

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B (SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/39 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

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.

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Paper 39 series overview

This paper assessed candidate knowledge and understanding of 'The Making of America, 1789-1900' and 'Living under Nazi rule, 1933-1945'. This series saw a limited number of entries and range of answers and for that reason, this report provides a narrow analysis of candidate performance. It should however be said that some candidates were effectively prepared for this examination and all questions on the paper were accessible to all and in some instances very well answered.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provided factually precise answers to Question 1• included accurate contextual knowledge to support their answers to Questions 2 and 3• attempted to respond to the essay questions in depth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provided answers that exceeded the date range or issue in question, particularly in relation to Section A• focused too heavily on the limitations of the sources/interpretations in Question 6 and 7.

Section A overview

Candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge and understanding of The Making of America and the majority attempted to respond to all questions. From the small sample of answers available, range and quality varied but some candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of the issue of slavery and the impact of the American Civil War on the lives of African Americans.

Section B overview

All candidates attempted to engage with the sources and interpretations presented about life under Nazi rule. The limited range of answers means that fewer candidates engaged with the higher levels of response more frequently seen within a regular examination series but it should be noted that many candidates were able to make valid inferences about the Nazi Dictatorship and degree of control and opposition that existed in Germany 1933-39. Candidates should also be commended for their excellent approaches to Question 8 where some detailed contextual responses were seen.

Themes in candidate responses

The small sample of candidate answers indicated some common themes. In Section A, many candidates were able to frame their answers to Question 2 around a range of second order concepts. Likewise, for Question 3, candidates attempted to structure two explained impacts of the Pikes Peak Gold Rush. In both questions, candidates attempted to provide two supported examples and it was pleasing to see clear attempts by candidates to give specific contextual support. Across both sections of the paper, candidates attempted to write extended responses to questions 4,5,8 and 9 that included a range of supported examples clearly related to the issue in question.

Comments on responses by question type

Section A questions

The limited range of candidate answers provided a small sample of responses to Question 1. Some candidates in this series had difficulty providing precise examples in response to Question 1(b) but a broader range of valid responses were given for both 1(a) and 1(c). Candidates have clearly been encouraged to write short, concise answers to allow time to address the remaining questions fully. Question 2 saw candidates attempting to analyse the issue of slavery, with most examples relating to the causes of its growth or diversity between the north and south of America in response to the issue. Question 3 presented most challenges to the small sample of candidates in this series. While the majority of candidates were able to explain the impacts of the California gold rush or gold mining more generally, very few candidates were able to explore the specific impacts of the Pikes Peak rush, as required by the question.

Of the optional questions, Question 4 was the most popular choice with many candidates presenting valid arguments that assessed the extent the lives of African Americans changed during the Civil War 1861-65 with many candidates highlighting the Emancipation Proclamation as a significant factor. It is again important to note the importance of the date range in question. Some candidates provided changes that related to the post-war Reconstruction era and were therefore not creditable.

Question 5 was tackled by a smaller sample of candidates and for that reason it is difficult to comment on specific trends in responses. Of responses marked however, candidates at a higher level were able to explore examples such as Little Crow's and Red Crow's Wars. Lower performing candidates tended to focus responses in earlier causes of conflict and therefore did not develop valid arguments in relation to the question.

	AfL	Differences in examples given on the specification should be highlighted in the classroom. The California and Pikes Peak gold rushes had varied impacts on the development of the American West and students should have an understanding of these differences.
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Section B questions

All candidates responded to Question 6 with direct reference to the source provided. While this series presented a small sample, many candidates were able to make inferences about the utility of the evidence. This was similarly the case with Question 7 where candidates were able to cross-reference the sources and interpretation to their own knowledge of control and opposition in Nazi Germany and in some instances inferences on the utility of the evidence were explained. The small candidate sample provided no examples for either question of candidates making inferences about the sources production, publication, purpose or existence but there were some attempts by candidates to engage in the nature of the evidence given and this is clearly a skill being taught in centres. A number of candidates explored the limitations of the evidence provided despite this not being a requirement of either question. Of the optional questions, Question 8 was the most popular choice with many candidates presenting valid arguments that considered the impact of the Second World War on the German people between 1939 and 1945. Many candidates framed their responses around the impact of bombing, rationing and the role of women.

Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

In delivering the specification, teachers should draw particular attention to the chronology of the Period Study. Some candidates in this series provided responses that did not fit into the date range in question and confused some aspects of their learning. Concerning the world study, when teaching students to engage with sources and interpretations, centres should develop inference skills and avoid exploring the limitations of evidence. This might discourage candidates from dismissing evidence as biased as they often do in response to Questions 6 and 7. This should specifically be the case when handling Nazi propaganda.

Guidance on using this paper as a mock

Centres would benefit from using this paper as a mock examination, particularly as an exercise to highlight to candidates the value of revising all aspects of the specification. Centres are likely to find the setting of this paper a valuable learning exercise for all concerned.

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