

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y312/01 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 Y312/01 series overview

Y312 is one of twenty one units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit 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.

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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed a limited understanding of one or both of the 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 overview

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.

Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation as to whether the prosecutions of witches in East Anglia were initiated from above or below. [30]

It is important that candidates take a holistic view of each passage and don't go through it line by line – what is the view of each passage about the issue in the question, i.e. what are they saying about whether the East Anglia hunts of 1645-7 were driven from above or below?

A considerable number of candidates did not read Passage A carefully. The first line states very clearly that 'The only English prosecutions which were obviously stimulated from above, in the continental manner, were the work of professional witch-finder, Matthew Hopkins, and his associate, John Stearne.' It was vital that candidates picked up on this even if they wanted to argue and evaluate that the interpretation was incorrect. Instead many focused more on the sentence that stated 'But the evidence does not support the view that, the Hopkins affair apart, many English witch-prosecutions were initiated from above', choosing to ignore 'the Hopkins affair apart' and argue that both passages suggested they were from below. In setting interpretation passages authors will try to provide contrasting passages so that candidates have a range of material they can use to evaluate the interpretations and this was no different.

Despite this, some then argued that Hopkins and Stearne's activities provide evidence that they were driven from above. In supporting the view in A, many used the evidence of the involvement of Grimston to show that they were driven from above, while some argued that despite this the fact local parishes paid for their services suggested they were concerned and brought them in and therefore the hunts were initiated from below. Unfortunately a number drifted off into lengthy comparisons with continental hunts whereas the question was on the prosecutions of witches in East Anglia.

Responses were generally much more confident in handling Passage B and were able to draw on the invitations made to Hopkins and Stearne and the fact they went only to parishes where they were invited. Most responses also referenced the instability caused by the Civil War and often had detailed knowledge about its economic impact. There was also discussion of the pecuniary gains made by Hopkins and Stearne and the extent to which showed it was driven from above. The range of examples used by candidates concerning the various trials was impressive, particularly where they were used to address whether the hunts were driven from above or below.

Exemplar 1 is an extract from a response that shows sound evaluation and it was placed in Level 5. This section considers Passage B, which as noted above, was often stronger, and provides an example of the clear linking of contextual knowledge to the interpretation.

Assessment for learning



Make sure candidates take an overview of the two passages. What is the main view of each passage about the issue in the question?

Exemplar 1

In passage B, Macfarlane claims that the initiation of prosecutions of witches in East Anglia came from below due to 'pre-existing and localised tensions'. This presents a convincingly accurate view of how prosecutions were initiated in East Anglia, given how important an accusation was in facilitating a prosecution. This claim is corroborated by the example of Margaret Moore, who was evicted from her cottage in the 1620s in favour of the Rawwood family. The Rawwood family went on to accuse her of bewitching them in the mid 1640s, demonstrating how Macfarlane's 'pre-existing' tensions functioned in initiating prosecutions. In this case, 20 years of localised tension from below initiated a prosecution.

supporting Macgarlane's claim. Macgarlane also claims that Hopkins and Stearne (and the prosecutions) could not have succeeded without wider support from below. This wider support, and tension, was partly due to the socio-economic crisis that the English Civil War (1642-51) had brought to the people of East Anglia. This affected the poorest most, contributing to Macgarlane's view that tensions from below initiated prosecutions. For example, the case of Elizabeth Gooding demonstrates how local tensions from below initiated prosecutions. She was accused by the shopkeeper Robert Taylor after he refused her request for credit and walked away mumbling. This clearly shows the tension due to poverty in East Anglia at the time, and how this tension led to an accusation from below (Robert Taylor) and how that accusation initiated the prosecution of Elizabeth Gooding. The cases of Moore,

Gooding, Clarke, and Lowes all show that Hopkins and Stearne relied on local accusations in order to initiate the prosecutions of witches in East Anglia. Therefore, Maggallane's rounded view that tensions grew below, exacerbated by the Civil War, inflation and high taxes, was the critical factor in initiating prosecution of witches in East Anglia.

Section B overview

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 in order 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.

Question 2*

2* 'Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the large-scale persecution of witches was the result of pressure from below.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

This was the most popular question and there was a considerable range in quality of responses. There were a significant number who simply listed and explained examples to show a range of causes of the large-scale hunts. The factors considered included pressure from above and below, social and economic tensions, war and religion. However, it was disappointing that many of these responses did not see that socio-economic issues were usually evidence of pressure from below as this would have helped to strengthen the argument. The question provided considerable opportunity for candidates to display the high level skill of synthesis with regional comparisons, but this opportunity was often missed and well-explained lists were more common.

In discussing pressure from below candidates could consider the social and economic tensions within villages as a result of population growth and economic hardships and this provided an opportunity for comparisons between East Anglia and parts of the Holy Roman Empire. There was also the chance to discuss the opportunity to remove those on the margins who presented a challenge in the declining economic climate or how the hunts provided the opportunity to settle old scores. Candidates did comment on the mini-ice age, but again comparisons between regions was not always evident. In considering other issues responses did discuss state power and there was again the opportunity to contrast the breakdown in authority in East Anglia and parts of the Holy Roman Empire and other parts of Europe and the impact this had on hunts.

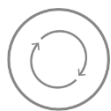
Exemplar 2 is taken from a response that was placed in Level 6 as there was synthesis throughout and this paragraph provides clear evidence of comparisons being made between regions.

Assessment for learning



Make sure candidates are aware of the main debates both for the in-depth topics but also the Thematic element

Assessment for learning



Focus on comparing the nature and scale of hunts in different regions, this will encourage candidates to think in terms of synthesis and not simple lists of example.

Exemplar 2

Pressure from above is arguably more significant as elites controlled whether accusations became persecutions. For example, the Inquisition of Italy and Spanish regions saw few persecutions arguably due to greater standards of evidence being required (free confessions needed for execution) and an increased belief that witches were just deluded old women who could be sent home with a warning and a penance. Contrastingly, King Christian IV of Denmark's interest in the Trier hunts of the 1580s and his relationship with King James VI/I of Scotland inspired him to prosecute witches as shown in the Copenhagen trials. These were linked to the North Berwick trials in which witches such as Dr Fian, Agnes Sampson and Barbara Napier were all accused of ^{using} witchcraft against the king's ship on his return from his marriage to Anne of Denmark. This supports the idea that pressure from above can encourage persecutions. However, the Cologne hunts do suggest that hunts could sometimes be out of elite control to some extent. For example Prince-Elector Ferdinand struggled to regain control of the hunts. Similarly English decentralisation during the civil war enabled local accusations during Hopkins' hunt to flourish. For example the case of Elizabeth Clarke due to the

illness of John Riet is wife. Overall however, pressure from above was necessary for convictions, meaning it is the more significant factor in determining the number of persecutions.

Question 3*

3* To what extent did the social and employment composition of those prosecuted for witchcraft change during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? [25]

This was the least popular question and those candidates who did attempt it often struggled to make comparisons and show the higher level skill of synthesis. Those who did attempt it often argued for continuity in many areas, which was acceptable, but needed to support this with examples from across the regions rather than simple assertions or generalisations.

The most obvious point of similarity was that women provided the majority of those persecuted, although stronger responses did make some comparisons with other areas such as Iceland and Russia. Many argued that this continuity was almost inevitable given the nature of the jobs that women did and how they could be associated with witchcraft.

In discussing the social composition, arguments were usually made that it was the less well off that were persecuted, but again stronger responses were able to make the comparison with Southern Germany, where, when the hunt developed momentum even the rich were persecuted. This led to a more general point that the more who were accused the further the social net spread and some did point to the prosecution of the lord mayor, parish priests and councillors in Trier or the vice chancellor and his wife in Bamberg.

Question 4*

4* To what extent did the response of authorities to witchcraft change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

[25]

This was a popular question and where candidates did not simply adopt a geographical listing of developments, there was considerable opportunity for comparisons. The most common themes where this was seen was in discussing torture and the growth of scepticism. Many were aware of how authorities' attitudes towards torture changed over the period and comparisons were made between states where it was not allowed, was abandoned at early stage or much later.

There was also discussion about the reliability of evidence and how states varied in terms of the level of evidence required, with discussions about the use of children as witnesses and spectral evidence. Many argued that the biggest change was in terms of scepticism, with this growing among members of the elite, who made up the 'authorities', due to the spread of new ideas and the Enlightenment and a growing belief that events attributed to the supernatural might have had natural causes.

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