

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

**HISTORY A
(EXPLAINING THE
MODERN WORLD)**

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/07 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 7 series overview

This was the third full examination of Specification A Paper 1. In the three other years of examination since 2018, there was either covid disruption resulting in low numbers, or the need to make changes to the paper to allow for student absences. Last year that resulted in sections A and B being examined separately. Centres should be congratulated for how well they have managed this disruption, and how well they are preparing their candidates for the interpretations section of the paper, and indeed the whole paper. This year candidates performed particularly well in the interpretations section, and centres have clearly devoted time and energy in helping candidates understand the processes historians go through in coming to conclusions about the past. It was also notable how much knowledge and understanding candidates have of international relations to support this study, especially notable in responses to Questions 1 and 2. This year also sees some improvement in how candidates handle historical sources.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used a wide range of contextual knowledge examples across all questions • were able to explain contextual knowledge examples about the question asked • were able to analyse the content and context of historical interpretations • were able to compare their own historical knowledge to the interpretations provided • were able to draw complex inferences from the sources provided • were able to draw judgements from the sources provided to assess their historical utility • were able to provide balanced arguments to essay questions • were able to provide summary and comparative conclusion arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used generalised rather than specific historical examples • left identified factors undeveloped or did not relate them directly to the question asked • took historical sources at face value rather than placing them in context • were descriptive rather than analytical of sources and interpretations • listed historical knowledge regarding interpretations rather than analysis of them in context • spoke about historical issues outside of the time periods covered in the questions asked • did not provide explanations relating to the question asked or conclusive paragraphs to compare arguments.

Section A overview

To perform well on this International Relations period study candidates need to show understanding of the unfolding narrative of developments and issues between 1918–c.1975. This includes the clash of ideologies between the East and West, and how commentators and historians have viewed these differently. These skills focus on Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 4, showing knowledge, understanding and the ability to explain, as well as analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations.

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this part of the course. The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted to respond to all the questions, and many wrote with excellent knowledge and understanding. The range and quality of responses was impressive, in the questions on the Historical Controversies, as well as the overview questions 1 and 2.

Question 1

- 1 Outline how the USA took action against the spread of communism around the world in the 1960s.

[5]

Most candidates found this question very accessible and were able to reach Levels 2 and 3 often at 3 or 4 marks. To achieve Level 2 an example of US action needed to be identified with a little detail; more development resulted in full marks within the Level. As the question asked about worldwide actions, the highest level was for those candidates who outlined (described) US action in two arenas, for example Cuba and Vietnam, or Vietnam and Berlin. responses showed that candidates were secure in their knowledge and had good mastery of not only US actions but the contexts of involvement, be it trying to overthrow Castro, defuse a missile crisis, or actions in Vietnam.

A significant number of candidates did not reach above Level 1 because they did not pay close attention to the timeframe given, i.e. the 1960s. As a result they explained US actions in offering Marshall Aid. This could receive no credit, unless the idea of aiding countries to stop the spread of communism was somehow separated from Marshall Aid itself, or they mentioned the Truman doctrine. Likewise, some talked about containment or the domino theory in the abstract. These ideas needed to be securely linked to what happened and where, in order to achieve Level 2.

Highly Recommended

Students should pay close attention to the **timeframe** given in the question, in this case the 1960s. They should also look for **trigger words**. In this case we were looking for US actions, not a general account of reactions to the wars back in the US.

Question 2

2 Explain why there was tension in Europe in the 1930s.

[10]

While many candidates were able to access Levels 4 and 5 on this question, by explaining the link between actions in Europe in the 1930s and emergent tensions, there were a larger number of candidates who achieved a Level 3 by identifying and explaining such events and actions, without the direct link to tensions. Candidate knowledge of a wide range of events in the 1930s such as those leading to the collapse of the League of Nations and the expansionist actions of Hitler and Mussolini was of a high standard. Many responses showed that candidates had a complex contextual knowledge and understanding of the interwar period and were able to draw synoptic links between the issues of World War One and the potential for another war in Europe at the time. Nearly all candidates were able to identify key issues such as the failure of the League of Nations and the emergence of dictators. Many candidates who did well on this question and attained Level 4 and above were those who focused on the tension caused by the Rhineland (France), Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia), appeasement (Britain and France) and the Nazi-Soviet pact (most of Europe).

A significant number of candidates did not reach Level 2 and above as they were utilising examples that were either outside the time period, such as the Corfu and Bulgaria Crises of the 1920s or outside the area of Europe, focusing on Manchuria or Abyssinia without being able to directly relate this to the tension in Europe. Without this link to the question, these responses were largely limited to Level 1. Many candidates were limited to Level 3 as they were unable to link their accurate explanation of European issues in the 1930s to specific emergent tensions. To achieve Levels 4 and 5, candidates needed to tie these tensions to a specific nation or issue impacted by the events outlined.

Exemplar 1

One reason why there was tension in Europe in the 1930s was the Wall Street crash and the great depression. Following the Wall Street crash in 1929, many European countries suffered economically throughout the 1930s. Such as Germany. This was ^{partially} because, in Germany's case, they had been receiving money from the USA (Dawes plan 1924), which had helped them recover from WW1 but the great depression ended that, and plunged the country into an economic crisis. This created tension because it obliterated the spirit of ~~internationalism~~ internationalism that had been present in the 1920s - countries no longer felt they could afford to help others, so acted selfishly, thus increasing tensions and reducing goodwill between them.

Another reason why there was tension in Europe in the 1930s was the growing power of dictators. After coming to power in 1933, Hitler began to build up the German military, despite it being forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. This created tension as many in France and Britain began to suspect Hitler was preparing for another war. Tensions continued to rise as Hitler claimed territory - he annexed Austria into Germany in 1938, and claimed a strip of land called the Sudetenland that same year. This

✓ created tension in Europe began because leaders began to fear that a Second World War was approaching which would have been catastrophic for everyone.

This response shows a very effective, yet concise, approach to the question. The candidate can effectively explain two different incidences where events culminated in tensions in Europe and is then able to describe and explain the events and then link them directly to nations or events directly impacted by these increasing tensions. It received 10 marks from a possible 10.

Question 3

3 Study Interpretation A.

Do you think this interpretation is a fair comment on the British policy of appeasement? Use other interpretations of the events of 1937–1939 and your knowledge to support your answer.

[25]

This question was answered significantly better this year than similar ones in the past. This might be explained by the fact that candidates found the given interpretation clear, obviously part of the Popular Majority school. Another reason might be that now the approach has become established, centres have become much more familiar with what is expected of candidates, which has focused the teaching and learning of these sections. This is significantly helping candidates to achieve high marks.

Generally, there is an excellent level of knowledge of the historiography of the issue of appeasement. Many candidates are extremely well informed about the various ideas and approaches which historians have brought to the subject. They also overwhelmingly began by offering a summary of the interpretation and its view, and then as their response progressed, referred to specifics of the given interpretations to show a clear comparison with others they explained. This is the ideal approach and makes clear that they are evaluating the given interpretation with other views.

This year, most candidates achieved Level 3 or above, and made effective use of other views. Most started by setting the interpretation in the context of the Popular Majority view, and then went on to compare it to at least two other views. Far fewer confused the interpretations than in the past, and many could describe chapter and verse the various views. The skill was to be very accurate in what they said, offer development about each view, and link effectively to The Sketch's content. Level 4 was given if one other interpretation was well used and linked; Level 5 was given if this was done well for at least two interpretations. A conclusion was not necessary.

The reason some candidates achieved Level 3 was because they dealt mainly with the background to the interpretation accurately, in other words, the context of 1938 to early 1939. Many had excellent knowledge of this. Alternatively, or in addition, at Level 3, they named other schools or time periods of historians who would think the view was fair/unfair correctly, but their accurate knowledge beyond this was patchy. Far fewer candidates achieved Level 2 or Level 1 than in previous years, and those that did misunderstood the different views of historians.

A sizeable minority of candidates were slightly confused with the approach needed for this question compared to Question 4. This question does not require examination of why other historians think what they do. This question is about what others would think of the given interpretation- would they see it as fair, not why they think what they do. This could save candidates some time, as going into the backgrounds of each interpretation uses valuable examination minutes. That said, in doing so, some candidates deepened their explanation of what the historians believed, especially in the case of revisionist and post-revisionist historians.

Exemplar 2

An interpretation that would disagree with the statement, would be the popular political view, written in 1939-48. A group of ~~3~~ ~~was~~ three journalists who named themselves Cato had created an article named the guilty men. In this they were criticising Chamberlain and ~~the~~ appeasement calling it immoral, foolish and cowardly response. They would've thought this to be because Hitler did invade Czechoslovakia and WW2 had still started. Appeasement had also made Britain look weak as they ~~was~~ were letting Hitler get ~~a~~ beat them. Some people thought it made the British leaders just as bad as the dictators.

This response shows a very effective and successful attempt to link another view to Interpretation A to judge fairness. Having already shown a clear understanding of the view offered by The Daily Sketch, the candidate achieves a very solid Level 4 with this paragraph, before repeating it again to achieve Level 5 and 23 marks overall.

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, this question was notably improved from previous years with the development of candidate awareness of interpretations in a wider contextual understanding of the reasons for the outbreak of the Cold War. Candidates were largely very well informed of the key interpretations and were able to outline key thinkers within each interpretation area and develop reasoning as to why the interpretation came about and the key historical context behind the thinkers in each area. This meant that most candidates were able to reach Levels 3, 4 and 5 as they were able to identify and explain the basis of at least one historical interpretation in direct comparison with the argument put forward in the interpretation.

The interpretation lent itself well to analysis as it was written by Gaddis and was recognisable as a post-revisionist standpoint. This naturally lent itself to candidates identifying elements of it that could be compared with the US Orthodox and US revisionist views. Some higher level responses were able to develop explanation of the nuanced opinions of Gaddis as he later changed his view to develop a New Cold War standpoint. There were many candidates able to reach Level 5 and full marks for this question as the depth of understanding of the schools of thought and the time period in which they were produced was comprehensive across a large number of candidates.

A sizeable number of candidates were limited by their approach to the question and only reached Level 2 because, while they were able to accurately describe and explain the differing interpretations in comparison with Gaddis, they had not accurately analysed what he said or provided any reference to it in comparison. Candidates needed to make sure that they made direct comparison with the interpretation to achieve Levels 3, 4 and 5. Higher level responses often referred to a quotation from Interpretation B that other interpretations would agree or disagree with early in the paragraph, so that it was clear to the examiner that they were making a direct comparison.

A small number of candidates were confused by the time period covered in the question and wrote about events or interpretations that should have been used in reference to Question 3. Most candidates, however, had their knowledge and interpretations rooted in the Cold War and were able to use these to make effective arguments.

Section B overview

To perform well on the non-British Depth Study, candidates needed to display an understanding of the relationship between the people and the state, and how key political, social and economic developments affected the people. Candidates' learning is examined through questions asking for knowledge and understanding and the ability to explain and analyse, as well as the use and evaluation of historical sources. These skills focus on Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3.

Candidates had a clear understanding of the period and were able to distinguish between knowledge needed for Section A and for Section B.

Question 5

- 5 Describe **one** example of an action taken by a US President to support African Americans in the campaign for civil rights between 1954 and 1964. [2]

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates who could identify a president that served during the period in question, either Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson and their actions in favour of the African American campaign for civil rights. There was relatively limited scope in the possibilities offered, but candidates were able to discuss positive presidential intervention in protests, such as the assistance offered to students at Little Rock in 1957.

A small number of candidates were confused and offered presidents outside of the relevant time period, mentioning events relating to the New Deal or earlier periods of civil rights protest, such as the 1920s.

Some candidates were able to outline an accurate event related to a president, but not identify the correct president. Candidates were given a single mark for this type of response. However, those candidates only naming a relevant president were not given a mark as the question focused on the 'action' rather than the president.

Exemplar 3

One action of US presidents to support the civil rights movement was President Eisenhower escorting students into a school in Little Rock. The local councillor Forback^{black} students from going to an all white school. He set state troops to prevent them from entering, Eisenhower sent Federal troops to escort the students past the troops.

Exemplar 3 shows a full mark response for this question. The candidate states the action President Eisenhower took and expands on the events at Little Rock High School to achieve 2 marks.

Question 6

6 Explain the impact of the feminist movement between c.1964 and 1974.

[10]

Similarly to Question 2, students were required to draw a link between the actions of the feminist movement between c.1964 and 1974 and the impact of this movement. Many candidates were able to reach Level 5 by identifying, explaining and developing two separate events/incidents and the impact these had on changing the lives of American women in the period.

The question allowed candidates to show their effective knowledge of a range of examples relating to equal pay legislation, emergent legalisation of abortion or the wider actions of feminist movements to give liberation to women of the period. Many responses showed that candidates clearly understood the actions of groups such as NOW in the period.

A smaller number of candidates were able to link these events to the impact they made. Some candidates, however, were able to make effective synoptic links on the wider liberation of women later in this period. Few candidates achieved Level 5 on this question as many took only one example to analyse the impact effectively. Similarly, many candidates were limited to Level 3 by their effective description of events without linking this to impact.

Question 7 (a)

7 (a) Study **Source A**.

Why was this film broadcast in 1948?

[5]

Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions

In this question candidates were required to outline the purpose of the source, by outlining the intention of why it was broadcast in 1948, and support this with evidence from the source and contextual knowledge relating to the period. This question was well answered with many candidates able to fulfil all three criteria required in order to reach Level 3. Candidates who reached this level were able to correctly identify that this source was produced at the time of the Red Scare, when fear of communism was at its height. Similarly, they were able to supplement this with accurate source extracts including reference to the benefits of capitalism as opposed to the negatives of 'other systems', by which they were able to infer that this referred to communism.

While all candidates were not able to accurately identify the purpose, most candidates reached the message of the source; namely that the source promoted the virtues of capitalism showing it as superior to communism. A smaller number of candidates supported this with source content alone and were limited to Level 2. Only a very small number of candidates were unable to identify the message of the source. Level 1 responses commonly consisted of basic source inferences or an accurate message without any context or source content.

Question 7 (b)

(b) Study **Source B**.

Explain how this source is useful to a historian studying the Red Scare.

[5]

Most candidates were able to correctly infer that the source was referring to the ideological struggle between communism and capitalism and there were many effective inferences from the use of Captain America as representing American strength to fight off communism. Many candidates were therefore able to reach Level 2 as they were able to make accurate inferences based on the source and identify that it was a source of propaganda. A smaller, but not insignificant number of candidates were able to reach Level 3 by developing their inference into a more complex one by provenance, source content or wider context. Commonly, reference to McCarthyism, present at the time of the cartoon, was used to highlight the meaning of the source.

Several candidates were limited to Level 1 in this question as they were unable to argue whether the source was useful and focused on describing the content of the source. Most students who were able to provide an accurate inference for the source were able to effectively draw this to its utility and effectively respond to the question.

Question 8*

8* 'In the struggle for civil rights for African Americans between 1954 and 1964, Supreme Court victories achieved more than protests.'

How far do you agree?

[18]

Question 8 focuses on AO1 and 2 and requires candidates to use their historical knowledge and understanding to write an extended answer (an essay) in response to a statement prompt. The essay should include at least three explained examples covering both sides of the argument which then offers potential for the highest mark band.

This question saw a wide variety of responses. Most candidates were able to identify both Supreme Court victories and protests from the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1964. Many candidates were able to develop some or all of these into explained factors, which allowed them to access Levels 3 to 5 of the mark scheme. The best responses accurately examined numerous examples for both sides of the argument.

Commonly candidates analysed the Brown versus Board of Education case and Montgomery Bus Boycott as Supreme Court cases that achieved positive results for the civil rights movement. On the other side of the argument, the Washington and Birmingham marches were the focus and their links to anti-segregation legislation. The period was well understood by candidates and a range of examples were used. The best responses were able to supplement the arguments put forward with a conclusion that compared the two sides of the argument. These responses were given 17-18 marks.

Some responses were unable to effectively explain factors but were given a mark within Level 2 as they were able to provide multiple accurate identification of events and factors applying to the question. These responses commonly focused on the individuals involved in the events, such as Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and were able to describe the events in some detail but did not address the impact of these events on the wider movement. A small number of responses showed a generalised understanding of the topic but were unable to develop a specific identification that was tied to the period. These responses were given a mark within Level 1.

Misconception



There were several candidates that spoke about the Selma March, which occurred outside the period of the question.

Similarly there was some confusion in candidate responses over the role of the Supreme Court, which some felt was responsible for passing legislation such as the Civil Rights Act.

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