

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/21 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 21 series overview

Candidates have engaged with their various sites. We have seen considerable depth of knowledge about how the site they have studied has been a part of historical events and candidates have demonstrated that they know a good deal about the site in the present day and recognise the value and relevance of the physical features and supporting artefacts. Although candidates may know a great deal of detail, they do not always make effective use of that information to answer the specific demands of the questions they have chosen (there will be more detail about this in the sections about individual questions). Most candidates followed the rubric correctly and attempted two questions. The majority remembered to state the site that they had studied; this is essential to ensure that their answer is correctly assessed.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referred back regularly to the question throughout their response • made specific references to details of other sites or wider events to support their explanations • identified a reasonable time period for Q2 and Q3 and ensured that all their comments related to that time period • explained what could be found out from their site, in relation to the period of study, rather than just identifying areas which could be explored • made regular and specific reference to physical features of their site to support their explanations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • described the site without direct reference to the question • made generalised comments about how their site related to trends or other sites • did not specify time periods on Q2 and Q3 • gave examples from multiple time periods on Q2 and Q3 • made general comments about what the site showed, or the areas to be studied, without explaining what information could be gained from the site • made few references to physical features from their site.

Question 1

- 1 How typical is your site when compared to other sites of the same type?
Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer. [20]

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

This was a popular question, with many candidates selecting it and there were some excellent responses. This question was answered by reference to design, use, purpose, location, or reasons for creation, though most candidates only referred to the physical features.

Most candidates were able to make some valid comments about whether their site was typical of other similar sites or not, but many made general statements, such as 'a typical motte and bailey castle' without providing any relevant comparison sites or simply naming another castle. This resulted in them not being able to progress beyond Level 2.

A noticeable feature of this year's marking was that some candidates, who displayed excellent knowledge about their site, did not gain high marks because they did not make an explained comparison with other sites. It would be helpful to candidates if centres gave guidance using the bullet points in the specification where it is stated that they should be able to make comparisons with another site, so that candidates know enough about other sites to make meaningful ones rather than simply statements of comparison.

To gain the top marks, candidates were expected to provide examples of both typicality and atypicality so that they offered a balanced view, although there did not need to be equal numbers of either. Less successful answers simply described their site and referred to it as typical or unique without support.

Assessment for learning



Many candidates demonstrated good understanding of the concept of typicality and were able to relate aspects of their site to this point. However, far too often, this consisted of simply stating that a feature was also present in another site or, even more generally, was a common feature of similar sites. This is not sufficient to constitute a developed explanation (i.e., Level 3 and above). For a developed explanation, it is expected that detail from the site used for comparison is given to enhance the value of the explanation. Effectively, then, a developed explanation of typicality will include: a statement outlining the key point; a description of the relevant part of their own site; identification of how this compares to another site plus describing detail from that second site to support how this exemplifies either typicality or atypicality.

Exemplar 1

Defensively, the town of Cambridge was fairly typical. After the Norman conquest of 1066, a Motte and Bailey Castle was built on Castle Hill in 1068. This ~~was~~ is fairly standard for towns throughout the country. Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, Cambridge was routinely attacked by bandits from Ely and needed defences. This led to the castle on Castle Hill being rebuilt in stone by Edward I in the late 13th century and the construction of 'The King's Ditch', a defensive moat around the town. When compared to other towns of a similar size, Cambridge's defences are a fairly standard set.

This example answer on Cambridge illustrates a candidate who knows a good amount about their site but does not make an effective comparison with another similar site. The candidate is accurate about the founding and historical events of their own site but only makes general comparison to other places. The answer could have been improved by a direct comparison to towns such as Oxford (for typicality) or other local towns such as Ely or Huntingdon.


Question 2

2 Choose **one** period in your site's history.

Explain how a historian could use your site to answer questions about people's lives during that period.

Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer.

[20]

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

Many candidates responded to this question well, specifying a relevant time period for their site, selecting specific aspects and explaining how these could tell an historian relevant information about their site at that time. To gain the highest level, three different explanations were needed. However, there were some issues for some candidates.

Firstly, some candidates did not select a time period and so were limited as to how successfully they could explain an aspect of people's lives. Secondly, some candidates did not keep their explanations within the time period they had identified, which meant that some of their answer could not be accepted for assessment. Unfortunately, there was a great deal of general comment from candidates along the lines of 'so this feature allows an historian to find out about people's lives' but without saying what could be found out. This meant that those answers were not able to progress above Level 2. Developed explanations would explain how their selected feature or aspect of the site would show an historian about the lives of people at their time i.e. 'The existence of the night stairs at Fountains Abbey can answer questions about how dedicated the monks were to following their religion. These stairs allowed direct access to the church from the dormitories so that monks could start their daily prayers at 2am. This shows dedication as they would be interrupting their sleep to go to pray.'

More successful responses dealt with the range of different people living at that site at a particular time. For example, effective responses considered the lives of wealthy residents in contrast to domestic staff or military personnel in relation to the different physical aspects of the site.

Less successful responses described lives at the time without reference to physical features or other aspects of the site, or made general assertions which did not relate to the period selected.

Exemplar 2

A historian could use the site to show ^{how} people's attitudes and values affected their lives. For example, Lord Darcy valued militarism. This can be seen in the Brear's sketch that illustrates defensive features such as towers, arrow slits and battlements. Lord Darcy was a well-respected military leader who fought ^{against} in Spain and Scotland. This is reflected in the house's military features as it demonstrates Lord Darcy's desire to defend his home. This may be because the 'War of the Roses' had recently ended. Therefore, a historian could use this to show that some people valued their role as a commander and leader.

A historian could use the site to show how people valued religion in their lives. The alcove in Miss Scott's room and the distance of Temple Newsam from Kirkstall Abbey show Lord Darcy valued his religion. Lord Darcy was a strong Catholic; this can be seen in his leading role in the 'Pilgrimage of Grace'. This was a rebellion against ^{king} Henry VIII's religious reforms. The fact that Lord Darcy died for his beliefs shows that he valued them strongly. This is reflected in the alcove, as it shows that Lord Darcy had an area dedicated to his beliefs and would take the time to pray daily. The house being built a short distance from Kirkstall Abbey shows that it was important for Lord Darcy to frequently visit a religious site. Therefore, a historian could use this to show that some people valued their religion and would incorporate

this into their lives:.....

.....

A historian could use the site to show how some people valued wealth and status in their lives. Lord Darcy represents his wealth with the positioning of the house, the glass windows and Darcy's stag. Lord Darcy came from generations of wealth and had a very high role in society, as a member of the 'Privy Council'. This is reflected in the positioning of the house as it is on a hill. This metaphorically shows that Darcy is above everyone, and he wanted the people below him to admire his wealth. Glass was very expensive to make in this period, therefore Darcy had a lot of glass windows to show to people that he could afford it. Darcy's stag was a family crest carved into multiple areas of the house and scratched into the plaster. This symbol demonstrates Lord Darcy's pride in his family name. Therefore, a historian could use this to show how people valued their family name and status in their lives:.....

.....

In conclusion, historians can investigate the physical features of the site in order to learn how people incorporated their beliefs and values into their lives:.....

This example response on Temple Newsam illustrates a good way to approach this type of question. Although the candidate has not specifically stated a time period at the beginning of their answer, their first paragraph on Lord Darcy sets the frame for the period of the answer and all the subsequent sections relate to Lord Darcy, so are acceptable for assessment. In each of the three developed explanations, the candidate has made direct reference to the question by identifying the type of question which an historian might ask. They have then selected a physical feature of the house and given a full explanation of what this feature reveals about Darcy.


Question 3

3 Choose **one** period in your site's history.

What are the benefits **and** challenges of using the physical features of your site to investigate how it looked at that time?

Use physical features of the site as well as your knowledge to support your answer.

[20]

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

Many candidates were able to identify a time period and examine the benefits and challenges of studying their site.

Candidates, who were writing about sites that remain intact, were able to confidently identify beneficial physical features for framing their response. Some candidates were able to identify the challenges but did not go on to explain what difference this would make to understanding the way their site had looked at the time they had chosen. As a result, their answers lacked the necessary support and rarely gained higher than Level 2.

The best responses referred to other sources of evidence (maps, photographs, artists impressions etc.) which might be used to overcome some of the challenges.

Less successful answers made general assertions about the condition of their site, without specific reference to why the site appears as it does and why that matters when interpreting a particular period. For example, candidates might explain that a feature had been destroyed or changed and assert that this would make it difficult to tell what it had originally been like but stop short of describing the feature at the given time.

There was some misinterpretation of this question, as explained in the box below.

Question 3 - Misconception



According to the criteria in the specification, it is clear that this section deals with the way the current state of the site can be interpreted to explain different time periods in the past. Some candidates interpreted this question as meaning how features of their time period helped or were problems for people of their time, for example, how location influenced the reason for the site being built. As a result, they did not do well on this question. It would be helpful for centres to reinforce the correct interpretation of this criteria with their students.

Exemplar 3

One benefit of using the physical features of the Swindon Railway Works to work out what the works looked like from 1914 to 1945 is that the exterior of the Long Shop has had no changes. The Long Shop's exterior has stayed the same due to it being listed as a historical site. It still has the same structure in the walls made from cheap red brick due to its availability and cheapness at the time and still has the decorative yellow brick. It also has an unchanged ridge and farrow roof to let in light and drain water. However, the interior of the Long Shop has slightly changed so it could function better as a shopping outlet. This makes it easy to see how large of a building was necessary at the time.

Another benefit of using the physical features of the Swindon Railway Works to work out what the works looked like from 1914 to 1945 is that the Mechanics Institute has stayed the same on the outside. The only change to the exterior of Mechanics Institute is that it is very overgrown. However, challenges arise once you look at the interior of the Mechanics Institute as it is completely empty. This could make it difficult to work out the kind of activities that took place within the Mechanics Institute.

This exemplar on Swindon Railway Works and Village demonstrates both developed and basic explanations. The first paragraph sets out the time period which it is focused on (1914-1945) and gives a developed explanation of the benefit of using the Long Shop. The key point about the building's survival is made but is also developed by a full description of the appearance of the building during the time specified. The next paragraph makes an additional point about the benefit of the survival of the Mechanics Institute, but this time does not support their answer with detail about its appearance in their specified time. The response continues with another basic explanation of the challenge of using the interior of this building, but again without supporting detail of the way it might have looked at the specified time.

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