



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1H: Britain transformed, 1918-97

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Introduction

It is recommended that centres should refer to previous Principal Examiner reports to achieve a more rounded view of what is typical performance in this paper. This examination series has taken place under exceptional circumstances and the comments in this report are based on a significantly smaller entry than is usual.

A Level paper 9HI0 1H deals with Option 1H: Britain transformed, 1918–97.

The paper is divided into three sections. Sections A and B both comprise a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period (AO1) by targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates in the main appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Sections A and B

- Candidates should identify the correct conceptual focus of the question
- Candidates should avoid a narrative/descriptive approach; this undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels
- Candidates must provide precise contextual knowledge as evidence. Weaker responses generally lacked depth and sometimes range
- Candidates should offer a sufficient range and depth of material – e.g. sufficient consideration of the given factor (in a causation question), set against other factors, across the chronological range of the question, will enable a balanced and rounded response.

Section C

- Candidates should make thorough use of the extracts; in practise strong response ensure all main paragraphs consider and discuss the views in the extracts
- Candidates should attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits
- Candidates should be careful in their use of own knowledge, e.g. knowledge which is clearly selected to examine the arguments, rather than a greater quantity of information which is less securely linked to the question and/or the extracts.

Q1: How accurate is it to say that, in the years 1918–45, the economic challenges Britain faced were the main factor in shaping the political landscape?

This question asked candidates to consider the factors shaping the political landscape in the years 1918-45, examining the proposition that economic challenges were the main factor in this. With regards to the give factor, the main issues candidates demonstrated knowledge of were problems relating to the competitiveness of the staple industries, the Gold Standard, and the Great Depression. Other issues considered - some of which were related back to economic challenges - were the actions and policies of particular governments and politicians, e.g. the positions taken on free trade, Lloyd George and the sale of honours, changes to the electoral franchise, developments in the international situation in 1930s, and the war from 1939. Where responses were strongest, candidates maintained a secure focus and related their analysis of economic challenges / other factors to the demands of the question, exploring how these contributed to shaping the political landscape. Less successful responses tended to offer (a) limited knowledge (b) a lack of focus or failure to develop issues, e.g., assertions that changes took place because of a Liberal decline, without exploring this, or (c) a limited chronological range.

Q2: How far do you agree that, in the years 1918–51, changes to Britain’s class structure were largely driven by war?

Candidates were asked to examine the extent to which changes to Britain’s class structure were largely a result of war. The impact of both wars featured, with most demonstrating knowledge and understanding of death duties, although there was some misunderstanding of the relationship between death duties and war in a minority of responses. Consideration of the ramifications of wartimes service alongside members of other classes also featured, examining the extent to which shared experiences contributed to egalitarianism. Some responses demonstrated confusion between and conflation of the two world wars. Where responses were limited, this tended to be due to limited success in countering the question, e.g. not sufficiently addressing other factors. Some responses strayed from the focus of the question, such as considering social and cultural change such as the growth of satire in the 1960s, or issue not securely linked to the question, such as analysis of the changing position of women.

Q3: How different was the provision of welfare in the years 1945–79 from the provision of welfare in the years 1918–39?

Candidates were asked to make a comparison between welfare policies in the years 1945-79 with those in the years 1918-39. A mix of responses were offered, with two issues tending to discriminate with regards to the quality of these responses. The first of these was the quality of knowledge offered. Some responses were hampered by limited knowledge of the provision of welfare, particularly in the earlier period. Stronger responses were able to offer both a range and depth of information, with more common issues being policies towards the unemployed, pensioners and other aspects of provision under the national insurance scheme, family allowances, and relevant aspects of healthcare. The second issue evident in a proportion of responses was the extent to which responses were focused on the demands of the question. A number of responses offered valid knowledge which, to a lesser or greater extent, was not targeted towards a comparison of provision in the two periods. Where candidates were able to structure the knowledge they offered within an analysis of the extent to which, say, unemployment policies were different, they were more likely to make better use of the knowledge they offered.

Q4: How accurate is to say that living standards saw sustained improvement in the years 1918–79?

Candidates were asked to examine whether living standards saw sustained improvement in the years 1918-79. The vast majority were successful in demonstrating a range of sound knowledge, which was in the main focused towards the analytical demands of the question. Issues which were commonly found included the development of consumer goods, relevant developments in entertainment and leisure, changes in housing standards, employment, and the impact of the welfare state. The significance of relevant periods within the timeframe were also considered, notably the Great Depression, the relative prosperity from the 1950s and economic stagnation in the latter period. Some also explored variations within these, although on occasion the extent to which certain regions or groups such as the elderly did not share in improvements were exaggerated. Overall though, the responses were pleasing, with the strongest offering a real consideration of the word 'sustained'.

Q5: In the light of differing interpretations, how convincing do you find the view that, in the years 1979–97, Thatcher’s governments had an impact on Britain that was both substantial and enduring?

Candidates were asked to examine the debate on the significance of the Thatcher government’s legacy, and in the main were successful in demonstrating a good understanding of the given views, a largely secure knowledge base of their own, and an ability to structure and develop this. Most were able to focus on the specific debate, although some at times were keen to discuss the extent to which the legacy was positive or negative. Stronger responses demonstrated confident handling of the extracts, with comparative discussion and own knowledge which was integrated into the debate. A range of issues were considered, with secure understanding of issues such as privatisation, the attempts to reduce the level of state intervention, entrepreneurship, the role and power of trade unions, and inflation. Knowledge of issues and policies such as the right to buy council houses, unemployment, the deregulation of finance and the shift from manufacturing to service sector was also generally good. Some responses were less secure over certain economic issues, e.g. displaying confusion over terms such as debt, deficit, the balance of payments and state expenditure, as well as confusion over subsequent political leaders.

