

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y314/01 Summer 2023 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.

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Paper Y314/01 series overview

Y314/01 is one of twenty-one units for Paper 3 of 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:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question • were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words • were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge • 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 of Bismarck's role in the unification of Germany in the years from 1867 to 1871. [30]

Both interpretations were largely well understood, and many candidates were able to access the higher levels by using their own knowledge to interrogate the views on Bismarck's role in this period. Most were able to point to Interpretation A's focus on his more passive approach after victory over Austria in 1866 and compare that to Interpretation B's view of him as a 'brilliant opportunist'.

Fewer candidates this year made the mistake of evaluating the provenance of each source and there were fewer references to other named historians. Often candidates had good knowledge of the events of the years 1867-71 and were able to link this to the passages using evaluative language such as 'supported by' rather than just describing these events.

Less successful candidates knew very little and resorted to using the content of Passage B to evaluate Passage A and vice versa. There was also a marked tendency to write information outside of the dates in the question and there were plentiful references to Bismarck's early career and even his later policies such as state socialism.

Exemplar 1

1.	<p>Passage A 1857-1871</p> <p>Bismarck as opportunist - more passive</p>
	<p>Passage B</p>
	<p>Bismarck as opportunist - more direct in action</p>
	<p>Both passages A and B present convincing interpretations displaying Bismarck to be an opportunist; passage A suggests that Bismarck was primarily a passive leader, who seized opportunities to further Prussia's control over Germany only when presented to him. Passage B, in contrast, suggests Bismarck was considerably more confident in his abilities and whilst remaining an opportunist, was absolutely capable of forcibly achieving his aims via 'subtle diplomacy and naked militarism'. Overall, Passage B is more convincing as an interpretation, as its assertions of Bismarck's capability as well as opportunism are both are more convincing than the ^{more} passive role Passage A suggests.</p>
	<p>The strengths of Cowie and Wolfson's interpretation stem from its discussion of Bismarck's ability to exploit events presented to him; it evidences this by way of reference to the Hohenzollern candidature crisis that would provoke the Franco-Prussian war. The suggestion that Bismarck did not ask ^{Prince} Leopold to take the Spanish throne initially is correct; the Spanish Cortes (parliament) did so after the deposition of Queen Isabel, and thus Bismarck had no involvement, strengthening the idea suggestion that Bismarck was an opportunist. This is lent further weight</p>

as Bismarck shrewdly takes advantage of this situation. When the French foreign minister and William I met in Ems to discuss the crisis, Bismarck edited his telegram of the event to suggest both sides had deeply insulted each other. The 'Ems Telegram' provoked war between France and Prussia, a war Prussia decisively won. This would finally convince the southern states to join the North German Confederation and allow Bismarck to completely unite Germany as a result of nationalist sentiment. This demonstrates that Bismarck may have been passive in accepting only accepting opportunities as they came, but overall ~~was~~ took great advantage of his these, thus making it an accurate depiction of his role. However, the lack of scope and initiative Bismarck is suggested to have in this ~~interpretation~~ interpretation make it less convincing. It suggests that 'French opinion' was what drove Bismarck to take 'peaceful steps' to protect Prussia. This is not a compelling argument as Bismarck's belief in Realpolitik (practical, not ideological, power increase) meant he ~~kept~~ ~~desire~~ favoured designs that would continue to increase Prussia's strength. When Napoleon III made compensatory demands ~~in 1866 after the Austro-Prussian War~~, for neutrality in Prussia's conflicts, Bismarck intentionally pushed France away from the southern German states and towards Luxembourg, suggesting he wanted control of them to be Prussian - unification ~~was~~ would be a huge practical power increase for Prussia. He also outmanoeuvred France intentionally over control of Luxembourg.

and denied Napoleon III control of the ~~entire~~ area. This demonstrates Bismarck's intentional outmanoeuvring of France and undermines passage A's 'appropriate yet peaceful' defense. It suggests Bismarck took, overall, the passages' focus on ~~opport~~ opportunism is a ^{convincing} ~~convincing~~ assertion of Bismarck's role, but is severely weakened by its mistaken view of Bismarck's lack of initiative.

Passage B's focus on Bismarck's opportunism as well as his ~~initial~~ initiative, on the other hand, makes it significantly more convincing. It suggests Bismarck used both subtle diplomacy and 'naked militarism' in order to unify Germany; this is supported by his actions in the Franco-Prussian War as well as later negotiations. Bismarck intentionally began the war ~~subtly~~ using the Ems Telegram, but used 'naked militarism' to win the war. After the battle of Sedan, in which the French leader Napoleon III had been taken prisoner, Bismarck continued to use the army to pressure France into surrender until the army was firing artillery on Paris. This total military domination shows Bismarck's use of militarism to unite the German people in Francophobia as well as ~~to~~ destroy opponents of Prussia and unification. The Treaty of Frankfurt bore harsh terms to prevent France from coming back as a powerful enemy such as reparations the same as in 1919. This makes the interpretation more convincing as it shows Bismarck's ~~to~~ use of Realpolitik through his diplomacy as well as militarism to achieve the ultimate power increase, German unification.

However, the interpretation ~~loses~~ loses weight as it suggests 'no statesmen could have complete confidence' in how Europe and Germany would change in the 1860s. This is undermined by the reliable strength of the Prussian ~~possi~~ position in the lead-up to unification. Prussia's control of the Rhineland gave it a massive industrial complex that could produce new military technology that allowed them to dominate conflict, such as the breech loaded rifle (~~5~~ five times faster than the musket-loaded rifle) as well as massive transportation links (five times the number of locomotives in Prussia than Austria). This placed Prussia in a dominant economic and military position in ~~the 1860s~~ the 1860s, and this explains how Bismarck could have confidence in Prussia's dominance over Germany and politically; wars ~~was~~ he began would ~~end~~ end favourably for ~~him~~ Prussia. As a result, the interpretation's assertion that Statesmen could not predict the outcome of the period is unfounded; ~~what~~ Prussia's strengths in Europe ~~that~~ could be established to result in its dominance. Overall, interpretation B is very ~~convincing~~ convincing in asserting Bismarck's role, and loses only some weight to its view of unpredictability.

In conclusion, Bismarck's role in unification is much more convincingly portrayed by Passage B, as it considers several factors in Bismarck's importance, such as his opportunism, but also his ~~strengths~~ strength and initiative in controlling events in Europe. Passage A, despite

		combining a convincing view of Bismarck's opportunism, ultimately fails to correctly depict him as any more than an opportunist, ignoring his realpolitik view and emphasising an uncensurable passive nature.
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This was a strong response to Question 1 which was given Level 6, 30 marks. The candidate took an overview of the argument in each of the passages in relation to the issue in the question.

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 answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2*

2* 'Nationalism in Germany had mass appeal only in the early twentieth century.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the most popular essay question. There were many successful responses which showed sustained synthesis throughout and often argued that there was evidence of mass nationalism in other periods. A good idea was to develop themes such as military, political and cultural nationalism that led to comparisons across the period within the themes. There were interesting discussions about 1919 and what happened to mass nationalism as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and the opposition to Napoleon at the beginning of the period was also well understood by many.

Less successful responses wrote at length about the twentieth century and then ran out of time when it came to covering the rest of the period. Many essays left the unification period out completely. Those that adopted a chronological approach found it hard to synthesise and sometimes ignored the word 'mass' in the title.

Question 3*

3* How important was the effect of economic change on nationalism and national unity in the period from 1789 to 1919? [25]

This was generally well answered and responses either focused on economic change or compared it to other factors such as war and political change which was a more popular approach. While nationalism and national unity were mentioned in the question to explicitly include the period after formal unification, there was no need to directly refer to both as national unity de facto includes nationalism and its desire for unity and vice versa.

Most candidates understood the role of the Zollverein and industrialisation and a few were confident on protectionism as well. There were a few responses which focused too narrowly on the middle of the period.

Question 4*

- 4* 'The liberals contributed more than any other political group to the unification of Germany in the period from 1789 to 1919.' How far do you agree? [25]

This was the least popular essay and there was some misunderstanding about its focus. While stronger responses could compare the role of the liberals to other political groups such as conservatives and socialists there were some who wanted to compare the liberals to individuals such as Metternich, Bismarck and Wilhelm II. Some responses effectively brought in the centre party and pressure groups and established themes such as political, economic and cultural and then compared the role of political groups within each theme. A few only talked about the liberals and coverage of the early period was generally weak.

Misconception



Question 4 asked candidates to compare the role of the liberals to other political groups, not individuals such as Metternich, Bismarck and Wilhelm II. Candidates should be reminded to read the question carefully, to make sure they understand its focus.

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