

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B
(SCHOOLS HISTORY
PROJECT)

J411

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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.

Section A overview

The majority of candidates did well to respond to the initial, short questions and showed good knowledge of features of the Mughal Empire. Candidates did well to use their contextual knowledge for the summary question and there were some fantastically comprehensive examples of this seen during the assessment window with good numbers of candidates attaining the higher marks. Many candidates were able to express the importance of Chitor although some answers did not express the consequences of this success to further develop their explanation. The essay questions gave candidates a good opportunity to express their knowledge and there were many good explanations offered although some candidates found their levels of attainment to be limited due to the lack of balance or sustaining an argument over time.

Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Name **one** battle won by Babur during his invasion of India. [1]

The majority of candidates gave a solid example and gained 1 mark.

Question 1 (b)

- (b) Give **one** example of a religion which was shown tolerance by Akbar. [1]

Most candidates gave an accurate example with a few minor exceptions.

Question 1 (c)

- (c) Give **one** example of how Shah Jahan showed off his wealth. [1]

The majority of answers centred around architectural or decorative features that were creditable.

Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the religious policies of Aurangzeb. Support your summary with examples. [9]

Candidates who answered this question effectively focused on the policies of Aurangzeb. Candidates demonstrated a wide range of contextual knowledge and showed understanding of change and continuity for other groups affected by Aurangzeb's policies and ideological standpoint. For example, the most effective responses were able to give an example of a policy often related to persecution and then the cause and effect of this policy. Less effective responses were based upon religious beliefs and ideas rather than policies. It would be a good teaching point for candidates to consider the nature of what is meant by policy and the difference between this and a set of values. The most practical way to approach this would be to teach candidates to consider the intended impact of policies and the sort of effects that they sought to bring about. In this case, the concept of religious policies could be explained.

Advice for Question 2

Advice for this question is to acknowledge the experience of successful candidates who tended to reach Level 3 when, commonly, three solid pieces of supporting evidence were used in their summary which showed a concrete understanding of the stem of the question.

Question 3

- 3 Why was Akbar's victory at Chitor (Chittorgarh) so important in the extension of the Mughal Empire? Explain your answer. [10]

Candidates answered this question well and many were able to give good contextual understanding around Chitor and other achievements in extending the empire. Candidates that were successful in answering this question were most commonly able to explain the importance of gaining control over Rajasthan and did this to explain the wider benefits of this control. Fewer candidates explained Akbar's power and control following the deaths of Bairum Khan and Adhan Khan. Some of the more developed responses explained how Akbar's territorial gains also meant the introduction of a central government which remained in place for more than 200 years. This was a limited number of candidates but it demonstrates the importance of teaching impact through this particular study.

Advice for Question 3

The key advice to candidates for this question is to ensure that they are fully explaining their evidence in reference to the question. This question does not require a list of evidence; it requires candidates to select the most applicable evidence and to explain this fully in reference to the question. Advice is to that candidates are specifically taught to consider impact and consequence in the context of Akbar's rule.

Question 4

- 4* How far do you agree that Shah Jahan's achievements in architecture were the most significant legacy of his reign? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Candidates approached this question with a wide range of contextual knowledge about Shah Jahan's achievements. The best responses showed balance between different architectural achievements and other successes and legacies to develop a comparison between multiple themes.

The best examples of contextual knowledge came from candidates who were able to use the weakening of the treasury following military campaigns e.g. attempts to conquer Samarkand and Kandahar as well as his social conscience shown through hospitals and rest houses. The most common problem was that some candidates focused exclusively on architectural achievement with the Red Fort, Pearl Mosque and Taj Mahal being the most prevalent examples but they did not develop the second order concept of significance to his legacy. Advice to teachers would be to carefully consider how each achievement contributed to Shah Jahan's legacy and challenge candidates to be able to explain which the more significant achievements were and why to develop a more nuanced understanding. Some candidates presented quite a descriptive response to this question which was limited in that understanding.

Advice for Question 4

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it. This doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response but the other side of the argument should be considered, even if they are rejected. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Question 5

- 5* 'Humayun's rule was a disastrous failure.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer. [18]

Candidates showed strong knowledge of the personal story of Humayun and some were able to align this to a greater assertion of success or failure. Candidates who did not answer this question effectively gave a narrative of the story of Humayun but did not consider the impact of his story. The most effective answers referred to specific examples and events.

The most effective examples of contextual knowledge outside of Humayun's years of exile were the repeated defeats by Sher Shah; comparison with other Mughals such as his son, his restoration of Mughal power; the longstanding influence he brought of Persian art and architecture as well as his expansion of the empire in a short time thereby leaving a legacy for later Mughals to continue.

The biggest problem for the few candidates who chose to answer this question was the linear focus on Humayun's personal story of exile without due regard for explanation of wider failures and achievements. It would be sensible for centres to consider how to broaden the scope of teaching his legacy so that it does not become a narrative without sharper analysis. It may be that his exile is one element of failure which can be contrasted with other themes of leadership. The main concern here was that candidates were not able to stand back and identify and explain failures but got too close to writing a story about the individual without the depth of understanding expected at this level.

Advice for Question 5

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it. This doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response but the other side of the argument should be considered, even if it is rejected. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Section B overview

Candidates did well with the single source question and were confident to give a range of contextual features. There were occasions when the length of context outweighed the actual focus on the evidence which is a balance that candidates must look to strike. The multiple source and interpretation question was answered most commonly by the description or explanation of each piece of evidence in turn. However, many candidates did not explain the utility of the source and rather focused on reliability which meant they did not access the higher marks. The terror essay question was answered really well by the majority of candidates who selected it for completion showing a range of factors to qualify their judgement. The second essay question was less popular and some candidates did not adequately refer to this in a balanced way demonstrating awareness of the benefactors of Nazi policy.

Question 6

- 6 What can Source A tell us about Hitler and the Nazi Party in January 1933? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer. [7]

Candidates did well to pick out many inferences from the source for example that Hitler was anti-Communist or that he wanted to make Germany strong and powerful again. Many candidates supported these inferences with a quote/quotes from the text which was excellent. Those who excelled at this question were able to explain the intended impact of this speech which was to persuade the people of Germany to vote for the Nazis in the March 5th election 1933 as they didn't have the majority vote. Candidates who explained this achieved Level 3 on this question. Candidates who didn't achieve as well on this question gave too much contextual knowledge which wasn't needed to score well on this particular question; this is a test of historical skill not historical knowledge. It is also worth noting that many candidates were giving contextual knowledge which was not only not applicable to the question but was also not applicable to the new SHP Germany specification for example hyperinflation and the Treaty of Versailles. This is not needed and will not be tested due to it not being on the new specification, it did not reduce candidate's marks but did not enhance them either as many focused on evidence outside of the time period rather than focusing on the intended impact of the source.

Advice for Question 6

Candidates should not stray too much from the source which they have been given. That is the focal point of the question and therefore candidates are encouraged to use this and explain it in reference to the question showing their understanding of the source in hand. Candidates should be encouraged to deal with the source in depth rather than deploying contextual knowledge which too often was irrelevant to the question. Candidates should aim to pick out the intended impact of the source and should also be making inferences rather than giving surface features. The best answers also had support from source A showing explicit use of the source in their response.

Question 7

- 7 How useful are Sources B and C and Interpretation D for a historian studying total war in Germany between 1943 and 1945? In your answer, refer to the two sources and the interpretation as well as your own knowledge. [15]

Candidates generally described B, C and D well however this description severely limited marks on this question as they should have been explaining B, C and D's utility. Many candidates achieved only 3 marks on this question as a result of not linking B, C and D to the question's focus which was 'Total War'. It was clear that some candidates didn't know the difference between Germany being at war and Total War. Candidates were often too focused on evaluating the provenance of B, C and D but often got dragged into explaining why they were unreliable and therefore not useful. This limited marks on this question as the focus of the question is utility - what a historian could learn from the sources.

Candidates who achieved well on this question were able to link B to Total War and either used the source's content to explain how enthusiastic the nation was towards Total War making it useful, or using contextual knowledge such as the war going badly following the invasion of Russia speeches such as these were needed to raise morale for Total War which was unpopular at times. Many candidates struggled with C as it was a British source; many described the image but didn't link this to Total War in their explanation of utility. Those who excelled tended to describe the destruction of cities such as Dresden and Berlin during Total War by using their contextual knowledge, those who used the provenance of the source as content to explain its utility tended to explain that the British people must have been feeling guilty about the destruction caused by Total War therefore meaning the government needed to produce propaganda to alleviate this guilt and prove that destruction of cities was the only way to destroy the Nazis – hence the swastika in the image. Those who were able to explain the utility of Interpretation D for studying Total War were often candidates who explained using the content that the Nazis needed to hide the reality of Total War as much as possible to win people over. Those who used context well linked the source to the extreme policies during Total War in the East such as the Holocaust, for example. Unfortunately many candidates tried to explain the Holocaust in reference to D but often veered away from the interpretation when they did this or didn't explain how it was linked to Total War. Candidates who explained the intended impact of B, C and/or D in reference to the focus of the question achieved the highest marks for this question. Candidates who then made a judgement on utility of B, C and D overall were able to achieve full marks on this question – this did not have to be a comprehensive judgement.

The main problem with responses for this question came from candidates explaining why the sources were not useful or picking out irrelevant information from the provenance to discredit B, C and D for being unreliable which is not the focus of the question. There were very few candidates who explained their evidence of B, C and D in reference to Total War leading to many candidates achieving 3 marks.

Advice for Question 7

Candidates should aim to explain all three of the interpretations/sources. They should aim to use quotes from these to support their points as this will ensure they remain focused on them throughout their response rather than veering towards contextual knowledge only. Candidates should be encouraged to deal with each of B, C and D separately as there is no requirement for candidates to compare and contrast the interpretations/sources. Candidates should explain inferences or the intended impact of the three interpretations/sources in reference to the topic in the question – in this instance Total War, if they are to achieve the highest marks.

Question 8

- 8* 'Terror was more important than propaganda in controlling people in Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1939.' How far do you agree with this view? [18]

This question tended to be the question most candidates opted for. Many of the candidates dealt with the topics in the question relatively well. However, there were some candidates who didn't support their arguments with specific contextual examples e.g. with methods for terror or propaganda. As this is a depth study candidates should ensure their arguments are supported with specific contextual knowledge.

Those candidates who dealt with terror well tended to explain the role of the SA, SS and Gestapo and how they helped with controlling people in Germany e.g. the Jewish community during Kristallnacht or the fear of the Gestapo for encouraging denunciations. Those candidates who explained how their evidence of terror helped to control people in Germany tended to achieve high marks on this question. However, there were many examples of lists of terror groups or description of terror which meant candidates couldn't access higher level marks as they had not linked their evidence back to the question.

Those candidates who dealt with propaganda well tended to explain examples such as films, posters and speeches in specific detail. Those candidates who explained how their evidence of propaganda helped to control people in Germany tended to achieve high marks on this question. However, there were many examples of lists of propaganda or description of propaganda methods which meant candidates couldn't access higher level marks as they had not linked their evidence back to the question. There were also responses which included other methods of control such as education but candidates didn't link this to propaganda through textbooks for example, and as a result of this they became separate factors to those in the question which meant they were not applicable.

Generally candidates did attempt a judgement for this question however it is worth noting many candidates didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled on this question were those who picked evidence outside of the time period, for most this consisted of explanation of the White Rose movement, the Holocaust and the execution of the Edelweiss Pirates in Cologne in 1944. Candidates need to read dates carefully to ensure all of their evidence is applicable.

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it. This doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response but the other side of the argument should be considered. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained whether terror or propaganda was the most significant for controlling the German public. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Advice for Question 8

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it. This doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response but the other side of the argument should be considered, even if it is rejected. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained whether terror or propaganda was the most significant for controlling the German public. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

Question 9

9* 'Nazi policies made the lives of German people worse between 1933 and 1939.' How far do you agree with this view? **[18]**

Generally this question was not answered well by candidates. Candidates who addressed why life got worse for the people of Germany tended to focus on minority groups such as the Jewish community giving examples such as the Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht as evidence in support. Those candidates who explained how their evidence proved life got worse for people in Germany tended to achieve high marks on this question. However there were candidates who simply described bad treatment rather than policies such as anti-Semitism or segregation for example.

Candidates who dealt with the other side of the argument well tended to explain how many Aryans benefitted, for example due to employment policies which saw many people back to work through schemes such as the autobahn which increased their quality of life, or women being awarded the motherhood cross. Those candidates who explained how their evidence proved life got better for people in Germany tended to achieve high marks on this question. However this side of the essay was generally dealt with less well by candidates and there were many candidates who simply described policies such as Strength Through Joy without explaining why they improved people's quality of life.

Candidates generally did attempt a judgement for this question however it is worth noting many candidates didn't have sufficient evidence in the main body of their argument to qualify for judgement marks. Those who had produced a balanced argument with sufficient supporting evidence tended to do a good job on this conclusion – those that were the strongest tended to consider both sides or have a focus on long term/short term distinction between factors.

The candidates who struggled on this question were those who picked evidence outside of the time period or country, for most this consisted of explanation of Holocaust for Jewish lives getting worse which is not applicable to the time period, or ghettos which were in occupied territory. Candidates need to ensure their evidence is applicable to all demands of the question. Some candidates also decided to use the two factors from Question 8 as a focus for Question 9 however generally this led to description as this question was best answered in terms of policies towards different groups of people.

Advice for Question 9

Candidates should aim to write a response with an element of balance to it. This doesn't mean they need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, the other side of the argument should be considered, even if it is rejected. Candidates who performed well consistently linked their evidence back to the question in order to prove how their evidence explained whether the lives of the German people were made worse. Candidates should aim to have a sustained argument throughout their response; generally speaking candidates who achieved full marks had a consistent argument throughout their essay so that their judgement was clear even before a conclusion had been written.

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