

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

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

**J410**

For first teaching in 2016

**J410/02 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 2 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 did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used a wide range of contextual knowledge examples across all questions</li> <li>• were able to explain contextual knowledge examples about the question being asked</li> <li>• were able to analyse the content and context of historical interpretations</li> <li>• were able to compare their own historical knowledge to the interpretations provided</li> <li>• were able to draw complex inferences from the sources provided</li> <li>• were able to draw judgements from the sources provided to assess their historical utility</li> <li>• were able to provide balanced arguments to essay questions</li> <li>• were able to provide summary and comparative conclusion arguments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used generalised rather than specific historical examples</li> <li>• left identified factors undeveloped or did not relate them directly to the question asked</li> <li>• took historical sources at face value rather than placing them in context</li> <li>• were descriptive rather than analytical of sources and interpretations</li> <li>• listed historical knowledge regarding interpretations rather than analysing them in context</li> <li>• spoke about historical issues outside of the time periods covered in the questions asked</li> <li>• did not provide explanations relating to the question asked or conclusive paragraphs to compare arguments.</li> </ul>

## 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. Answers 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 many 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. Most 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 <sup>partially</sup> 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 ~~then~~ claimed a strip of land ~~in~~ called the Sudetenland that same year. This

I 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 this, 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 of thought. 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 compared 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 centres 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 still 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~~ ~~just~~ 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 L4 with this paragraph, before repeating it again to achieve Level 5, 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 development of candidate awareness of interpretations in a wide 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 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' responses spanned a wide range of ability, and it was clear that most candidates had been well prepared for the examination and demonstrated an understanding of the 'broad sweep' of this specification. Marks were given across the entire mark range for all five questions, although again, sadly, some candidates performed less well on the questions requiring use of sources. Question 6 also proved more challenging at the higher levels.

### Question 5

5 Describe **one** strength of the Weimar Republic in the period 1925–1928.

[2]

This very straightforward question was well answered. Candidates needed to identify one 'strength' from a wide range and develop it with specific knowledge. Many focused on the recovery of economic stability after the hyperinflation crisis or the foreign policy successes at the time. Others drew on excellent knowledge of cultural developments and post war freedoms. Some described or explained the political stability achieved. Most candidates achieved two marks.

#### Exemplar 3

The Weimar republic were successful in rebuilding Germany's economy after WWI. By 1928, Germany's industrial production levels reached equal to pre war standards, showing that it was successfully rebuilding the economy in ~~the~~ only 10 years.

This response identifies one strength of the Weimar Republic, rebuilding the economy. It then develops this by identifying the industrial production levels. This response achieved 2 marks.

## Question 6

6 Explain the impact of de-Nazification on Germany in the period 1945–1950.

[10]

Question 6 focuses on AO1 and 2, where candidates use their knowledge and understanding to explain, an impact of a feature of the period.

This question was challenging for many candidates. It is complex, as there is the East and West of Germany that could be considered. Furthermore, candidates often struggle with impact questions more than those that address causation. The guidance below aims to help centres address these issues.

To achieve Levels 4 and 5 candidates needed to identify an impact, say something about it and explain why it was important, what was involved, or what changed from before. Most candidates could achieve Level 3, which involved identifying an impact, with some relevant description around it. Many focused on the removal of Nazi insignia, swastika, eagle or flags. It was interesting that few commented that it would need to be physically removed from many buildings by stone masons, or that it led to extensive street renaming. Some candidates described the Allied and Soviet policies of tribunals, questionnaires, arrests and trials, and showed impressive mastery of the statistics. Many referred to changes to education, the rewriting of the curriculum, the sacking of teachers and abolition of the Hitler Youth.

However, a few took this further, either by explaining why any of these things would be needed or the aims of the policy. These comments could easily move a basic identification to an explanation of impact, especially if the focus was on the need to reset the Nazi-mindset of Germans away from racist, antisemitic, and eugenic leanings. A few conveyed the confusion and difficulty this must have presented for Germans, given the brainwashing they had been exposed to. A significant minority commented on the fact that ultimately both East and West Germany abandoned the policy to concentrate on economic recovery.

Many candidates focused on the process of de-nazification rather than its impact. This left some in Level 2. The guidance below should help, as well as reiterating to candidates that they need to respond to the question, rather than simply telling us all they know about a topic. Encourage candidates to highlight the trigger word in a question to help them focus on what they need to do.

A sizeable minority of candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about the 'economic miracle' in the West, or the Stasi in the East. These responses could not be credited as neither was directly relevant to de-Nazification.

### Assessment for learning



**Questions about impact** or consequence often present particular problems for candidates as they have some knowledge but fail to develop it sufficiently to gain the higher levels of 4 and 5. Centres would be well advised to practice this type of question in class, especially focusing on the impact rather than the process which leads to the impact.

One approach that can be effective is to consider and articulate what the situation was like before the impact happened and integrate this into the response to develop a point. Another approach is to make sure the explanation has three stages: the identification, more specific detail about it, and how it represents a change from the past or was important.

## Question 7 (a)

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

Explain why this source was published in Germany at this time.

[5]

Both parts of Question 7 focus on AO3 analysis, evaluation and use of historical sources. Candidates are expected to interpret a historical source, in this case a poster, and explain its purpose or why it was published at this time, using support from the source and contextual knowledge.

This was an interesting source as after 1936 it was virtually compulsory to enrol in the Hitler Youth if one wanted to access sporting facilities, and by 1939 it was made compulsory for all. The poster was clear and vivid and most candidates responded well, immediately identifying it as an encouragement to take part. Few were confused. Most were then able to use features in the source to support this statement, either the Aryan-ness of the child, or the benevolence of Hitler himself.

However, achieving Level 3 by using contextual knowledge was more challenging for some, as the context was the late 1930s, and so knowledge needed to be securely linked to the state of the Hitler Youth then, rather than general comments about the activities in it. Reassuringly, many candidates understood that it was published at a time when war was looming and so this was why it would be useful to have teenagers lined up with some basic military skills. Many knew that the Hitler Youth became compulsory at this time, and successfully linked this to the poster. Others commented on the fact that a rise in youth opposition groups may have provoked this appeal to young people and their parents. Fewer noted that this was a time when initial enthusiasm for the Hitler Youth was wearing off as young and enthusiastic leaders were conscripted away and so taking part seemed almost boring. Any of these explanations would have been credited, and the quality influenced the placement in the level.

Notably, a few candidates had excellent grasp of the reasons why the poster was produced but did not explain any features in it. Level 2 was accessed with reference to either explanation of source or contextual knowledge, Level 3 was both. Candidates disadvantage themselves if they fail to use anything from the source because they think it is obvious. This is something to be aware of when practising source questions.

Very few candidates ended with a Level 1 mark, as the vast majority understood the basic message or purpose of the poster. A minority just explained the poster, seeing it as information only: 'The source tells us about the Hitler Youth.....'. Centres should encourage candidates to avoid this approach, instead look for the 'message' or purpose.

## Question 7 (b)

### (b) Study **Source B**.

Explain how this source is useful to a historian studying Nazi Germany.

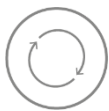
[5]

Usefulness questions require candidates to focus on inferences, looking beyond the surface features of a source. This question was answered reasonably well, especially compared to source questions last year, with most candidates achieving Level 2 or 3. There was plenty of scope for a range of inferences to be drawn, from the nature of propaganda, how it was spread, its focus and what it revealed about German receptivity. Most candidates were able to make simple inferences from the source and picked out that the Nazis wanted people to stop buying from Jewish people or commented that it showed an antisemitic ideology. For this they were given Level 2. If they could support it from the source clearly and explain their point, they were given Level 3.

A few candidates used the context of the source to suggest that the Nazis were planning to rid Germany of Jewish people (Nuremberg Laws) or that Jewish people had 'undermined' Germany in the First World War. Fewer commented on the fact that it indicated that many Germans were actively ignoring antisemitic guidance; those that did were rewarded highly. Fewer still commented that the existence of guidance showed how the Nazis coordinated and spread their vicious attitudes.

Those who simply used the source as information were given Level 1, but there were fewer of these than in previous years.

### Assessment for learning



**Questions about usefulness** require candidates to see beyond what is written on the page and think about the nature of evidence. They should begin their response by focusing on what the source is useful for, probably using the words from the question to make sure they make this clear. They should concentrate on the content of the source, not necessarily their contextual knowledge, in their response. They will have used this knowledge to understand the source but need to draw mainly from the source to support their inference, which will see them placed in Level 3.

## Question 8

8\* 'Opposition within Germany to the Nazi regime increased during the Second World War.'

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 was answered well, despite it being the final question on the paper. Candidates are clearly managing their time carefully. Some candidates had good knowledge of opposition groups, such as the Edelweiss Pirates, the White Rose, or opposition from the church and army which all grew or appeared during wartime. Most could readily explain the lack of opposition because of the early victories in the war, Nazi propaganda and censorship and the terror state: Gestapo, informers, the SS and labour camps. These, more general, causes of lack of opposition were valid as an explanation, although candidates needed to make clear they were talking about 'during the war'. Many candidates were given Level 3 or above as they could identify an example of opposition or reason for lack of, explain what happened and how it was a threat or not. To get higher marks they needed multiple explained examples and at Level 5 a balanced argument.

That said some candidates' knowledge was quite patchy on the specifics of opposition during the war, and so they struggled to achieve a balanced response. Some talked in general about opposition from the church but could not pick out the name of Bishop Galen, or his specific actions in championing the anti-ethanasia cause, or the role of Bonhoeffer in setting up the Confessional church with Niemoller. Equally, most knew the name of the White Rose, but struggled to recall either what it did (beyond produce anti-Nazi leaflets), why it opposed the Nazis or any detail about the fate of Sophie and Hans Scholl. Furthermore, some confused the Swing Movement with the Edelweiss Pirates. Candidates did not have ready facts at their fingertips.

Similarly, because they were not secure in their knowledge, there were many speculative responses about the impact of bombing on opposition, the likely impact on morale of defeat edging closer in the war, and reaction to war dead and the loss of loved ones. However, these were often not given above Level 2 as they needed to be linked securely to specifics of opposition appearing, or a well explained reason about why it would still be difficult to expect visible opposition, despite these hardships. Hardships during war can lead to more support for a leader, not less.

Less successful responses tended not to be rooted in wartime, some even talking about de-Nazification, or opposition in other countries. Focusing clearly on key words in the question would help avoid this. However, there were fewer responses in Level 1 than in previous years.



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