

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y315/01 Summer 2022 series

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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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper Y315/01 series overview

Y315 is one of twenty one components for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This component tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an interpretation option on a named in-depth topic and two essays. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the interpretation. In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period, explaining similarities and differences between the events they are discussing to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons made may be either between periods within the topic or between regions. The strongest responses will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question • used contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words • considered both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge • in answering the essay questions, covered the whole period in a balanced way • adopted a thematic approach • made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic • explained the links and comparisons • supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples • reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question • demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the different command verbs, e.g., identify, describe, explain and discuss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed a limited understanding of one or both interpretations • did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation • did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation • in answering the essay adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach • did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph • did not cover the whole period • did not focus on the precise wording of the question • made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

Section A

Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the role of the state in the First World War. [30]

Most candidates were able to understand the contrasting views in the passages on the role of the state in the First World War. They also recognised the need to engage with the interpretations and evaluate them using their own knowledge and did this with varying degrees of success.

Stronger responses recognised that Passage A was arguing that as the nation was successfully mobilised for unlimited warfare that also in turn led to the escalation of warfare itself.

On the other hand, Passage B was focused on the evolving war over resources once conventional attacks had failed which led to greater government control of social and economic life on the home front.

Weaker responses mostly just described the content of each passage or explained them with little attempt to work out which was the more convincing and why.

Exemplar 1 is an example of a very strong response, marked in Level 6.

Exemplar 1

1	A	<p>As an explanation of the role of the state in WWI, it is certain that passage B is more convincing than passage A. Passage A views the role of the state as the support mechanism for the war strategy, with industry and society needing to be mobilised. Passage B depicts the state's role to be one of civilian sacrifice particularly, with rationing as the richer of the two sides would win and this could be helped to come about by the state. The passages are similar in their thoughts on mobilising the population for the war effort, yet differ in A's stressing of the state's role (and politics) following strategy whereas B implies the economic aspect was more key than a strategic one as enemy strategy would be to target your resources.</p>
		<p>Passage A is certainly less convincing than passage B, although it does retain some convincing elements, such as its mention of the "unrestricted use of all possible means of warfare", was necessary to break the economy. This is a valid point by Greyer, as shown through the nature of total war in WWI, and particularly the attacks on civilians as the line between military and civilian targets became blurred. This is exemplified by Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare, which would target civilians too, and a further example would be the Zeppelin bombing raids of 1915, whereby German blimps were able to drop bombs onto British civilians - showing the unrestricted nature of war which Greyer describes. However on the whole this passage is less convincing, the point made that "propaganda" became the "principal tool" of the state and politics is weak and unconvincing. Certainly it was</p>

		<p>instead conscription and legislation which were more powerful tools. instead whether this was conscription into factories or occurred in Britain, or into the force armed forces, it is clear that this legal method of ensuring society is mobilised was a more principal tool than that of propaganda, which attempted to achieve what conscription certainly did. Shown through Britain conscripting soldiers to the army for the first time in its history in 1916. Further legislation was a more principal tool of the state and in politics, exemplified by the Defence of the Realm Act, whereby the government was able to have greater control over key areas such as communications and industry, enabling them to affect vital aspects in the war. This clearly indicates that "propaganda" was not the "principal tool" of the state whether in mobilising society for war as conscription both to factories and the army was more effective as was legislative tools in giving government key controls. Another area in which Greig is unconvincing is the statement of "politics followed strategy", yet this was of course not the case on many occasions. This is evidenced by the French and British to when the Germans set up in French territory when they realised they would not take all of France, as the French and British were inclined due to political reasons rather than military ones, to try push the Germans back and out of French territory. The military reality was that of strong German fortifications whereby the allied approach should be considered, yet the political pressures encouraging Generals to get Germany out of allied territory showed politics before strategy, once again presenting the unconvincing nature of his passage. On the whole it is clear that despite some convincing elements, Passage A is on the</p>
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		<p>whole somewhat unconvincing, certainly less convincing than B. This is further shown through the statement of "escalating use of force" rather than "concentration" being more important.</p> <p>Passage B is much more convincing, yet there are elements that are less convincing despite this,</p> <p>in victory, yet the Ludendorff offensive, a huge breakthrough by the Germans which failed in the end but had it been better reinforced may not have, come through the concentration of stormtroopers on one point which goes against Geyer and shows the unconvincing nature of the passage again.</p>
		<p>Passage B is much more convincing, yet there are elements that are less convincing despite this, such as the point on "women" and taking the place of men in the "factories and fields". It was the case in Britain that this did indeed happen fairly swiftly, yet in the Germany women were kept out of the war effort for the entire duration of the war a longer period as well as in other countries.</p> <p>Further the point of armies being "instruments to bleed each other of resources" is one which is not entirely convincing, as each side kept seeking breakthroughs which might prove strategically and tactically decisive. This is shown again through the Ludendorff offensive where clearly the objective is to break the lines of the allies on the western front, as the use of stormtroopers (in packs of eleven, heavily armed) were concentrated so which would have had no significant resource burden to the allies, but was tactically and strategically vital with the breakthrough, and therefore Howard's point in this case is weak. Yet it is more</p>

		<p>convincing on the whole, as shown through the views on "Napoleon's principles of war" being "no longer valid". This can certainly be said as the first world war was a defensive one due to the nature of defensive technologies e.g. barbed wire, entrenchments and machine guns making Napoleonic principles invalid, thus Howard makes a strong point. Further, the "destruction of the enemy's resources" being "more relevant" is accurate, as economic warfare was vital and pivotal. This is evident through the British blockade of Germany, preventing many supplies reaching Germany and particularly food, in the end 750,000 Germans starved to death and it was key in their collapse. Finally, Howard's point on "The richest side would win" as quoted by a General is strong as especially with the introduction of the US to the allied forces the economic might of the allies far exceeded the Germans and their allies, and the US were able to help supplement industry and arms due to this, making Howard's point key. Overall passage B is certainly convincing despite some weaker elements of women on a blanket statement and armies being just an instrument to "bleed resources", as the strong points on Napoleonic principles of war being invalid as well as the relevance of resources and the richest would win.</p>
		<p>To conclude, it is certain that passage B is the more convincing of the two due to passage A's weakest points, particularly on the lack of importance of concentration of troops as well as propaganda and strategy over politics. In comparison B is much more convincing with the credible arguments on principles of war which is down</p>
		<p>to WW1's defensive nature, as well as economic and the importance.</p>

Section B

Question 2*

- 2* 'Generals had little impact on the outcome of battles.' How far do you agree with this view of warfare from 1792 to 1945? [25]

This was a popular question and there were many more successful responses which often defended the role of Generals in winning battles over the period but perhaps less so with the advent of technology in the later period.

It was possible to reach good synthesis by just focusing on the role of Generals themselves or comparing them to other factors such as planning and technology.

Coverage of the period was sometimes poor, and Napoleon tended to dominate some of the responses at the lower end. Weaker responses often listed Generals and battles chronologically and seldom got beyond the First World War.

Question 3*

- 3* 'Tanks have been the most important development in weaponry in changing the nature of warfare.' How far do you agree with this view of the period 1792 to 1945? [25]

This again was a popular question although a notable number of candidates strayed into developments that were nothing to do with weaponry such as the quality of soldiers. As tanks only appeared later in the period there was also a tendency to over focus on the First World War.

Stronger responses were able to compare tanks to other weapons such as artillery and rifles but again a surprising few mentioned chemical weapon and the atomic bomb. Some good responses were also able to argue that tanks only really came into their own at the end of the First World War and were more important in Blitzkrieg and the Battle of Kursk in the Second World War.

Question 4*

- 4* To what extent was the American Civil War the most important turning point in the organisation of the state for war in the period from 1792 to 1945? [25]

This was the least popular question but often produced some impressive responses with plenty of synthesis across the period.

Candidates often established themes such as conscription and economic warfare and then used these to make useful comparisons across the wars of the period. Many did not agree with the American Civil War as the most important turning point and the most popular alternative was the First World War, although some weaker responses then chose to focus too much on information from the Question 1 passages in their response. Some weaker responses also just listed wars chronologically across the period with little attempt to make comparisons.

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