

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505


For first teaching in 2015

Y218/01 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 Y218/01 series overview

The first question was a less popular choice than Question two however, a considerable number of candidates still completed this section. Overall, the standard of written communication and references to specific knowledge showed accuracy although there was more generalisation when candidates attempted to explain how nationalism and imperialism increased tensions prior to World War One, and also where responses addressed the failure of leadership on the Western Front. Despite this, these questions still yielded some well-developed responses and sometimes addressed the question with specificity and a clear argument.

Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Which of the following made the conclusion of a successful peace settlement in Paris in 1919 more difficult?
- (i) The aims and motives of France
 - (ii) The aims and motives of the USA

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Overall, candidates had a good understanding of the aims of France during the peace settlement. These often focused on reparations, the implementation of the War Guilt clause, military and territorial demands and restrictions. Candidates also commonly explained why France had this desire for revenge, referencing *revanchism* and the extensive damage wrought by the war on French soil. Most candidates managed some degree of analysis to address the question in support of French aims, which were essentially to make Germany pay, explaining how *revanchism* did or did not make for a difficult peace. The USA was usually credited as the nation that made for a less difficult peace because they were far more lenient on Germany. Candidates almost always cited Wilson's Fourteen Points, and often spoke of the self-determination and the League of Nations. This less punitive approach was usually contrasted with the French and attributable to an easier peace because Germany were more willing to accept these terms. The explanation could be justified in several other ways too, for example, how US leniency frustrated the other powers. Moreover, some candidates explicitly explained how isolationism made the peace more difficult because US withdrawal from international affairs, notably the failure to ratify the League of Nations, meant the leading power had retreated from the global stage and it was this power that could have made a lasting peace. Occasionally, the US distaste for empire and its aims for self-determination were linked to Wilson's frustration at the acquisition of French and British post-war mandates. This point effectively explained how the USA made for a difficult peace at times.

Despite some accuracy in the information deployed, this information still needed to be used to explain how the aims and motives of the country, France or the USA made the peace more difficult. Exemplar 1 is an example of information relating to the factor but not being used to develop a response to the question.

Exemplar 1

Wilson's aims for the peace settlements were outlined in his 14 points which he advocated of his aims were peaceful. They included the creation of the League of Nations, the reduction in colonial gains made by western countries and the reduction in army sizes to maintain peace. This was significant as his proposal was accepted by Germany and was

deemed acceptable by countries such as Britain. This provided a true peaceful treaty that would satisfy the majority of the countries, however, the USA were ~~pleasur~~ predominantly ignored and the French were able to dominate the peace talks. This led to only a few of Wilson's points becoming a part of the Treaty such as the League of Nations, but the lack of true desire for peace left the USA ~~at~~ out and led to the isolation of the USA as they didn't join the League.

US aims and motives are referenced via some accurate information. However, the knowledge is not used to create a developed analysis of why US aims made the peace settlement in Paris more difficult.

Question 1 (b)

(b)* How far do you agree there was a failure of leadership on the Western Front during the years 1914 to 1918? [20]

There was a rich variety of responses to this question. More limited responses lacked specificity and accuracy and did not explain the failure of leadership in a convincing manner. This was sometimes due to inaccuracies or by simply illustrating some of the battles that took place on the Western Front. On rare occasions, candidates discussed the leaders of the nations, e.g. Clemenceau, Wilson, etc. and this did not accurately address the question. Also, discussion of tactics surrounding the allied blockade did not address leadership on the Western Front.

More accurate responses referenced a range of successful and unsuccessful leadership strategies on the Western Front. These responses commonly explained the failures of Joffre via his outdated tactics and the brightly coloured French uniforms, or cited the human costs and tactical errors made by Nivelle, Haig on the Somme and during the Third Battle of Ypres, and Falkenhayn at Verdun. Sometimes the Spring Offensive was cited as a failure due to the overstretched lines and subsequent success of the allied counterattack (see Exemplar 2). Successful leadership commonly referenced Petain and the ability to hold onto Verdun, or Haig becoming more flexible, for example utilising the creeping barrage, and the later use of tanks.

It was also common for candidates to discuss the role of technology. The quality of these arguments varied. More effective responses explained how technology nullified the tactics used by leaders on the Western Front, for example, tanks breaking down or machine-guns preventing any advances. Less effective responses discussed technology but did not really relay how this impacted leadership on the Western Front.

Exemplar 2

However, it remains overallly argued that most, if not all effective leadership was short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful. This ~~was~~^{is} easily most obvious when considering the later consequences of the final German offensive, in which the German army overextended itself by penetrating so deeply, arguably making the Allied counterattack at Amiens inevitable. Given that this in turn led to the ~~the~~ final depletion of German manpower and led to full-scale retreat essentially knocking Germany out of war, German leadership in 1918 especially could only with reason be regarded as a major failure. ~~That was the~~

The response represents an argument that focuses on addressing the question using the Spring Offensive as the example in support.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Which of the following provided the greater challenge to peace in the years before World War One?

(i) Nationalism

(ii) Imperialism

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Nationalism and imperialism were commonly dealt with using some degree of accuracy however, these factors were not always clearly defined. It would have been quite useful for responses to describe what each cause was, and then provide examples for how they challenged peace before the outbreak of World War One. (See Exemplar 3). Nationalism was best supported by examples from the Balkans, the Bosnian Crisis, the Balkan Wars, and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. More limited responses were somewhat illustrative of events instead of explicitly explaining how these events caused a challenge to peace. Equally, imperialism was not always clearly defined, and responses sometimes used less-than convincing attempts to explain why they threatened the peace. The most accurate examples commonly referred to the Moroccan Crises and the tension between France and Germany. However, other imperial references were also made, sometimes to Austro-Hungary and Turkey, and the tension over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Exemplar 3

Imperialism was another issue in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Britain and France had massive empires in Africa and it was expanded over in Asia in India too. This had caused resentment in Europe as Germany too wanted to grow their empire, challenging those of Britain and France. This was seen in the 1905 Moroccan crisis, where the Kaiser had visited Morocco and greeted the Sultan as an independent ruler, ignoring French influence in the area, causing tension. Another key point

This part of the response defines imperialism in its relevant context and how this caused tension, it then develops the response further by providing specific support from the Moroccan Crisis.

Question 2 (b)

(b)* 'International relations improved throughout the period 1919 to 1929.' How far do you agree? [20]

Candidates commonly found several examples to use when explaining the improvements and failures in international relations during this period. Occasionally, candidates stated how relations improved because of the impact of World War One, and how this ensured nations couldn't afford to go to war. While there is some truth in the economic, psychological and social devastation caused by the Great War, the argument was limited as there are examples that show the noble ambition of 'Never Again' did not come to fruition. The Russian Civil War, Vilna, Greece and Bulgaria, Russia and Poland could all testify to this. The fact that nations were too exhausted to embark on a wider conflict was not justified as evidence of better international relations. More accurate responses spoke of the legacy of Versailles, and how this harmed the peace, usually with reference to the Franco-Belgian seizure of the Ruhr (although the Belgians were often overlooked). Other causes of tension were events in Corfu, the USA failing to join the League of Nations, and some of the conflicts outlined above. Some responses discussed the impact of the Great Depression, technically valid as the question states 1929, but it was unwise to develop the response too far into the 1930s due to the timeframes in the question. Other responses also focused quite heavily on the actions of the League. This was acceptable if relating to the time period within the question and ideally taking a balanced approach to address both improvements and failures in international relations. Arguments that analysed improvements referenced the 'spirit of Locarno' (see Exemplar 4), the successes of the League of Nations, the Dawes Plan and Young Plan, Kellogg-Briand, and other diplomatic ventures. This is not an exhaustive list but demonstrates that there was plenty of scope for a balanced analysis of the time period.

It was rare to see inaccurate responses, but it did occur. For example, any discussion of Hitler as Chancellor was not relevant and showed a lack of chronological understanding.

Exemplar 4

The Locarno Treaty of 1925 was very positive and ~~it~~ main consequence was the great honeymoon period in Europe which lingered throughout the 1920s. This ensured Germany accepted her western borders, securing France's position in the area, which resulted in the removal of 10,000 French and British troops from the Rhineland. This was monumental in relieving tension between long term rivals, France and Germany, therefore greatly improving international

relations. This 'honeymoon period' of goodwill and peace in Europe continued when Germany was accepted into the League of Nations in 1926, showing they were accepted into Europe again and peace was reestablished during the 1920s. The Locarno Treaty therefore demonstrates the easing of tension and goodwill in ~~the world~~^{Europe} and was a highly successful treaty, so international relations did improve from 1925-29 ~~as~~ as the Locarno Treaty's influence was massive in establishing ^{more} peace.

This part of the response explains Locarno in some detail and substantiates the view that it was a 'honeymoon period' in international relations.

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