OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B (SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411
For first teaching in 2016

J411/38 Summer 2018 series
Version 1

Contents

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.

Paper J411/38 series overview

This was the first examination of the new History B (Schools History Project). The new paper was very different from what has gone before, with a whole section of the paper for Making of America being purely knowledge based. There was also a slightly different focus to the Depth Study, with two of the questions being source based with just one additional essay question.

Section A overview

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for the thoroughness of their preparation for this new GCSE. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions. The range and quality of responses was varied but on the most part candidates produced impressive responses in the essay questions on the Gold Rush and the Native Americans.

Question 1

1   (a)   Name **one** slave state added to the USA between 1793 and 1838.   [1]

     (b)   Name **one** Indian tribe living on the Plains between 1839 and 1860.   [1]

     (c)   Give **one** example of a difficulty faced by Homesteaders farming the Plains.   [1]

The majority of candidates struggled with the dates in Question 1(a). The most common response to this question was 'Texas' which is outside of the time period. Candidates generally achieved well on 1(b) with the Lakota Sioux being the most common answer. Similarly, candidates also performed well on Question 1(c) with the majority speaking about extremes of weather or locusts destroying crops. It is worth noting that candidates only need to give one word or one phrase responses for these gateway questions, some candidates wasted time writing the question out or writing a short paragraph which isn't necessary for these 1 mark responses.

Question 2

2   Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the American expansion from 1789 to 1838. Support your summary with examples.   [9]

This question was answered relatively poorly by candidates for two reasons. The first reason was that many were unable to distinguish the difference between 'expansion' and 'migration' and the second reason was ignoring the date constraints on the question. As a result many candidates gave evidence such as the Mormons, the gold rush and the transcontinental railroad which were not only out of the time period within the question, but were also not applicable to the question focus of expansion as they would have been evidence for migration instead. Candidates who did very well on this question tended to describe three pieces of evidence which showed the causes or consequences of expansion for example the Louisiana Purchase or the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

Advice for Question 2

Candidates tended to reach Level 3 when three solid pieces of supporting evidence were used in their summary which showed a concrete understanding of the stem of the question – in this case 'expansion'. They were also aware of the date constraints and were able to link their summary to a second order concept such as cause or consequence.

Question 3

3   Why did Reconstruction do little to improve the lives of many African Americans? Support your answer with examples.   **[10]**

This question was generally answered well by candidates. Those who did well were able to explain evidence such as the Black codes, the influence of the KKK and the role of sharecroppers – these examples were those that were explained by the majority of candidates who performed well however there was a range of evidence used by candidates which covered the specification well and showed a solid understanding of Reconstruction. The main problems candidates faced were mixing up racial groups within America – Native Americans and African Americans. Some also listed lots of evidence without explaining it which severely limited the marks available to candidates. The other major issue was not having secure knowledge of when Reconstruction was. There were a significant amount of responses which focused on Civil Rights rather than Reconstruction.

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 - in this instance: why Reconstruction did little for African Americans. The candidates who achieved high marks on this question had specific evidence within their explanations e.g. the term sharecroppers or specific amendments in the constitution which effected African American lives.

Question 4*

4* 'The discovery of gold was the main reason for migration to the West between 1839 and 1860.'
How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.   **[18]**

Candidates generally coped well with the given topic in this question. Many were able to address this and explain evidence in reference to how it increased migration. Many candidates spoke of Sutter's Mill, Polk's confirmation of gold and the Pike's Peak rush, and explained why this caused migration west. However, some candidates missed out on explanation marks when they turned their evidence into description rather than explanation of why it encouraged migration. For example, many described the treacherous journey west and how there was actually little gold when they arrived. This naturally drew their explanation away from the focus which should have been how gold persuaded people to migrate west.

Many candidates did well to pick out other factors which increased migration for example persecution of religious groups such as the Mormons, the economic collapse in the East and Manifest Destiny. Those candidates who then explained how these issues caused migration to the west achieved high marks on this question.

Candidates generally speaking 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 was through giving evidence of the Homestead Act of 1862, some candidates also referenced the transcontinental railroad. Candidates need to read dates carefully to ensure all of their evidence is applicable.

Advice for Question 4

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, 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 why there was migration to the west. 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* 'The most significant change for the Plains Indians in the period 1877–1900 was the destruction of the buffalo.' How far do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.   **[18]**

Candidates generally dealt with the topic in the question very well, many candidates understood the importance of the buffalo to the Plains Indians and were able to give comprehensive examples of how the buffalo was used and therefore why their destruction caused such a huge change to the Plains Indians. Many also explained the spiritual importance of the buffalo using evidence such as the Ghost Dance alongside the nomadic significance of the buffalo through hunting. The candidates who struggled with this question tended to list lots of uses of the buffalo without explaining why their destruction caused a change. Many also didn't make distinct points, grouping all of their evidence on the buffalo together reducing the availability of explanation marks.

Other factors that candidates picked out generally tended to be the impact of reservations, the suppression of their culture by white Americans through boarding schools for example, and homesteaders fencing in their land. Where these were explained in reference to the question in terms of why they were such a significant change for the Plains Indians candidates achieved high marks for this question.

Candidates generally speaking 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 description of the Indian Wars and Trail of Tears as well as explanation of the Indian Removal Act. Candidates need to read dates carefully to ensure all of their evidence is applicable.

Advice for Question 5

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, 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 which change was most significant to the Plains Indians. 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 have adapted well to the source/interpretation centred section of this paper on the Aztecs and Spanish Conquest. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all of the questions; many used the sources/interpretations to make inferences, which was excellent. The range and quality of responses was varied however we expect the quality of evaluation of sources/interpretations particularly for Question 7 to continue to improve over the following years of assessment.

Question 6

6   What can Source A tell us about the extent and nature of Moctezuma's Aztec empire? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer.   **[7]**

Candidates did well to pick out the inference that the nature of Moctezuma's Aztec Empire was powerful, large, dominant and cruel to list a few examples. Many candidates supported these inferences with a quote from the text which was excellent. Those who excelled at this question were able to explain the intended impact of this account which was to inform or persuade people of the evil of the Aztec rule in comparison to the Spanish. 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.

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 the nature of Spanish rule in Mexico? 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 'the nature of Spanish rule in Mexico'.

Candidates who achieved well on this question were able to explain source B through the understanding that Charles V was keen to blame the Spanish in Mexico and not those back in Spain for the cruel punishment of the Mexicans, indicating the nature of Spanish rule in Mexico was not supposed to be as harsh as it actually was. Those who linked source C to immorality of Spanish rule in Mexico either through using the content of the source or contextual knowledge received reward for their explanation. Similarly, those who picked up the harshness of the encomienda system by using Interpretation D from either the clues in the image such as the whip or through contextual knowledge achieved higher marks. 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 are not useful or picking out irrelevant information from the provenance to explain why the source is unreliable. The candidates should avoid comments like this as this question is about utility to a historian not reliability. Many of these types of responses tended to remain in Level 1. Surface features of B, C and D should not be the focus of this question – candidates are being encouraged to evaluate the sources in reference to the question by considering why their content is useful often by making inferences.

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 the nature of Spanish rule in Mexico if they are to achieve the highest marks.

Question 8

8* 'The most important reason for the Spanish expansion into the Caribbean and central America was the desire to spread the Christian faith.' How far do you agree with this view? **[18]**

Candidates generally achieved well on this question with many achieving at least Level 3. Candidates generally dealt with the factor in the question relatively well, many candidates chose to explain that due to Spain's strong Catholic faith there was a desire to convert more people to their religion. This was applicable but a little simplistic and many candidates only gave this one argument, those candidates who achieved high marks on this question tended to be much more specific for example some explained the defeat of the Muslims in 1492 and the subsequent Papal Bull which encouraged Spain to spread Christianity further. Those candidates who then explained why this was such a significant reason for expansion secured explanation marks for this question.

Candidates struggled more with explaining other reasons for expansion with many candidates giving very vague factors with little specific support e.g. because they wanted more power or money. Those candidates who achieved higher marks for this half of the essay tended to be more specific e.g. with power explaining this was important due to competing with the Portuguese empire which was being established in Africa. Those candidates who then explained why other factors such as these were such a significant reason for expansion secured explanation marks for this question.

Generally speaking, 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.

Advice for Question 8

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, 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 why the Spanish expanded into the Caribbean and central America. 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 9

9*   'The massacre of Aztec nobles in May 1520 was a disaster for the Spanish.' How far do you agree
     with this view?   [18]

This question was answered relatively poorly by candidates due to many telling a story of what happened during the massacre rather than focusing on the successes and failures of the massacre.

Those candidates who dealt well with the statement tended to explain how the massacre's consequences were the Spanish being surrounded by the Tenochtitlan people and that they then faced attacks as a result, many others explained that it led to the night of sorrows. The candidates who achieved high marks here did not fall into description; they fully explained why their evidence proved that the massacre was a disaster for the Spanish.

Candidates who also explained the counter side of this statement tended to consider arguments such as the massacre weakened the Aztecs by removing many of their most powerful leaders and that the uprising of the Aztecs was likely to happen anyway with or without the massacre therefore reducing its significance as a disaster. The candidates who achieved high marks here did not fall into description they fully explained why their evidence proved that the massacre was not a complete disaster.

Candidates generally speaking 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 to get out of Level 1 or 2 on this question were those who told a story about the Aztec massacre. Many candidates had excellent knowledge but slipped into this and their response was one filled with description rather than explanation for whether the massacre was a complete disaster.

Advice for Question 9

Although candidates did not need the same amount of arguments on each side of their response, 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 the Aztec massacre was a complete disaster. 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.

Supporting you

For further details of this qualification please visit the subject webpage.

Review of results

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our review of results services. For full information about the options available visit the OCR website. If university places are at stake you may wish to consider priority service 2 reviews of marking which have an earlier deadline to ensure your reviews are processed in time for university applications.

activeresults

Active Results offers a unique perspective on results data and greater opportunities to understand students' performance.

It allows you to:

- Review reports on the **performance of individual candidates**, cohorts of students and whole centres

- **Analyse results** at question and/or topic level

- **Compare your centre** with OCR national averages or similar OCR centres.

- Identify areas of the curriculum where students excel or struggle and help **pinpoint strengths and weaknesses** of students and teaching departments.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/active-results/

CPD Hub
Your route to OCR's teacher training

Attend one of our popular CPD courses to hear exam feedback directly from a senior assessor or drop in to an online Q&A session.

https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

Looking for a resource?

There is now a quick and easy search tool to help find **free** resources for your qualification:

www.ocr.org.uk/i-want-to/find-resources/