

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

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

J410

For first teaching in 2016

J410/09 Summer 2022 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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 9 series overview

In order to perform well on the British thematic study, candidates need to display an understanding of change and continuity across a broad sweep of British history, including the analysis of a significant event. Candidates' learning is examined through question questions asking for recall, causation, significance and analysis of an issue over two periods as set out in the specification. These skills focus on Assessment Objectives 1 and 2; demonstrating knowledge and understanding, as well as explaining and analysing historical events.

Candidates' scripts spanned a wide range of ability, and it was clear that most candidates had been well prepared and demonstrated an understanding of the 'broad sweep' of this specification. Marks were awarded across the entire mark range for all four questions.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave examples, issues and events relevant to the time periods examined by the question (Questions 1-4). • managed their time effectively, balancing their answers proportionally to the mark allocations for each of the questions (especially important for Question 4) • established clear explanatory links back to the issues in the questions (Questions 2-4). • showed an understanding of how historians assess significance (Question 3) • had a clear grasp of the key concepts required from study of the specification (such as Parliament, government and monarchy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offered material that was outside the chronological scope of the question (especially Question 1 and Question 3) • showed less secure historical knowledge, for example by confusing information about monarchs or groups that were less relevant to the question (Question 2 and 3) • described issues without analysing them for cause, change or significance (Question 2 and 3) • did not leave enough time in the examination to offer a fully developed response to Question 4 • gave responses to Question 4 that were imbalanced, whether by looking at only one side of the argument or considering only one of the two relevant time periods.

Question 1

- 1 Describe **two** ways in which Parliament challenged the monarchy in the Tudor period, 1485 to 1603. [4]

This question requires candidates to select and use two relevant examples and to develop each with a small quantity of supporting material.

Most candidates understood the concept of 'Parliament' and attempted to give valid examples of where it challenged the power of a monarch. Some strong responses were seen, most often linked to Elizabeth I and issues over religious policy or the succession, even though some candidates focused their responses around Henry VIII and issues over taxation such as the Amicable Grant (though the grant itself was not frequently mentioned and was not necessary in order for the candidates to receive credit). It was possible for candidates to obtain all 4 marks with a succinct and focused response, and some candidates succeeded in doing so (see Exemplar 1).

That said, many candidates offered valid examples of Parliament challenging the power of a monarch but these could not be credited as they were not rooted in the Tudor period. Most commonly, these responses were centred around Parliament's relationship with Charles I. These responses were not uncommon. As 'the role of Parliament under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I' is explicitly included in the specification, it is likely that more candidates would have achieved higher marks had they reflected on the date range of this particular question.

Responses that offered examples which were potentially relevant to the period but without a specific instance or issue within the period were given one mark (for a 'general point').

Exemplar 1

1		Parliament challenged Elizabeth I when MPs such as
		Walter Stretton in 1571 brought up a complaint
		about the a want for stricter religious
		reform. This was followed by Peter Wentworth in 1593
		who challenged Elizabeth about succession and marriage
		showing how MPs were speaking out against monarchs.

This is an example of a candidate who achieves full marks with a succinct paragraph. Two examples of a Parliamentary challenge are given, supported with a developed example of it (in this case the Member of Parliament who brought the challenge).

Advice to centres

Centres are encouraged to make sure their candidates reflect on the time period stipulated in this question to reduce the prospects of them writing about material which – while historically accurate – falls outside the parameters of the question set.

Question 2

2 Explain why the barons forced King John to agree to Magna Carta in 1215.

[8]

This question requires candidates to explain two reasons – in this case causal. Candidates who can offer a valid identified reason, support this with some historical evidence and then link the reason back to the question are credited as offering an explanation, and so reach Level 3. Candidates who can repeat this for a different reason are credited in Level 4.

King John and Magna Carta is a central part of the first key topic of this specification, and many candidates were well prepared to offer valid responses. These responses were well focused on the question – identifying a valid baronial grievance towards John – most commonly around issues of taxation of injustice. Many of those candidates then went on to show how Magna Carta addressed those grievances and this analysis established a link back to the question. A range of impressive historical material was seen across the candidate entry. It was not uncommon to see Level 4 responses.

Although many candidates achieved the higher level, some responses were less successful. Some of these restricted themselves to a range of issues the barons had with John without linking these to Magna Carta in an analytical way (for Level 2). Others were general critiques of John without a sense of the material being associated with the barons (for Level 1).

Misconception



Some candidates confused King John with other historically significant monarchs relevant to the specification, for example by identifying issues with taxation, but then incorrectly referring to these as around 'ship money' (Charles I) or by making reference to John and Parliament.

Question 3

- 3 How significant were pressure groups such as CND and Greenpeace in the period 1980 to 2014?
[14]

Question 3 requires candidates to structure an answer around the concept of significance. While it is certainly possible for candidates to structure their answer around significance as a core concept, the vast majority of candidates approach this question by explaining how the subject of the question represented a change, and then moving on to make an assessment about the significance (or the limited significance) of that change. This latter approach does make sure that if candidates' assessment of significance cannot be credited (for Level 4) then they do at least have the opportunity of having their explanation of change credited (in Level 3).

Many candidates had a good understanding of pressure groups identified in the question and chose to write about one or both of those, though some candidates also offered material on the actions of the NUM in this period, which could also be validly credited. Level 3 answers explaining relevant changes were not uncommon, and some candidates made valid assessments of significance. These were most commonly in terms of scale (for example the magnitude of CND and its popularity), or reach (for example how Greenpeace paved the way the popularity of green politics or for more modern groups such as Extinction rebellion) - see Exemplar 2. All valid assessments of significance, or limited significance, were credited.

Some candidates were able to describe the work of relevant pressure groups in this period but without any real sense of how they represented change, and it was difficult to credit these answers highly.

Exemplar 2

3		<p>Pressure groups such as CND and Greenpeace were significant because they disrupted proceedings in government and international proceedings greatly. The CND movement arose during the Cold War, ^{in the 1980s} when the UK allowed the US to stock up on missiles by storing many of them on British territory. In response to this, there were huge rallies and marches protesting against this action, which caused disruption because it addressed a huge issue between two very powerful nations internationally. Not just this, but the fact that as a result of this pressure group, the missiles were removed from British soil shows the significance of the movement to be able to break up a big deal between two powerful countries, and that ordinary people could come together and force a government to change its mind, which had not been done many times before.</p>
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This is an example of a candidate who initially works through an explanation of change, using CND and their campaigns, with the analysis of change around the way they caused disruption to the existing order. This is then developed with a reasoned statement about significance based on both CND's impact and as a turning point. This section of the answer would be awarded Level 4, 12 marks.

Advice to centres

It was possible for candidates to validly use prior material – such as the activities of the WPSU and NUWSS – to make valid judgements about the relative significance of pressure groups in the period in the question, but most commonly groups outside the period were used by candidates as if they existed within the period of the question itself, and this approach could not be credited. In a specification where the 'broad sweep' of a long period of history is so important, centres are encouraged to stress the importance of a chronological understanding with their candidates.

Question 4

4* 'Between 1485 and 2014, governments became less powerful.'
How far do you agree?

[24]

Question 4 requires candidates to consider a statement across two of the three study periods and offer explained examples of how the statement could be both supported and challenged. Four explained examples covering both sides of the argument and both time periods opens up the higher mark band in Level 5. Candidates mainly drew their material from a wide range of examples across their studies from which to base their explanations.

It was not uncommon to see candidates' scripts begin with their response to Question 4, as centres clearly recognise that the overall mark for this question is so much higher than the others across the paper and so have recommended this as a way to help candidates manage their time.

Strong responses were able to provide valid examples that supported (or challenged) the statement and analyse them by showing how they either weakened, preserved or strengthened the power of the government. There were a significant number of candidates that were able to do so effectively, and so access the higher levels.

The final mark, in Level 5, was reserved for those candidates who could also offer a 'clinching argument', most probably based around a comparative judgement or a particular turning point. A number of these were seen.

Some candidates were able to identify valid examples, but were less confident in terms of offering analysis of whether the material led to the weakening (or strengthening) the power of the government at that time. This was especially true of material relevant to the Tudor period, where candidates could offer a description of potentially relevant events but the relevant explanation was missing. Responses that could not offer at least one explained example were capped at Level 2.

Exemplar 3

		<p>Furthermore, in the Modern er period, the government became more powerful in regards to limiting people's freedoms in the First and Second world wars. These limitations are included blackouts, rationing and conscription. Conscription was was utilised in both wars, with 2 million men conscripted to fight in 1916, midway through the war, compared to the start of conscription in 1938, a year before war started. As In addition, the government employed over 800,000 women to work in heavy ind industry works during the for First World War, showing that the government became more powerful in by employing people in the war effort.</p>
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This section of a candidate's response is a good example of a clearly explained example, as part of an answer that offers a range of explanations across both time periods and both sides of the argument. The example has been clearly identified, and then developed with supporting information. The candidate clearly offers a statement that links back to the question, at which point it is credited as an explanation. As part of the candidate's wider answer, this paragraph was credited in Level 5, but on its own would be considered a sound enough explanation to be awarded Level 3, 11 marks.

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