

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

***HISTORY A
(EXPLAINING THE
MODERN WORLD)***

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/08 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

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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.

Paper J410/08 series overview

This was the first examination of the new 9-1 Specification A. This new specification 'Paper 2' differs from timed examination papers on the old 'legacy' specification, focusing exclusively on AO1 and AO2. It presented the challenge of a totally new focus of study - migration to Britain across a period spanning a thousand years – as well as question types that centres were unfamiliar with. Question 3 focused on a new area; that of significance, previously the domain of controlled assessment questions. Question 4 required a more developed, thematic essay-style that previous candidates would have found unfamiliar.

Candidates' responses, for the most part, demonstrated a good level of preparation for this component. Their answers appeared to reflect a breadth and depth of learning that stood them in good stead for undertaking the examination. The balancing act of candidates having a broad base of knowledge as well as sufficient depth in order to be able to answer a variety of questions was largely managed with candidates showing they had a good understanding about a sufficient number of groups in order to be able to answer all questions with a good level of competence. For example, many knew enough about the Huguenots to be able to explain not only their impact but why they migrated to Britain. Most candidates appeared to cope well with managing their time with the length of their answers reflecting the marks available for the question. It was not uncommon for candidates to answer the questions in 'reverse order' starting with question 4 and finishing with question 1.

The danger that current affairs opinions on this potentially contentious topic could creep in was avoided by most candidates. For those that could not avoid a personal opinion it did not usually impact the assessment.

Question 1

- 1 Describe **two** examples of measures taken by the British authorities in the 20th century to control migration. [4]

The answer required the candidates to show knowledge of a piece of legislation that had the effect of control, in the sense of limitation, and what it enacted. Candidates, almost without fail, attempted to give an Act and a 'clause' from it. For those that could not remember specific information most could give something that had changed as the result of legislation and that knowledge was credited. Most stayed within the bounds of the 20th century as specified in the question. Many candidates demonstrated excellent recall, managing to remember dates of the different Commonwealth Immigrants Acts and Asylum and Immigration Acts. However, those that could not remember the dates were not penalised.

Advice on answering Question 1

Encourage candidates to answer this question with specifics. A sizeable minority of candidates limited themselves by including too many generic points, which could be true of any nation or period. These only achieved one mark without solid examples. It is also important for candidates to focus on the specific demands of the question; in this case 'control'. For example, some candidates used the 1948 British Nationality Act, which was not felt to be a method of control, and likewise with the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947, which was only credited if candidates expressed that it was only a limited offer to Polish servicemen and their families.

Question 2

- 2 Explain the impact of migrant groups who came to Britain in the period 1500–1700. [8]

The vast majority of candidates were able to demonstrate valid knowledge of migrant groups arriving in this period, often using the Huguenots and the Walloons. Many candidates then provided an overview of what these groups contributed in order to access Level 2, with a significant number of these being able to analyse this contribution in order to show the impact the group had on Britain (and so access Level 3, or Level 4 for two or more explanations). Another group often identified were African and Asian child servants, though some candidates were hindered by considering them as slaves or by using one specific person rather than acknowledging that the question asked for an impact of a group.

Most candidates answered the question in terms of what the migrant group contributed, but some explained why they came, which was not the question. This then created a problem when these candidates came to question 4 as they thought they had answered this question already.

Advice on answering Question 2

Candidates should be encouraged to write a paragraph explaining each point. They are most successful when they identify the reason, demonstrate specific understanding of it and then explain the impact (in this case), and ensure they have fully addressed the question. Some candidates selected migrant groups which, whilst relevant to the period in question, arrived in relatively small numbers and so it was more challenging for candidates to explain a genuine impact. Examples of such groups were lascars and ayahs.

This question is examined in the same way as question 2 and question 6 on Paper 1 and candidates should be encouraged to adopt the same approach.

Question 3

3 How significant was the Norman Conquest for migration to England?

[14]

Many candidates were able to identify more than one way in which migration as a result of the Conquest changed England, and these answers often went one to analyse 'before' and 'after' in order to reach Level 3. That said this question saw a larger number of candidates not able to access the higher levels. This was partly as candidates often struggled to demonstrate significance, but also because some candidates' knowledge of the Norman era was quite limited.

Candidates who demonstrated understanding of the significances of changes brought by the Norman migration were credited alongside candidates that could show how the migration itself was significant.

Candidates that chose to show that William's invitation to the Jews set up the tradition of 'filling a skills gap' were seen as acceptable, as were those that show how introducing things like the Domesday Book, inviting literate migrants and changes to the law starting a tradition of central control were also credited. Assessors worked with candidates who showed an understanding of the concept of significance as far as was possible.

Advice on answering Question 3

Centres are encouraged to explore the issue of significance fully with candidates, both in terms of long-term, short-term, reach, size and type of impact. This is important as some candidates restricted themselves to merely considering change rather than significance, which capped their marks at the top of Level 3 - 10 marks. Significance is different.

The most effective approach seen in candidates' responses was to successfully explain how migration as a result of the Conquest changed England and then before leaving the explanation, emphasise the significance at the end of the paragraph, to be sure it has been made clear. Of course some candidates are capable of a more sophisticated approach from the start of the paragraph, laying out the criteria for significance clearly and then developing explanation on to it. But that approach requires candidates to sit back and plan their answer more carefully, which many are reluctant to do in an hour long examination.

Question 4*

- 4* 'Between 1500 and 2010 the main reason migrants came to Britain was because they wanted employment'. How far do you agree with this statement? [24]

A key demand of this question is that candidates **must** focus on **both periods** specified in the question. Many candidates did this well, but some answers were restricted to a lower level as they did not adequately explain at least one example from each period. The majority of candidates appeared aware of this, but some focused their answers on one period alone, which depressed their marks.

In general, this question seemed to be enjoyed by many candidates as its breadth allowed them to display their knowledge and understanding. Many candidates produced impressive responses and showed an understanding of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

The key to answering this question was an identification of a group and its reason for coming to Britain (e.g. to escape persecution). Then candidates needed to show an understanding of what drove the group (or 'pulled' them) and explain it with some level of understanding. For example with the Irish migrants of the 19th century who came to escape the potato famine examiners were looking for an understanding that they came because they needed work and there was none in Ireland because of the collapse of agriculture whilst at the same time Britain had plenty of work because of the industrial revolution.

Candidates often showed good breadth of detail, but less effective responses tended to identify the group and describe what they did when they arrived. For example, candidates wrote about how ayahs came with white families from India and looked after their children. This did not show understanding of the compulsion that drove the ayahs to Britain in the first place nor how they remained because they were abandoned.

As stated above, candidates needed to show breadth across the time period. Assessors understood the specification showed a divide between periods at 1900 whilst some textbooks showed this divide at the traditional Early Modern/Modern period and worked with candidates to place the time period divide where it most advantaged them, meaning that one candidate may have the divide placed at c.1750 whereas another may have had the divide placed at 1900. Where candidates did not specify a date or used the wrong date examiners used their knowledge and professional judgement.

Advice on answering Question 4

Candidates should be encouraged to plan their answers to this question. They could focus on fewer groups (as many wrote about nearly every group they had learnt about) but ones which best allow them to exemplify the points they want to make. Two issues for each period specified in the question is ample for candidates to obtain a very secure mark in the top level.

They need to be specific about the reasons they identify, supporting with accurate factual support from which demonstrate that impact. Good revision is key. Candidates who have not revised thoroughly were unlikely to be able to cover both the periods specified in the question and so would be capped at Level 3.

When making their points about the reasons migrants came to Britain, they then need to retain their focus on the question, rather than drift into a narrative of the events or move into the impact of the group when they arrived (which was question 2). This may seem obvious but when writing an essay over the course of thirty minutes it is easy for candidates to lose this focus. Planning is the answer, and a style of writing which keeps the question in mind.

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