

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY B**

## **(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)**

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**J411**

For first teaching in 2016

**J411/12 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 responses 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 12 series overview

The J411 June 2023 series reverted to the first pre-pandemic structure since 2019. Components 11–19 therefore composed of the chosen Thematic Study alongside the selected British Depth Study. Paper J411/12 was The People's Health, c.1250–present with The Elizabethans, 1580–1603.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recalled at least two valid responses for Question 1</li> <li>• analysed public health in medieval monasteries by organising their response around a historical concept (most frequently, reasons why public health in monasteries was good, the impact of wealth and religious belief on public health in monasteries or the differences between medieval towns and monasteries). They supported their responses using specific examples (Question 2)</li> <li>• fully explained, in Question 3, at least one reason why national and local governments found it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period (1500–1750)</li> <li>• effectively used a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their responses (Question 4 and Question 5)</li> <li>• were able to link cause and consequence together by identifying a tangible improvement in public health brought about as a result of their chosen cause, in Question 4 particularly.</li> <li>• set their response in the context of the period ensuring that their argument was relevant and specific to this period (Question 5)</li> <li>• read the question carefully and wrote about one way in which the Elizabethan period was depicted as an important age of exploration (Question 6 (a))</li> <li>• understood that the question was confined to the period 1580-1603 and selected their area of research carefully ensuring that it was linked to a second order concept (Question 6 (b))</li> <li>• produced valid comparisons of portrayals with specific support from the interpretations and/or considered purpose when commenting on the reasons for their differences (Question 7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not produce a valid response to any part of Question 1</li> <li>• described aspects of medieval monasteries but did not consider how to organise and present their response as a historical analysis OR misinterpreted the term 'monastery' and instead answered the question about medieval towns (Question 2)</li> <li>• identified valid reason(s) in Question 3 but were unable to develop their responses with precise evidence and/or use it to address the question OR provided responses rooted in the wrong period (usually medieval or industrial)</li> <li>• made accurate but generalised points which they were unable to support with specific evidence in the essay question, or else gave precise evidence but did not explain how it helped to address the question being asked (Question 4 and Question 5)</li> <li>• did not identify a public health improvement which could be linked to their chosen cause, which limited their mark in Question 4.</li> <li>• identified relevant points with no development or wrote generalised descriptions of crime often not period related (Question 5)</li> <li>• selected a quotation from the interpretation and paraphrased it (Question 6 (a))</li> <li>• chose an investigation without incorporating a second order concept or answered their own investigation (Question 6 (b))</li> <li>• provided a summary with no valid comparison or compared provenance and identified individual points of similarity or difference (Question 7)</li> <li>• produced incomplete responses which were descriptive or contained identified points, some candidates did not consider both sides of the question (Question 8 and 9)</li> </ul>

<b>Candidates who did well on this paper generally:</b>	<b>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• deployed their knowledge and understanding of the period to weigh up the extent to which they agreed with the view and made use of second order concepts to explain their responses (Question 8 and 9).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• were not secure in their knowledge of Elizabeth I's treatment of the Catholics resulting in points being identified rather than explained (Question 8).</li></ul>

## Section A overview

To do well on the Thematic Study, candidates needed to be able to:

- present a historical summary of an area of content they have learned
- offer an explanation in response to a historical question (e.g. explaining the causes or consequences of something)
- recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a statement in an essay-style question.

It was clear from the majority of responses that most candidates had been well-prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately on Question 2 and at least in part in the essay-style questions, particularly candidates who opted for Question 5.

However, on Question 3, while many candidates were able to accurately identify reasons why national and local governments find it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period, far fewer were able to develop these reasons into full explanations. Similarly, although most candidates who chose to answer Question 4 were able to identify reasons for public health improvements in the 1800s, many were unable to successfully explain the connection between cause and consequence.

### Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Name **one** way in which the authorities in medieval Britain (1250–1500) tried to prevent the spread of disease in towns. [1]

There were many invalid responses to this question. Most frequently, candidates offered examples relating to the prevention of the spread of plague in the early modern period, such as Plague Orders or bringing in a policy of isolation. There were also frequent responses which did not relate to actions by the authorities, such as the burning of herbs or carrying posies of flowers.

However, there were a wide range of responses rooted in the medieval period which were given marks, such as the King's orders to clean the streets during the Black Death, the use of gongfermors and moving dung heaps to the outskirts of towns. There were some candidates with very precise knowledge about measures taken by individual town authorities, which were all given marks as well.

### Question 1 (b)

- (b) Give **one** example of a problem with living conditions caused by the rapid growth of towns in the period 1750–1900. [1]

There were few problems here and most candidates were able to provide a valid response, such as overcrowding, pressures on water supply and waste management, pollution, and poor ventilation in housing. Responses which simply described types of housing (e.g. 'back-to-back houses') without identifying a problem associated with this were not given marks.

## Question 1 (c)

- (c) Give **one** example of a government action since 1900 that was introduced to improve air quality.

[1]

Many candidates found this straightforward and most cited the Clean Air Act of 1956, or accurately identified what this did. Other valid responses which were given marks included the banning of smoking in public places and various measures to encourage less or cleaner car use. Responses which named new technology but did not link this to a government action (e.g. 'wind turbines') were not given marks.

## Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses public health in medieval monasteries.

Support your summary with examples.

[9]

Most candidates were able to include some relevant knowledge about public health in medieval monasteries in their responses to this question. Additionally, while there were some responses which contained unorganised descriptions, most candidates did approach their summary in an analytical way, clearly organising their responses in a valid historical format. Most frequently, candidates considered causation (reasons why health in monasteries was good, such as clean water and effective waste management, or the underlying reasons for good public health, such as the wealth of the Church), and consequence (the impact of various features of monasteries on monks' health). Fewer candidates made use of diversity (i.e. differences between health in monasteries and health in town).

The main reason in this series for responses not moving beyond Level 1, despite clear organisation, was a lack of development or a lack of precise examples. Many responses were not inaccurate but were too vague to move beyond Level 1. To move into Levels 2 and 3, responses needed to contain precise examples relating to medieval monasteries. There were many good examples of things such as the layout of monasteries, for example, latrines over rivers and the importance of clean water for religious reasons. However, many responses did not demonstrate the required knowledge of medieval monasteries to move into Levels 2 and 3.

A minority of candidates misunderstood the question or were unfamiliar with the term 'monastery' and instead wrote about medieval towns. Some candidates incorrectly asserted that public health in monasteries was very poor. These types of response could not receive any marks.

### Assessment for learning



'Approaches to public health in late-medieval towns and monasteries' is a bullet point on the specification, so it is vital that candidates are familiar with the term 'monasteries' and are able to demonstrate specific knowledge about health within them.

### Question 3

- 3 Why did national and local governments find it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period (1500–1750)?

Explain your answer.

[10]

This question made reference to 'public health issues' in the early modern period. This was interpreted by candidates in a variety of ways, with most choosing to discuss the problems of plague and the Gin Craze. A small number examined public health problems caused by the growth of towns.

The majority of candidates were able to identify at least one reason why national and local governments in this period found it difficult to deal with public health issues. The most common valid response was the lack of understanding about the causes of disease, usually in relation to the spread of plague. Other frequently cited reasons which were given marks included the rising population in towns which put pressure on waste management and water supply, and government measures being unpopular and subsequently ignored in relation to the Gin Craze. Many responses offered at least one full explanation, supported by precise evidence/examples, and they were rewarded at Levels 4 and 5.

However, many candidates were unable to progress beyond Level 2 or Level 3 because they lacked specific detail to support their response and/or were unable to explain why their reason **meant it was difficult** for governments **to deal with the problem**.

There were also many responses which veered away from the question's focus, instead addressing a different question, i.e. why authorities took little or no action, instead of answering the question of why they found it difficult to deal with problems. These were not given marks.

There were a fair number of responses to this question which lapsed into discussing the response of ordinary people to plague, such as prayer and carrying herbs and posies, instead of focusing on the actions of local or national governments. These were marked at Level 1 only.

Finally, a minority of candidates provided responses rooted in the wrong time period (usually medieval or industrial), discussing things such as flagellation, industrialisation and cholera. These were not given marks.



## Exemplar 1

A big reason why governments struggled to deal with public health was due to a lack of knowledge when it comes to how disease was spread. During the early modern period it was still common for people to believe in the miasma theory, which is the belief that disease is spread through 'bad' air from cracks in the ground. This lack of knowledge caused government response to the great plague (the big disease at the time) to be unsuccessful as the government tried doing things to counter miasma.

This response is organised around the reason identified at the beginning of the response, that there was 'a lack of knowledge when it came to how disease was spread'. It then uses precise evidence to explain that the government responses to the plague were not effective as they were based around the incorrect miasma theory. This was given the bottom of Level 4. To be given the top of Level 4 the candidate could have provided further precise evidence about what measurement the government took, such as burning barrels of tar to remove the bad air.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates need to be comfortable with the four different time periods on the specification and be able to differentiate between them. It is also really important that candidates remain focused on answering the precise question in front of them.

## Question 4\*

4\* How far were improvements in public health in the 1800s brought about by improved scientific understanding about disease?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

This question focused on public health improvement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the reasons for it. Candidates were asked to consider not only how scientific understanding about disease was responsible for improvement, but also other factors. The vast majority of candidates had clearly studied the period and were familiar with the terms referred to by the question.

The point most often raised by candidates to support the statement was the development of Pasteur's Germ Theory (which they most frequently linked to the 1875 Public Health Act). Scientific-style research which furthered understanding about the link between living conditions and disease (such as Chadwick's detailed investigations resulting in the 1848 Public Health Act) was seen less often. To challenge the statement, candidates put forward reasons such as:

- the 'Great Stink' of 1858 and advances in engineering/improved industrial machinery, leading to the development of London's sewers by Joseph Bazalgette
- the extension of franchise to some working class men in 1867 and the role of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, both of which also influenced the passage of the 1875 Public Health Act
- the abandonment of a *laissez-faire* attitude and an acceptance of an increased role for national government in public health, reflected in both Public Health Acts
- the role of 'civic' pride, resulting in many local improvements to health
- the role of individuals (e.g. Chadwick/Disraeli/Joseph Chamberlain).

Responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

However, although most candidates were able to describe accurately a factor or factors, far fewer were able to reach the higher levels by successfully identifying a tangible improvement in public health which occurred as a result. To reach Level 3 and above, although detail was not required about the resulting change or improvement (and the same improvement could be cited more than once), candidates did at least need to be able to identify one in order to engage fully with the question. Many responses did not do this.

Similarly, responses describing public health improvements themselves without explaining why they were brought about were also not fully addressing the question and were marked at Level 2 only.

There were also a significant number of responses which simply described the work of John Snow or went on to argue that his investigations into the causes of cholera had an impact on the government's decisions to bring about public health reform. This was not valid and could not be marked above Level 2.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates tended to make accurate but vague assertions about scientific advancement in this period, which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. These responses were generally placed in Level 1. A small minority of candidates wrote about the wrong time period – usually plague in the medieval or early modern period. These were not given marks.

## Question 5\*

5\* 'Responses to epidemics between 1900 and 2000 were **not** effective.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

On the whole, candidates scored more highly on this question than on Question 4.

The vast majority of candidates understood what the question was asking and had studied the two twentieth century epidemics of Spanish Flu and HIV/AIDS. Although not strictly necessary, most discussed both in their responses as it gave them a wider scope of material from which to draw.

The question was asking about responses and their impacts. A wide range of points were given marks by examiners, including:

- effective responses to the Spanish Flu, such as: the government public information film featuring 'Dr Wise' and more localised responses, including the work of Dr. Niven in Manchester and Dr. Hood in London
- less effective responses to Spanish Flu, such as, the lack of impact of the government film, given its lateness and lack of copies available
- less effective responses to HIV/AIDS, including: the panicked and prejudiced media response, which provoked over-reaction; the responses of firefighters, some Churchgoers and parents of school children; and government instructions to hospitals to detail AIDS patients
- later, more effective responses to HIV/AIDS, such as: successful public information campaigns; the responses of charities; and the impact of figures such as Princess Diana in helping to stamp out misconceptions about the disease's spread.

At Level 3 and above, candidates were given marks for demonstrating specific historical evidence to support their points and using this evidence to address the question about effectiveness. Again, responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

Candidates whose points were at Level 2 usually had a lack of precise detail and/or did not use their knowledge about responses to explain why it was effective or ineffective.

There were a number of attempts to discuss the response to the Spanish Flu outside of its proper historical context, with many responses incorrectly asserting 21<sup>st</sup> century/Covid-type responses to this question, such as central government mandates on isolation, wearing face masks and shutting schools. These were not given marks. Similarly, candidates who based their response on what the government 'should have done' rather than analysing the responses that did happen, rarely moved out of Level 1.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates who have precise historical evidence at their fingertips will reach the high levels on essay questions, but they must also be able to deploy that evidence effectively, explaining how it answers the question asked.

## Section B overview

Candidates had certainly learnt about Elizabeth's policies towards the Catholics and there were many successful responses which effectively discussed whether her treatment of them was 'remarkably tolerant'. Neither Question 8 nor Question 9 stood out as being the more popular choice. However, Question 9 was less successfully answered with too many generalisations which could be applicable to most periods. Question 7 proved to be very accessible to the majority of candidates with many attaining Level 3 and being able to show how the interpretations differed in portraying the queen. However, candidates are still struggling to attain Level 4 which requires them to consider the purpose/audience of the interpretations. Again, this year Questions 6 (a) and 6 (b) proved to be the most problematic, with candidates unsure how to approach them.

### Question 6 (a)

- 6 (a)** In **Interpretation A**, the author A N Wilson depicts the Elizabethan period as an important age of exploration.

Identify and explain **one** way in which he does this.

**[3]**

Good responses indicated that candidates had developed a technique for answering this type of question. They ensured that they identified a relevant and appropriate way in which the author depicts the Elizabethan period as an important age of exploration, explained it and elaborated on their point. A variety of approaches can be used including starting with a specific feature and then making two points of development about it. Alternatively, some began with a more general point, providing an example and stating how it depicted the Elizabethan period as an important age of exploration. It is also appropriate to state that the source refers to different achievements, refer to them and then finish the response by stating the impression that is given.

Candidates who were less successful tended to select a quotation from the source and then proceeded to paraphrase it. Some just selected three quotations. Often their selection from the source was not one that they could easily comment on. It was clear that many were struggling with this question.

## Question 6 (b)

- (b) If you were asked to do further research on **one** aspect of **Interpretation A**, what would you choose to investigate?

Explain how this would help us to analyse and understand England's connections with the wider world between 1580 and 1603. [5]

Candidates who did well on this question gave thought to their area of research and selected an appropriate aspect that they could frame their investigation around ensuring that they thought about the second order concept that they were going to use. There were a range of possibilities including investigating the motives of explorers like Raleigh, considering the impact of English exploration on England or other areas of the globe and examining the reasons why the Elizabethans were successful in trade. Some candidates used an impression they had gained from the source to develop their line of enquiry such as the positive impact that exploration had on England's wealth and power. They then explained that they would investigate how far this would affect Elizabethan society. Alternatively, some chose to investigate the impact that the explorers had on the 'New World'. To attain Level 3, candidates, need to provide a clear explanation of how the enquiry would increase understanding of England's connections with the wider world between 1580 and 1603.

Less successful candidates often selected an investigation that was not relevant or took them beyond the period in the question. For example, some candidates chose to investigate how American domination of the world came about. Others merely stated that they would learn about English sea power. Candidates need to understand that their choice of investigation is crucial to them being able to answer the question successfully. Stating that they wish to find out extra information merely confines them to Level 1. However, fewer candidates selected investigations that bore no resemblance to the topic in the question than in previous years.

### Assessment for learning



This question does not require candidates to answer their own enquiry, nor does it require them to use their contextual knowledge to develop the enquiry. It is expected that candidates will be familiar with the concept of historical enquiry, but there is no requirement that they use particular conceptual words or phrases – indeed it may not work effectively in this question to simply name those words. Instead, focus on framing a genuine historical question as this is more likely to be well-rewarded.

## Exemplar 2

If I was going to do further research on one aspect of Interpretation A, I would ~~see~~ research what parts of the world ~~I~~ did Britain hold in Imperial Power. This would help to understand England's connections with the wider world, because we ~~would~~ would be able to find out about who England ~~traded~~ traded with and who had power ~~of~~ over and who England traded with, which would help to understand the changes to the lifestyles of British people ~~one~~ once exploration of the wider ~~world~~ world had started. For example, we ~~we~~ could find out ~~on~~ what different food people ate and what new spices they used.

This response begins with a Level 1 investigation based around finding out more about what parts of the world England held power over. It reaches Level 2 when it develops this into wanting to know what changes in lifestyle of the British people there were, as this is a valid line of enquiry based around the second order concept of consequence. It is then developed more precisely by wanting to know what different food they were introduced to as a result of exploration.

## Question 7

7 Interpretations B and C both focus on the power of Elizabeth.

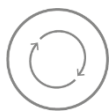
How far do they differ and what might explain any differences?

[12]

Many candidates were able to attain Level 3 on this question as they identified differences in the way that Elizabeth was portrayed and selected relevant sections of the interpretations to support their responses. For Interpretation B most focused on her power and success while on Interpretation C her weakness and failure were referred to. Candidates also compared the interpretations on her decision not to marry and the effect on her power. A minority of candidates were able to attain Level 4 usually by focusing on Interpretation B and considering that it was published on a feminist website which is aiming to encourage women to become powerful female role models so will emphasise Elizabeth's power and achievements. Only a small number of candidates managed to successfully consider the historical perspective of Interpretation C, comparing her with the other Tudors and concluding she did fail as she did not continue the dynasty.

Some candidates merely compared the provenance of the sources in a simplistic way or discussed that one was more trustworthy than the other because of its provenance. They often managed to comment on the fact that Interpretation B aimed to promote women's stories and roles but were unable to take it a step further to consider purpose in relation to the question.

## Assessment for learning



In preparation for future examination series, centres should focus students on developing the skill of identifying the 'core message' of an interpretation and practising the selection of short quotes to illustrate that message. To achieve Level 4 for 'purpose', a consideration of what is specific to the interpretation is needed, along with avoiding generic, stock comments relating to 'bias'.

### Exemplar 3

Interpretation B chooses to focus on uplifting
Queen Elizabeth I through describing her as
'successful' and 'strong.' This source depicts
Elizabeth I as a great ruler who held

great control in her court, despite the gender inequality at the time. ~~On~~ Whereas, interpretation C chooses to demote Elizabeth I ~~to~~ by calling her accomplishments 'overstated' and describing her role as monarch as filled with 'instability' as because she struggled with Catholic opposition and marriage candidates, therefore ending the Tudor Monarchy with her when she died.

The article ~~from interpretation B~~ where interpretation B is published is one used to promote women's stories, telling us why Elizabeth I was so heavily praised within the source as it was used to uplift women today in believing that we are strong and formidable, promoting the feminist agenda. Interpretation C differs as the extract was taken from an interview by a historian who focuses on the Tudors, ultimately showing that this information would have to be accurate due to Whitelock's extended knowledge of the British Monarchy, as this would be used to educate others rather than as something empowering.

This response is given Level 3 towards the end of the first paragraph where it summarises the portrayal of Elizabeth's power in Interpretation C as compared to Interpretation B, using support from both. It is then given Level 4 for explaining the difference using the purpose of Interpretation B.



## Question 8\*

8\* According to the website 'elizabethi.org', Elizabeth I was 'remarkably tolerant'.

How far do you agree with this view of Elizabeth I's **treatment of Catholics** between 1580 and 1603?

[20]

It was pleasing to see that so many students were focused on the question and were well aware of the format that their response should take. Good balanced responses considered different aspects of Elizabeth's treatment of the Catholics. Many included the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy which, although earlier in her reign, could be included as they were still relevant in 1580. Her treatment of Recusants was often used as an example of her tolerance considering that she could have taken more extreme action against the Catholics. Many demonstrated a sound knowledge of the Act of Persuasions 1581, the Recusancy Act 1587 and the Act against Recusants 1593. Equally, these could be used to show her lack of tolerance with higher fines and greater restrictions rather than her taking more severe action against the Catholics. The Act against Priests 1585 was also widely known and again some argued that the low numbers that were executed showed her tolerance while others argued that this was an extreme measure. Similarly, the fact that Elizabeth had kept Mary Queen of Scots alive for so long was deemed to be tolerant by some while others focused on her execution as intolerant.

Less successful responses tended to be those where candidates were less secure in their knowledge and tried to make some valid points which they could not substantiate. In many cases one or two well-focused explanations would have served them more successfully than trying to stretch their limited knowledge to make four separate points. However, even responses that did not attain high marks showed an understanding of the topic and were able to make some valid points.

### Assessment for learning



- Candidates should focus on the quality of their explanations and try to organise their responses.
- Continue to emphasise the importance of focusing on the question and remind candidates that a one-sided response is limited to Level 4.

## Question 9\*

9\* In his 2016 article 'The dark side of Elizabethan England', historian James Sharpe argues that life for the poor was dominated by 'violence, vagrancy and crushing hunger'.

How far do you agree with this view of **daily life for the poor** in Elizabethan society? [20]

Good responses demonstrated an understanding of the period and the problems it experienced. Such responses focused on explaining the reasons why vagrancy became so serious and the severe punishments for it. They also referred to the population increase and the inability of England's agriculture to meet the rising demand for food. Some candidates referred to inflation as well as the poor harvests in 1586 and in 1595, 1596 and 1597 which caused 'crushing hunger' often leading to violence. However, they also focused on the attempts to alleviate it and were able to deploy their knowledge of the Poor Law of 1601 to explain how that offered hope to some while adopting a different attitude towards the 'undeserving poor'. Another argument against the view focused on the entertainment that was available to the poor, especially the theatre.

Less successful candidates invariably lacked the knowledge to answer the question. Many responses remained at Level 1 as invariably knowledge of the topic was less successful. This question was clearly the popular choice for those who thought they could get by with generalised responses on life for the poor. Too many responses lacked the specific knowledge required to provide an explained response. Some candidates were able to identify points on the Poor Law in their responses but were unable to develop these to consider the changes that they made to the lives of the poor.

### Assessment for learning



- Candidates need to make sure that they place their responses within the context of the period.

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