

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

(EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD)

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/11 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 11 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1	5
Question 2	6
Section B overview	10
Question 3	10
Question 4	11



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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 11 series overview

This was the second series of the new Specification A Paper 11. It was clear from the majority of answers that candidates had been well prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately, especially on the explain-type questions. We were extremely impressed with the high standard on this paper. Most candidates attempted all four questions, and very few seemed to have run out of time.

Section A overview

It was clear that candidates had been well prepared for their depth study on The Impact of Empire and we saw an enormous range of contextual knowledge being deployed in these questions, some of which was very impressive and detailed. The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted to answer both of the questions. The range and quality of responses varied a huge amount; as was the case last year, developed evaluation of the sources in Question 2 remains the most significant challenge for candidates and the area for centres to focus on to support their students.

Question 1

The Impact of Empire on Britain 1688–c.1730

1 Explain how the growth of the British Empire changed the lives of people in Britain between 1688 and c.1730. **[10]**

The open nature of this question gave candidates the opportunity to select from a wide range of knowledge acquired during the course. There was a huge variety of content successfully deployed from right across the specification, ranging from changing consumer habits due to an increase in the import of raw materials such as coffee, to the development of plantocracy racism, to the increase in job opportunities. Most of these responses achieved either L3 for a valid identified change or L4 for a valid explained change. There were a pleasing number of candidates who explained more than one change and reached L5. A smaller number of candidates wrote about the impact of British expansion into Scotland and Ireland and how that changed the lives of people such as Irish Catholics. This was relevant too and the vast majority of these were often valid for L4/5. However, those candidates who did refer to issues in Scotland and Ireland were more likely to describe events and lacked the specifics to reach the higher levels. A very small number of candidates tried to use ideas linked to Question 3 about migrants taking jobs and causing unrest, which were irrelevant to this time period.

Advice to centres

This was a well answered question. Where candidates fell down it was usually through either a lack of specific evidence or not remaining tightly focused on the precise question being asked. Knowledge which is overly descriptive, no matter how detailed or extensive, will not be rewarded at the highest levels if it is not used to answer the question set.

Question 2

2 Study Sources A–C.

'British people benefitted from the East India Company.' How far do Sources A–C convince you that this statement is correct? Use the sources and your knowledge to explain your answer. [20]

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

Candidates were well prepared for this source-based question. The vast majority of candidates engaged with all three sources and attempted to relate them to the question being asked, which was very pleasing to see. Most candidates ended up being placed in Level 2 or Level 3 for using the content of one, two or three of the sources in a valid way to address the question of whether or not British people benefitted from the East India Company. These comments included: arguing in support of the statement by using Source A to show that the EIC brought high-quality goods to Britain and that its trade led to importers becoming wealthy; challenging the statement by using Source B to argue that the competition from Indian goods created by the EIC hurt British workers like the weavers; and using Source C to demonstrate that the EIC generated revenue for the crown which benefitted the whole country, and also that they supplied to Britain goods which were in high demand at a reasonable cost. The sources proved accessible to the majority of candidate and if they did not reach Level 3, it was most commonly because they picked out detail from the source(s) but did not relate the content to the statement or the question.

The question also required candidates to consider how 'convincing' they found the sources in relation to the statement and this continues to be the most challenging area for candidates. Although most candidates did attempt evaluation, the bulk of attempts that were made fell back on simplistic comments about provenance, such as (with Source C), 'it was written by a former governor of the EIC so will be biased towards them.' There were quite a lot of candidates who used the sources as a 'springboard' for their knowledge and flooded their responses with what they had learned about the EIC. While the range and depth of this knowledge was often impressive, rarely was it used to evaluate the source(s) as required by the question.

The most successful candidates examined the precise purpose, motivation or context of one or more of the sources in order to address the question of how convincing they were as evidence about the statement. Typically, these candidates argued that: Source A was convincing because it was typical, usually citing knowledge about the wealth made by Josiah Child; that Source B was less convincing given that Defoe was trying to generate sympathy for the weavers by using emotive language such as 'begging for bread'; and that Source C was less convincing because the author was clearly motivated by painting the EIC in a positive light given the criticism of the company and its monopoly). These responses were rewarded at Levels 4 and 5.

Advice to centres

Centres need to make sure that their candidates have lots of practice in handling sources from this time period and that they can use them as evidence in addressing a particular statement/question. Candidates would also benefit from more guidance in evaluating how convincing evidence is, but more support on moving beyond the generic is required here. Responses which evaluate sources in a 'stock' way are unlikely to achieve the higher levels in this question. Getting students to consider things such as the context of each source, the purpose/motivation of its author(s), and the other sources in the collection (and critically what impact these factors may have in relation to the statement/question being asked), is important. Candidates also need to recognise that this question is assessing their skills in handling contemporary sources, so where contextual knowledge is employed, it needs to be used sparingly, and (crucially) to argue whether sources are convincing or not about this particular question.

Exemplar 1

In Source A, Lockyer shows that, at face value, the East India Company benefitted British people. Lockyer explains that "great profits can be made" at Fort St. David and that "there is plenty of high quality cloth" and that it is "in great quantities". Lockyer shows how the East India Company benefitted British people by providing lots of great commodity like cloths. He shows that British merchants can also get great profits at the Company's port and that the people British people who work there benefit greatly. However, when we look deeper into the source we can see that Lockyer may have only seen one side of the East India Company. He is obviously from an upper class family and is rich enough to spend three years travelling around Asia. As well as this he was travelling on a ship belonging to the East India Company who may have only wanted their wealthy guest to see the profits. But, even so there were profits for British people and the source shows this overall.

Source B shows that, at face value, the East India Company did not benefit British people. Dugoe explains that "many weavers left their jobs" and "many of our best workers left the kingdom" and that those who stayed were "reduced to begging". This description paints a very negative picture of the East India Company and what it has done to British. Dugoe

is actually saying the opposite of the statement that saying how the East India Company made life worse for many British. However when we look deeper into the source we can see that the source is not as reliable as we first thought. Dugoe has been hired by English writers who most likely want him to exaggerate and make others feel sorry for them. This is probably why they picked Dugoe, who is a pessimist writer; they wanted a story to be told of their loss in an exaggerated way. Overall the source loses some reliability but is unlikely to be entirely untruthful and disagrees with the statement.

Source C shows how British people benefitted greatly from the East India Company. Child explains that the "wealth of the whole kingdom is greatly increased" from trade with the East India Company. The trade "pays his majesty £60 000 per year in import duty" and "exports between £60-70 000 per year" in English goods. This shows how rich people (like the king) benefitted greatly but that ordinary people benefitted too, from exports of their goods. This shows the statement to be true. However, when we look deeper we can see how Child may be overly nice about the company as he was Governor at the time. But this the profit of the company for British people were still huge, with Child himself being worth £22 million. Overall this source shows that British people did benefit from the East India Company.

In conclusion, the profits and benefits of the East India Company for British people far out weigh the loss and British people benefitted greatly from all classes.

There is a sound start to the response with Source A. The candidate argues that the source can be used to support the statement because it shows how the EIC generated profit for Britons and also brought commodities into the country. The first attempt at evaluation does not hit the mark ('the source is one-sided' so can't be trusted), so by the end of the first section, the response is at L2. Source B is then used to show that the EIC has had a negative impact on the weavers, with relevant parts from the sources chosen to support this. This source is also evaluated effectively, the candidate arguing that it is less convincing because Defoe has been hired by the weavers in order to tell their story in such a way as to generate sympathy from others. This places the response into L4 as one source has been evaluated in a relevant and developed way. The response concludes by examining Source C, effectively using it to show that the EIC generated tax revenue which benefitted the British. Right at the end, the candidate says that Child was worth £22 million (and this is accurate) but unfortunately this fact isn't explicitly used by the candidate to argue that the source is convincing about the EIC bringing in so much money to the country. So, by the end of the answer, the candidate had used the content of all three sources to support/challenge the statement, and they have also used valid and relevant evaluation of one of the sources to explain how convincing it is. This means that the response was given L4. To move into L5, one other source needs to be evaluated in a valid and developed way.

Section B overview

Again, it was clear that candidates were well prepared for the questions on South Shields and knew the history of the site well. Almost all candidates attempted both questions.

Question 3

Urban Environments: Patterns of Migration

3 Explain the impact of migration on South Shields between 1800 and 1920.

[10]

Most candidates made a reasonable attempt at this question. There was some impressive knowledge on display about the history of the site and migration from this period. Candidates achieving Level 3 and above most commonly gave specific examples linked to the impact of Yemeni or German migration, focusing on social impact/diversity (lots of candidates gave precise examples relating to the popularity of German sausages) or the development of tension with the local community as shown by the anti-German attached in WWI, or the Mill Dam riots. Many candidates achieved L4 or L5 by fully explaining one or more impacts.

Where candidates did less well, they tended to describe migrant groups or events without linking their knowledge to a specific impact. These responses were usually placed in L2. Some candidates focused on the economic boom and the use of Scottish and Irish migrants as workers, which was not valid as it was a cause rather than impact of migration. Some candidates wrote about migrant groups from after 1920, e.g. Bangladeshi migrants, and their impact, and quite a few mentioned Mohammed Ali, again not addressing the question.

Advice to centres

It is important that candidates can link their knowledge to the question being asked: the best answers were those that 'framed' their knowledge (e.g. '*Migration caused tension. For example, ...*') rather than simply describing migrant groups, why they came, and events linked to migration.

Question 4

4 Study Sources D and E.

Which of these sources is more useful to a historian studying the experiences of the Yemeni community in South Shields? [10]

Most candidates performed well in this question, which was about source utility, and thus it was expected that candidates would make inferences from the sources about the experiences of the Yemeni community in South Shields. Most valid inferences (given at Level 3 and above) referred to Source D revealing the racism and discrimination faced by the Yemeni community (supported by this woman's description of her husband's experiences looking for shipping work, or her reference to the suggestion that 'marrying Arabs is a scandal'); and Source E showing us at the same time that people in the town were becoming more accepting of the Yemeni community as revealed by the council giving Muslims their own burial area in the local cemetery. Where candidates who had a valid inference from Source D did not reach L5, it was usually because they misinterpreted Source E, and thought this was showing further discrimination. Some argued it wasn't useful at all as it was talking about 'Muslims' and not the Yemeni. Weaker candidates typically ignored the content of the sources and used the provenance to argue that either D was more useful as the writer had personal experience, or that E was more useful as it was an official record of a council meeting. Again, some candidates simply saw the sources as a way in to narrating everything they had learned about the Yemeni community in South Shields and did not focus on the sources or the question being asked.

Advice to centres

All candidates should be encouraged to view the sources as a historian, i.e. what can we work out from these sources? How do they help us? Weaker candidates should be encouraged to use their comprehension skills to lift relevant content as opposed to attempting to say why the sources are 'reliable' or not based on their provenance. More able candidates would benefit from practice in making inferences from a range of contemporary sources. For example, centres might ask their students to consider whether particular sources could be used as evidence of (for example) reasons for migration, impact of migration, or responses to migration. Or perhaps the sources might provide evidence about the experiences of migrants, or how particular events affected the area. The guidance in the specification provides a helpful set of prompts to help candidates consider the ways in which sources might be useful as evidence.

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