

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B (SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/37 Summer 2018 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 J411/37 series overview

This was the first examination of the new History B (Schools History Project). The new paper was very different from what has gone before, with a whole section of the paper for Making of America being purely knowledge based. There was also a slightly different focus to the Depth Study, with two of the questions being source based with just one additional essay question.

Section A overview

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this new GCSE. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions. The range and quality of responses was varied, but on the most part candidates produced impressive responses in the essay questions on the Gold Rush and the Native Americans.

Question 1

1 (a) Name **one** slave state added to the USA between 1793 and 1838. [1]

(b) Name **one** Indian tribe living on the Plains between 1839 and 1860. [1]

(c) Give **one** example of a difficulty faced by Homesteaders farming the Plains. [1]

The majority of candidates struggled with the dates in Question 1(a). The most common response to this question was 'Texas' which is outside of the time period. Candidates generally achieved well on 1(b) with the Lakota Sioux being the most common answer. Similarly, candidates also performed well on question 1(c) with the majority speaking about extremes of weather or locusts destroying crops. It is worth noting that candidates only need to give one word or one phrase responses for these gateway questions, some candidates wasted time writing the question out or writing a short paragraph which isn't necessary for these 1 mark responses.

Question 2

2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the American expansion from 1789 to 1838. Support your summary with examples. [9]

This question was answered relatively poorly by candidates for two reasons. The first reason being many were unable to distinguish the difference between 'expansion' and 'migration', the second reason was ignoring the date constraints on the question. As a result many candidates gave evidence such as the Mormons, the gold rush and the transcontinental railroad which were not only out of the time period within the question, but were also not applicable to the question focus of expansion as they would have been evidence for migration instead. Candidates who did very well on this question tended to describe three pieces of evidence which showed the causes or consequences of expansion for example the Louisiana Purchase or the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

Advice for Question 2

The most common way for candidates to reach Level 3 was when three solid pieces of supporting evidence were used in their summary which showed a concrete understanding of the stem of the question – in this case 'expansion'. They were also aware of the date constraints and were able to link their summary to a second order concept such as cause or consequence.

Question 3

3 Why did Reconstruction do little to improve the lives of many African Americans? Support your answer with examples. [10]

This question was generally answered well by candidates. Those who did well were able to explain evidence such as the Black codes, the influence of the KKK and the role of sharecroppers – these examples were those explained by the majority of candidates who performed well however there was a range of evidence used by candidates which covered the specification well and showed a solid understanding of reconstruction. The main problems candidates faced were mixing up racial groups within America – Native Americans and African Americans, some also listed lots of evidence without explaining it which limited the marks available to candidates. The other major issue was not having secure knowledge of when reconstruction was. There were a significant amount of responses which focused on Civil Rights rather than Reconstruction.

Advice for Question 3

The key advice to candidates for this question is to ensure that they are fully explaining their evidence in reference to the question. This question does not require a list of evidence; it requires candidates to select the most applicable evidence and to explain this fully in reference to the question - in this instance: why reconstruction did little for African Americans. The candidates who achieved high marks on this question had specific evidence within their explanations e.g. the term sharecroppers or specific amendments in the constitution which effected African American lives.

Question 4*

4* 'The discovery of gold was the main reason for migration to the West between 1839 and 1860.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Candidates generally coped well with the given topic in this question. Many were able to address this and explain evidence in reference to how it increased migration. Many candidates spoke of Sutter's Mill, Polk's confirmation of gold and the Pike's Peak rush, and explained why this caused migration west. However, some candidates missed out on explanation marks when they turned their evidence into description rather than explanation of why it encouraged migration. For example, many described the treacherous journey west and how there was actually little gold when they arrived. This naturally drew their explanation away from the focus which should have been how gold persuaded people to migrate west.

Many candidates did well to pick out other factors which increased migration for example persecution of religious groups such as the Mormons, the economic collapse in the East and Manifest Destiny. Those candidates who then explained how these issues caused migration to the west achieved high marks on this question.

Candidates generally speaking did attempt a judgement for this question, however it is worth noting many candidates didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled on this question were those who picked evidence outside of the time period, for most this was through giving evidence of the Homestead Act of 1862, some candidates also referenced the transcontinental railroad. Candidates need to read dates carefully to ensure all of their evidence is applicable.

Advice for Question 4

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, the other side of the argument should be considered. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained why there was migration to the west. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Question 5*

5* 'The most significant change for the Plains Indians in the period 1877–1900 was the destruction of the buffalo.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Candidates generally dealt with the topic in the question very well, many candidates understood the importance of the buffalo to the Plains Indians and were able to give comprehensive examples of how the buffalo was used and therefore why their destruction caused such a huge change to the Plains Indians. Many also explained the spiritual importance of the buffalo using evidence such as the Ghost Dance alongside the nomadic significance of the buffalo through hunting. The candidates who struggled with this question tended to list lots of uses of the buffalo without explaining why their destruction caused a change. Many also didn't make distinct points, grouping all of their evidence on the buffalo together reducing the availability of explanation marks.

Other factors that candidates picked out generally tended to be the impact of reservations, the suppression of their culture by white Americans through boarding schools for example, and homesteaders fencing in their land. Where these were explained in reference to the question in terms of why they were such a significant change for the Plains Indians candidates achieved high marks for this question.

Candidates generally speaking did attempt a judgement for this question however it is worth noting many candidates didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled on this question were those who picked evidence outside of the time period, for most this consisted of description of the Indian Wars and Trail of Tears as well as explanation of the Indian Removal Act. Candidates need to read dates carefully to ensure all of their evidence is applicable.

Advice for Question 5

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, the other side of the argument should be considered. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained which change was most significant to the Plains Indians. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Section B overview

Candidates have adapted well to the source/interpretation centred section of this paper on the First Crusade. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions; many used the sources/interpretations to make inferences, which was excellent. The range and quality of responses was varied however we expect the quality of evaluation of sources/interpretations particularly for Question 7 to continue to improve over the following years of assessment.

Question 6

6 What can Source A tell us about relations between different religious groups in the Holy Land by 1095? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer. [7]

Candidates did well to pick out the inference that the relationship between the different groups in the Holy Land was hostile. Many candidates supported this inference with a quote from the text which was excellent. Those who excelled at this question were able to explain the intended impact of this speech which was to rally Christians to join the crusade. Candidates who explained this achieved Level 3 on this question. Candidates who didn't achieve as well on this question gave too much contextual knowledge which wasn't needed to score well on this particular question; this is a test of historical skill not historical knowledge.

Advice for Question 6

Candidates should not stray too much from the source which they have been given. That is the focal point of the question and therefore candidates are encouraged to use this and explain it in reference to the question showing their understanding of the source in hand. Candidates should be encouraged to deal with the source in depth rather than deploying contextual knowledge which too often was irrelevant to the question. Candidates should aim to pick out the intended impact of the source and should also be making inferences rather than giving surface features. The best answers also had support from Source A showing explicit use of the source in their response.

Question 7

7 How useful are Interpretations B and C and Source D for a historian studying why people went on crusade? In your answer, refer to the two interpretations and the source as well as your own knowledge. [15]

Candidates generally described B, C and D well however this description severely limited marks on this question as they should have been explaining B, C and D's utility. Many candidates achieved only 3 marks on this question as a result of not linking B, C and D to the question's focus which was 'motivation for crusade'.

Candidates who achieved well on this question were able to link Interpretation B to the people's crusade and either use contextual knowledge to explain why this had a religious motive or used clues from the interpretation e.g. the cross to explain the motivation. Those who linked Interpretation C to the motive of religious devotion rather than greed and again explained this with either contextual knowledge or support from the interpretation received reward for their explanation. Similarly, those who picked up the change of motivation in Source D from one of selfish greed to gaining forgiveness achieved the higher marks. Candidates who explained the intended impact of B, C and/or D in reference to the focus of the question achieved the highest marks for this question. Candidates who then made a judgement on utility of B, C and D overall were able to achieve full marks on this question – this did not have to be a comprehensive judgement.

The main problem with responses for this question came from candidates explaining why the sources are not useful or picking out irrelevant information from the provenance to explain the source's utility. For example, many candidates explained the utility of B by picking out it was made for children and this is why the people were wearing bright clothes, and then explained this made it unreliable and therefore not useful. The candidates should avoid comments like this as this question is about utility to a historian not reliability. Surface features of B, C and D should not be the focus of this question – candidates are being encouraged to evaluate the sources in reference to the question by considering why their content is useful often by making inferences. Answers which to do the above remained in Level 1.

Advice for Question 7

Candidates should aim to explain all three of the interpretations/sources. They should aim to use quotes from these to support their points as this will ensure they remain focused on them throughout their response rather than veering towards contextual knowledge only. Candidates should be encouraged to deal with each of B, C and D separately as there is no requirement for candidates to compare and contrast the interpretations/sources. Candidates should explain inferences or the intended impact of the three interpretations/sources in reference to the topic in the question – in this instance motives for crusade, if they are to achieve the highest marks.

Question 8*

8* 'The crusaders captured Antioch in 1098 because of their effective use of siege warfare.' How far do you agree with this view? [18]

This essay question was the most popular choice from candidates. Many dealt with the given factor of 'siege warfare' relatively well. The majority who scored well tended to explain the siege weapons such as towers and their impact alongside increased control of the area from 1098 onwards due to control of roads and ports. Those candidates who then explained how this led to the capture of Antioch tended to achieve high marks on this question.

Some candidates managed to select other factors to discuss to help explain why Antioch was captured; the most popular was Bohemond's agreement with Firuz. However some considered the impact of the holy lance and the fact that the besieged were still receiving resources proving the siege wasn't the most significant factor. Again, those candidates who then explained how other factors such as these led to the capture of Antioch tended to achieve high marks on this question.

Fewer candidates attempted a judgement for this question and it is worth noting that many of those candidates who did attempt judgement didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled to get out of Level 1 or 2 on this question were those who told a story about the capture of Antioch. Many candidates had excellent knowledge but slipped into this and their response was one filled with description rather than explanation for how their evidence proved why Antioch was captured by the crusaders.

Advice for Question 8

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, the other side of the argument should be considered. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained why the crusaders were able to capture Antioch. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Question 9*

9* 'The crusaders were able to take the city of Jerusalem in July 1100 because of the divisions within the Islamic world.' How far do you agree with this view? [18]

Generally speaking this question was not answered well by candidates. Those who dealt with the given factor well addressed the divisions within the Islamic world by giving specific groups such as the Fatimids as evidence and explaining why they were divided or unwilling to work with other groups. Those who achieved the highest marks explained that the Turkish force at Kerbogha had dispersed and would not come to the aid of the Fatimids proving that the divisions in the Islamic world led to the crusaders taking the city of Jerusalem.

Candidates tended to deal with other factors better than the factor given in the question. For example, many candidates explained the effective preparations for siege warfare, the use of vinegar on the Greek flames and the religious zeal of the crusaders. Those who explained why these factors led to the crusaders capturing Jerusalem tended to achieve relatively high marks on this question.

Fewer candidates attempted a judgement for this question and it is worth noting that many of those candidates, who did attempt judgement, didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled with this question were those who gave no specific knowledge about the Islamic divisions or those who gave evidence which was applicable for the Antioch question within their response to this question having no real focus on Jerusalem.

Advice for Question 9

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it, although this doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, the other side of the argument should be considered. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained why the crusaders were able to take the city of Jerusalem. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Please note an erratum notice was issued for this question:

Erratum notice

Turn to page 5 of the question paper and look at question 9.

In the first line, cross out '1100' and replace with '1099'.

The question should now read:

'The crusaders were able to take the city of Jerusalem in July 1099 because of the divisions within the Islamic world.' How far do you agree with this view?

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