen in the Crimean War. In this war, the *Time's* correspondent WH Russell wrote of the horrors of the war, much to the distaste of Prince Albert who regarded him as "wretched". This does indicate that there was little censorship of the communications in the early period however, demonstrating that there was little control over public opinion at this stage. Another example of the limited censorship of the limited wars of the period is shown in the Zulu Wars. The embarrassing defeat at Isandlwana was mainly overshadowed in the British press by the defence of Rorke's Drift on the same day. This indicates that there was only limited censorship during

this time, as there was still accurate reporting, but some influence from the government.

By the world wars however, there was heavy censorship for the press and communications. For example, the Spanish Flu was spread in the trenches, but this was not reported on in fears it would decrease morale. This shows a high level of censorship, as the government was removing a threat to public safety from news circulation to prevent a drop in morale, showing how important public opinion was by the First World War. By the second World War, censorship became even more important; with the use of newsreels to centralise and censor the reporting of the war. Additionally, listening to foreign radio was banned, demonstrating how by the Second World War there was even more censorship than the First World War. Overall, this indicates an increase in the importance of public opinion shown in increasing levels of censorship throughout the period. While it started as unimportant, it grew steadily, as communications improved, and went relatively unchecked in the middle of the period. However, by the total wars of the 20th century, censorship was used extensively, to a large extent in the Great War, and an even greater extent in the Second World War. This demonstrates the slow but growing importance of Public opinion during the period, culminating with public opinion being the most impactful in the Second World War.

The confidence in the government grew in importance during the period, going from one that could not be questioned in the French revolutionary wars, to becoming more impactful as the period went on. By the second world war, confidence became a very important issue, indicating that public opinion was at its most important in the Second World War. In the beginning of the period in 1792, the confidence in the Revolutionary government was not very important in influencing the conduct of the war. This is shown in the fact that the

government stayed popular throughout the duration of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. This is shown in Napoleon's popular 100 days return to Europe subsequent to his escape from Elba, even after he had lost the war. This indicates that popular opinion of a government had little effect in the early period. However, the conduct of war became more influenced by government opinion as the period progressed. In the American Civil War, the Confederacy failed to gain a strong navy or naval command due to the individual states being reluctant to contribute. This was shown in confidence in the governments, as states, especially Georgia, feared a tyrannical Confederate government, showing how public opinion influenced state governments not to increase the size of the Confederate navy, which overall had a negative outcome on the conduct of the Southern campaign in the Caribbean Sea, as they could not break the Northern embargo. This shows how public opinion on a war had increasing impact on the conduct of a war, as the period progressed. By the 20th century, government opinion was very important to the conduct and outcomes of wars. For example, the German government was so unpopular by 1918 that a general strike was called, and eventually the government capitulated and the Kaiser fled, resulting in their surrendering. This shows the high impact of government opinion on the outcomes of the more total wars in the period. The most significant example of public opinion having influence on a war of the period was in 1940, when the Attlee led opposition refused to enter into a government of national unity with Chamberlain, instead choosing to work with Churchill. This indicates a very impactful decision made on the back of opinion in the Government, and resulted in a far more aggressive British war effort once Churchill became



PM., this demonstrates that confidence in the government was at its most consequential in 1940, and therefore shows that as the period progressed, confidence in the government became more impactful in governing how the war would be fought. This proves that public opinion was at its most important in the Second World War.

In conclusion, public opinion's importance grew steadily throughout the period, but was at its most importance at the end of the period in 1945 rather than in the First World War.

Propaganda progressed from a call to arms, to become far more aggressive and pervasive in the lives of the public as wars became more total, with it being a means of disseminating government instructions by 1945, indicating this to be its most important use. Censorship was high in the French Revolutionary Wars, but it decreased in the limited wars of the 19th century, only becoming very important in the World Wars, but more important in the second World War, due to the banning of foreign information, rather than just the censorship of negative information. In terms of the confidence in the government, this also became more impactful as the period progressed. It was unquestioned in the early period, but if governments were not popular they became more mitigated, as seen in the American Civil War. By 1918, it showed that unpopular governments could lose wars, but more importantly, in 1940, Churchill's appointment can be seen as a turning point for British military aggression, showing its influence in the 2nd World War to be its most impactful. This shows that while public opinion was highly influential during the First World War, it was at its most impactful in the Second World War than any other war in the period from 1792 to 1945.

This is a good example of a Level 6 essay which develops a thematic approach which leads to sustained synthesis over the period.

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