

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y218/01 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 Y218/01 series overview

Y218/01 is one of twenty four units in Paper 2 for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about 100 years through a short-answer essay and a traditional essay. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short-answer essay and a traditional essay and candidates had to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short-answer essay question, candidates needed to consider the significance or importance of both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

To do well on the traditional essay, candidates needed to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. To reach the higher levels, candidates needed to assess the issues they discussed and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short-answer essay • reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important • linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question • discussed at least two relevant issues in depth • gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic • reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question • made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considered only one of the issues or discussed one in a superficial way • produced a judgement that was not supported and was therefore assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response • were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question • showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay • were unable to support their response with relevant or accurate material • did not focus on the precise wording of the question • made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Which of the following was the more important cause of the First World War?

(i) The aims and policies of Austria-Hungary

(ii) The aims and policies of Germany

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

[10]

The purpose of this question was for candidates to provide a comparative analysis of these two issues in relation to their importance in causing the First World War. Most candidates had some understanding of the aims and policies of Germany and Austria-Hungary in the years before the First World War and why both countries caused tensions. Candidates tended to understand Germany's role better than Austria-Hungary's role.

Most candidates had knowledge of Germany's actions in the Moroccan Crises as well as its encouragement of Austria-Hungary through the Alliance System and 'blank cheque'. Better responses explained the policies of 'Weltpolitik' and noted that the existence of the Schlieffen Plan suggested Germany was planning for war. Most responses discussed Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908, and the ultimatum given to Serbia during the July Crisis of 1914. Better responses examined Austria-Hungary's involvement in the Balkan Wars.

The responses which reached the higher levels were those that provided a judgement usually in a concluding paragraph as shown in Exemplar 1.

Exemplar 1

Overall, it was the German aims and policies that was the most important cause of World War One. They were determined to start a conflict in the hopes of fulfilling their imperialistic goals. They made no attempt to ease tensions and often strived to increase them for example, the Moroccan Crisis and the Balkan League of Support. While Austria-Hungarian foreign policy was overly aggressive towards Serbia, it was German backing that gave them the confidence they need to commit to a war. The German support also made the isolation of the conflict impossible through the activation of Alliance Systems. Therefore, the aims and policies of Germany was the most important cause of World War One.

Exemplar 1 is taken from a Level 5 response. It demonstrates a good attempt to provide a supported judgement in a concluding paragraph for a response to Question 1 (a).

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* 'The years 1918 to 1941 were a period of consistent Japanese aggression.' How far do you agree? **[20]**

The purpose of this question was for the candidates to discuss whether the years 1918 to 1941 was a period of consistent Japanese aggression. Therefore, candidates should have provided knowledge and analysis to argue that it was consistently aggressive and counter arguments that it was not consistent.

Most candidates had a good understanding of Japanese aggression in the 1930's and gave a range of examples to support this, including the rise of nationalism, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the Sino-Japanese War, and the attack on Pearl Harbour. However, only a minority of candidates fully engaged and questioned the idea of 'consistent aggression'.

The candidates who provided arguments that Japanese aggression was inconsistent explored Japanese actions in the 1920's. This included involvement in the League of Nations, the Washington Naval Treaty, and the Kellogg Briand Pact. This enabled the very best candidates to differentiate between the years 1918-31 and the years 1931-41 effectively.

Assessment for learning

When providing responses for the traditional style essay question (b), candidates should make sure that they reach interim judgements at the end of each factor and a concluding judgement in order to access Level 5 and Level 6 of the mark scheme.

Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) Which of the following consequences of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 caused more problems for international relations during the period from 1919 to 1935?
- (i) The treatment of Italy
 - (ii) The treatment of Germany

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

[10]

The focus of this question should be that candidates provide a comparative analysis of the importance of these two issues in relation to the problems of international relations during the period from 1919 to 1935.

A reasonable number of candidates understood that the treatment of Germany and Italy at the Paris Peace Conference 1919 eventually led to the rise of fascism in both countries. Candidates tended to have a better understanding of the treatment of Germany compared to Italy. Better responses did make a comparison but relatively few made the distinction that Germany was defeated in the war and Italy regarded the war as a 'mutilated victory'. Some candidates used this question as an opportunity to describe the terms of the Treaty of Versailles while focusing on Germany rather than Italy.

In terms of Germany, most responses discussed the terms of the treaty and explained why it led to resentment that would eventually result in the rise of Hitler. Better responses understood that the treatment of Germany led to political and economic instability in the 1920's that undermined the Weimar Republic.

In terms of Italy, most responses understood Italy's disappointment at the land terms of the treaties which led to the rise of nationalism and Mussolini. The better responses linked this to the occupation of Fiume, the invasion of Corfu and Mussolini's involvement with the League of Nations. Very few candidates made references to the other treaties in the Paris Peace Conference, most only made references to the Treaty of Versailles.

Misconception



Some responses thought that Italy had lost the First World War rather than being a victor and therefore, were not aware that many Italians regarded the war and the treaty as a 'mutilated victory'.

Question 2 (b)*

- (b)* 'Poor relations between Russia and Britain, and between Russia and France, were the most important reasons for the failure of appeasement in Europe during the years 1929 to 1939.'
How far do you agree? [20]

The focus of this question was for candidates to analyse and assess the reasons for the failure of appeasement. The candidates have been given that 'poor relations between Russia and Britain, and between Russia and France' was the most important reason for this failure. Some candidates performed well by considering a range of factors, including relations between Russia, Britain and France, the actions of Hitler, the actions of Mussolini, the actions of the League of Nations, and the impact of the Great Depression.

However, some candidates attempted to assess the reasons by describing the events associated with appeasement rather than analysing the factors. Some responses understood that poor relations between Russia, Britain and France led to the isolation of Russia and the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the failure of appeasement. More accomplished responses went on to examine Hitler's aggression and expansionist aims and why this contributed to the failure of appeasement. Weak responses were limited in their knowledge and understanding of international relations during the interwar period.

Exemplar 2

In conclusion, despite Russia's poor relations with ~~the~~ Britain and France meaning they were in a poorer negotiating position and weaker encouraging fascist expansion it cannot be blamed as the main reason appeasement failed. Instead it can be seen that with or without Russian support Britain and France's policy of appeasement was destined to fail due to the aggressive expansionist policy of Hitler who ~~is~~ prepared and seemed to want war

Exemplar 2, taken from a Level 5 response, demonstrates a good attempt to provide a judgement after the response has given detailed knowledge and analysis for the reasons for the failure of appeasement in Question 2 (b).

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