

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

(EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD)

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/10 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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. 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 can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 10 overview

This was the second examination of Specification A Explaining the Modern World, Paper 2. It is a thematic paper that targets exclusively AO1 and AO2, and focuses on the relationship between war and society over a broad sweep of time, c.790 to c.2010.

To do well on this thematic paper candidates need to apply their knowledge and understanding to identify and explain the causes and impact of war on people and society. Successful candidates responded well to the challenges the paper presented and had a secure grasp of the chronology of conflict. Their grasp of the detail of many wars was excellent, particularly in the medieval period: large numbers of candidates were able to construct well-developed responses which focused on the questions set. It was especially pleasing that again the essay style of question 4 was not daunting, especially this year when it focused on change over time. Candidates who did well on this question approached it thematically and picked solid examples of change and continuity that demonstrated a very secure grasp of the content of the course. Responses to question 3 with its significance focus were weaker than question 4 and revealed that some candidates needed better knowledge of this war to access the higher levels. Question 2 was answered particularly well with much better focus on the question than in the paper's first year.

Overall candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and able to demonstrate the skills and understanding gained on the course.

Question 1

1 Describe **two** examples of conflict between Scotland and England in the period 1500 to 1800. [4]

The majority of candidates found this question very accessible and most were able to achieve at least two marks. Many different examples were acceptable, and an extra mark was given for supporting detail. Many focused on the Jacobite rebellions and demonstrated good knowledge of both attempts: most could explain the causes of the rebellions as well as key figures and events. Most also identified border warfare in the 1500s and again could explain the nature of the conflict as well as examples of rievers like the Elliots, who were involved. Fewer candidates focused on the conflicts between Henry VIII and the Scottish monarchy, or the role of the Scots in the second and third civil war, but when attempted this was done well. Less successful attempts tended to focus on religious conflicts in the Elizabethan period, mainly Mary Queen of Scots, or general attempts to identify religion as a cause for conflict between the two countries but with little development or accuracy. Some fell into the trap of talking about Edward I's wars, which were obviously outside the timeframe given.

It was very pleasing to see many candidates with good knowledge and understanding of this relatively new area of study.

Advice on answering Question 1

Encourage students to answer this question with specifics, for example using dates if relevant and mentioning important individuals or locations. Only two examples are needed; each should be supported with supporting specific details.

Question 2

2 Explain the impact of war on the English people in the medieval period.

[8]

This question was generally tackled very well and most students achieved four marks or more. They did this by providing an example of a specific impact, usually linked to a specific time/reign within the Middle Ages and then explaining it. For example, many candidates focused on the impact of the anarchy and the lawlessness and exploitation that resulted; others chose the Norman Conquest and the changes to religion and language that followed. Some used examples from the Viking raids, for example the trauma and devastation they brought. A few chose the Baron's Wars, which generally resulted in a very successful answer focusing on the creation of Magna Carta and attempts to limit the power of the King. Some chose to focus on the Harrying of the North, which although an impact of the Norman Conquest, needed to be successfully linked to that event to convince the examiner that this wasn't just a description of a monarch's reign. Many were able to develop one or more of these reasons into explanations for higher marks.

Less successful answers had reasoning, but focused on impacts of war that were too generic: for example 'higher taxes', 'large numbers of deaths' or 'physical devastation' which could form part of a successful explanation, but need to be linked successfully to a period within the Middle Ages and include specific details relevant to that period to achieve above Level 1 and 2. A surprising number of candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the term 'medieval' and regrettably scored poorly as they focused on examples of wars from the Elizabethan era or Seventeenth century. Candidates must be familiar with terms that describe eras in the course, for example medieval, early modern and modern and other commonplace historical terms that could come up in questions.

Advice on answering Question 2

Candidates should write a paragraph explaining each point. They are most successful when they identify the impact, link it to a period within the broader era and explain how war was responsible for that impact.

This question is examined in the same way as Q2 and Q6 on Paper 1 and candidates should be encouraged to adopt the same approach.

Question 3

3 How significant for Britain was victory in the Seven Years War?

[14]

This question required candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the consequences of the Seven Years War. Reassuringly on the whole candidates showed understanding of the war and could place it as an Imperial war against France and could identify that victory had brought benefits. Successful approaches explored the benefits in terms of growth of empire, the gaining of new colonies and so trading and commercial opportunities, naval dominance, as well as being able to point out the importance of a victory over a stronger European rival. Many candidates achieved at Level 3 by explaining one or more ways in which the war brought benefits.

However, to achieve Level 4 candidates must address significance successfully. Like last year, this was challenging for candidates and means convincing the examiner that they are addressing impact over time or scale in a meaningful way. This was usually demonstrated at the start and end of a paragraph where some sort of overarching theme or statement of significance developing the explanation given. With this year's question it was usually successful if candidates emphasised the growth of empire to become a global superpower, and successfully detailed colonies gained and advantage that brought. Another successful approach was to explain the value of the trade with empire and how this contributed to the industrial revolution, however admittedly fewer candidates explored this idea.

A sizeable minority of candidates only achieved at Level 2 because they simply did not have the specifics of this war at their fingertips to help them to answer in a developed way. Answers needed to be exemplified with details of colonies gained from France, new products traded and how this would have benefitted Britain. Without this too many answers were limited to Level 2.

Advice on answering Question 3

Continue to explore the issue of significance with students, both in terms of long-term, short-term, reach, size and type of impact.

The most effective approach seen in candidates' responses was to successfully explain a benefit or consequence of the victory and then before leaving the explanation, emphasise the significance at the end of the paragraph, to be sure it has been made clear. Of course some students are capable of a more sophisticated approach from the start of the paragraph, however this fail safe of an emphasis at the end of each paragraph on why the point made was significant should help more hit the target.

Many candidates had a good focus on the question throughout their answer. That said, they need to be slightly more secure in their detailed knowledge: identification of significance can only be credited at Level 4 if supported by specific own knowledge about the feature identified. For example, if identifying that Britain became a global superpower, then at the very least there should be development on where the growth in empire was. Likewise, if there is a focus on expanded trading opportunities that helped power the industrial revolution, there should be reference to in which new products and how they came to Britain as a result of the war.

	Misconception	<p>A minority of candidates seem to have been told that their answers need balance, and as a result developed their answer on an irrelevant tangent of why the war was NOT significant, for example comparing it to later wars like the Napoleonic or Crimean War. Candidates should be discouraged from this approach and focus on significance of the war given, rather than comparative significance or insignificance.</p> <p>The exemplar below demonstrates this erroneous approach in action. In the first paragraph the candidate successfully identifies the impact of the Seven Years War at Level 2. He or she then moves on to make a comparison of significance with the Crimean War. This is not credit worthy and distracts from the focus on the war in question.</p>
	<p>Exemplar 1</p> <p>The victory for Britain in the Seven Years War was significant because it allowed them to boost their economy through trade and it also allowed them to expand their empire from my own knowledge. I know that the Seven Years War was fought between Britain and France and was won by Britain. This is significant for Britain as it allowed them to expand their empire but also boost their economy.</p> <p>However, I think the Napoleonic Crimean War was more significant because it was a modern war between Britain and Russia. It marked the first war where newspapers and media had a large influence over the public opinion. It also made the government consider how they should approach future wars in regard</p>	

to news papers and media.
~~This is I think this is~~
 more significant for Britain
 because it marked a
 new start of warfare.

Question 4

4* 'British warfare changed little between 790 and 1750.' How far do you agree with this statement? [24]

The aim of this question was for candidates to assess change over time in warfare across the Medieval and Early Modern period. Successful candidates looked at issues like the role of the navy, the continued presence of looting / destruction, the role of religion as motivator (often seeing a change from Elizabeth's wars onwards), changing weapons and tactics and perhaps most successfully, the change from feudalism to professionalism of warfare and the impact of the longbow in the 100 Years War. Most were able to explain at least one way in which warfare changed or stayed the same, to achieve high Level 3 marks. Many were able to explain change and continuity across both periods to achieve Level 4 and 5. Successful answers were well focused and drew on specific examples. Some approached the question by explaining change on society as opposed to change of warfare, but this was seen as a valid way of interpreting the question as it stands, and the minority of candidates who answered in this way were rewarded for explanations at all levels.

The most striking feature of many answers was that candidates fell back on a chronological approach to explaining change that hampered their ability to draw comparisons. This chronological approach led to some candidates losing focus on the question and drifting into a description of warfare over time rather than concentrating on elements of change or continuity. This should be avoided.

A significant minority of candidates fell into the trap of thinking that this question simply **required** a narrative with a brief introduction of how this war was different from the preceding example chronologically. This made achieving above Level 3 challenging.

Equally, some were adept at stating a change without explaining how it represented a change: what went before or after and why. This is clearly something that can be addressed in practice questions in the classroom but was notable. It resulted in a number of candidates with good knowledge of wars failing to get beyond Level 2, or more usually Level 3 as usually there was a valid comparison made at some point.

That said, what is pleasing is that this type of question enabled many candidates to demonstrate their historical skills and understanding and show their intellectual grasp of the subject. Many made interesting comparisons and developed examples very successfully, particularly around continuity around civil wars, and change in the style of warfare and its professionalism. Few candidates were caught out by placing wars in the 'wrong' historical period, and many showed excellent knowledge of changes in warfare.

Advice on answering Question 4

Candidates should practice this type of thematic question of change over time and be encouraged to plan their answers. A purely chronological approach is rarely the best way to answer questions like this and candidates should be encouraged to look for themes, and NOT adopt a purely chronological approach.

Change over time should be a focus in practice questions in the classroom to help candidates to be more ready to explain the 'before and after' of changes.

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