

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y110/01 Summer 2023 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.

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Paper Y110/01 series overview

Y110 is one of thirteen units in Paper 1 for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about fifty years through an Enquiries or source-based option and an essay. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates have to answer a compulsory source question based on four written primary sources. The question requires them to use all four sources to assess the validity of a view. In Section B candidates are required to answer one essay question from a choice of two.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to be able to both:

- consider the provenance of the sources, and
- apply contextual knowledge to the content of the sources.

This allows them fully to answer the question set by reaching a judgement **about the sources** in relation to the issue in the question.

It is important that the judgement reached is based on an evaluation of the reliability of the evidence given, and that it is not merely the candidate's own judgement on the topic based purely on their own contextual knowledge.

In order to reach Level 6, a good strategy is to make a judgement at the end of the analysis of each source, with an overall judgement in the conclusion.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels, candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion. To reach Level 6 candidates should also make an overall judgement as well as interim judgements when assessing each factor.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considered the provenance of the source(s) and used relevant contextual knowledge • clearly linked the contextual knowledge to the source being discussed to show whether the view of the source was valid or not • reached an overall judgement as to the extent to which the sources supported the view in the question • discussed at least two relevant issues in depth • wrote supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic • reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question • made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not consider the provenance and use contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources • wrote an unbalanced response in their treatment of the sources, with very little consideration of one of the sources • reached a judgement based on their knowledge rather than the sources • showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay • were unable to support their response with relevant material • did not focus on the precise wording of the question • made unsupported comments about issues which were assertions.

Section A overview

The Enquiry section in this unit examines the reasons why Peel decided to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846 and in particular examines the view that his main argument was because of shortage of food. The question requires candidates to critically assess evidence and reach judgements. The critical evaluation of sources is the central theme in this section with all marks given against AO2.

Question 1

Peel and the Age of Reform 1832–1853

- 1 Using these four sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that Peel decided to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846 because of the shortage of food. [30]

Most candidates were able to analyse the content of the four sources and reach a reasonable conclusion regarding those who agreed that Peel's main focus was on relieving food shortages against those who suggested a more ideological shift in his thinking. The majority of candidates displayed a well-developed understanding of technique and so understood the need to use both context and provenance. Some candidates continued to evaluate using only one of these and were therefore capped at Level 3. In this paper the judgement must be based on provenance rather than contextual knowledge. It is the reliability of the evidence that should be the focus of any judgements made.

Source A was generally used to contradict the premise in the question by demonstrating a more ideological shift in Peel's thinking. Most candidates could point out that the Morning Post was arguing that Peel was moving towards principles of free trade and that landowners should find new leaders before it was too late. Better responses pointed out the date of the source and demonstrated how this was a period of relative prosperity for landowners, before the famine, and that landowners were perhaps too complacent about their position and wanted to protect their wealth. Most candidates used the provenance of the source well and were able to point out that the newspaper supported traditional Tory policy and was therefore in favour of the Corn Laws.

Source B was used to support the view in the question, with most candidates concentrating on the content of the source. Candidates argued it showed that Peel was concerned about the situation in both Ireland and Scotland by November 1845. Peel could not countenance restrictions on imported grain while using public money to support those in need. Contextual knowledge was generally applied well with most candidates aware of the situation in Ireland. Fewer candidates discussed the situation in Scotland. Comments evaluating provenance were generally sound, with most candidates able to point out the nature of the Cabinet memorandum. The candidates who evaluated this source particularly well were able to focus on his purpose, that Peel was attempting to persuade Cabinet colleagues of his plans by appealing to their traditional prudence in public expenditure. Many candidates focused on the private nature of the memorandum as being indicative of Peel's genuine views. A focus on evaluating the purpose of a source would be a useful tool for candidates to think about in future sessions.

Source C was used to argue both views in the question. Most candidates were able to use the source content to demonstrate Peel's concern to avoid a 'national calamity' and to remove protection to make sure that the problems of food supply were solved. Some candidates also used the source content to argue that in fact Peel was more concerned about the influence of the Anti-Corn Law League. Peel had hoped there would be political benefits for his government as well as benefits for all sections of society including farmers and manufacturers. Contextual knowledge was particularly strong on this source, with candidates able to provide substantial details on the impact of the famine, as well as good knowledge of the Anti-Corn Law League and its growth throughout this period. The best responses were able to discuss Peel's resignation in December 1845. In terms of provenance many candidates focused on the relationship between Victoria and Albert and the nature of this private account as being dependable. A few candidates pointed out that the relationship between Peel and the Queen was frosty although a more fruitful evaluation, which fewer candidates mentioned, was the closer relationship between Peel and Prince Albert and their mutual respect. A focus on the Prince's duty to relay the details of their conversation to his wife was also noted.

Finally, Source D was generally used to demonstrate that Peel was less focused on the scarcity of food and was more concerned with law and order. Most candidates were able to explain how it showed that Peel was afraid of a class war and that repeal of the Corn Laws was in the interests of the wider population. Good contextual support on the impact of the famine was again noted including statistics on evictions and emigration. The best responses were able to call on knowledge of the vote in the Commons and the majority of MPs in Peel's favour. In terms of provenance the majority of candidates were able to evaluate Peel's purpose in the debate of attempting to win over MPs to support his repeal. A few candidates pointed out that his concern for the manual labourer related to his own cotton production background. Some candidates queried his statement that food scarcity was not his biggest concern and related this to the need to win over agricultural interests in the Commons.

Exemplar 1

Source A does not support this view, instead, proposing that Peel was eager to repeal the Corn Laws as a means to push the country towards freer trade. Written from the perspective of a Tory MP, who would dismiss all call for reform, this newspaper ^{strongly} condemns Peel's attempt for reform. Peel's party members, such as Disraeli and Lord Ashley, spoke out often against ^{Peel's} willingness to reform, without first addressing his party. This anger that many Tories felt towards Peel is reflected in this source, as the 'Morning Post' has a Tory driven view. Many portrayed this view that Peel favoured free trade over genuine concern for food shortages, for example in Ireland where over 1 million people had died as a result of the Irish famine by 1845, yet Peel only seemed to act on the ideologies of the ACL which supported free trade, where raised to Peel. The source mentions the struggle that landowners would fall into, if the Corn Laws were repealed. The Corn Law was in place as a result of landowners' requests for Peel to stabilise their incomes. ~~by~~ Therefore, the suggestion of repeal would threaten this power balance which tipped in favour of the landowners, as bread prices were kept high for the ordinary person whilst those farming the crop had stable income. This concern for the position of landowners is typical of a 'Tory Party' view, as the landed class were often members of this party, confirming the bias of this source. The 'Morning Post', ~~say~~ is eager to highlight the evil of Peel, for favouring 'free-trade' over other factors for repeal, making its usefulness limited for

answering this statement, as it does not address Peel's consideration of food shortages, either.

Whilst Source A is very critical of Peel, Source B places Peel in a more favourable light. Immediately, this source's usefulness must be questioned as it's taken from Peel's note ~~directly~~ to the his cabinet, directly, in which he would put his reasons for ~~reform~~ repeal as the most suitable. Source B agrees with the statement, confirming that the deficiency of the food in the UK is the overbearing reason for Peel's repeal of the existing corn laws. Peel recognises, particularly, the burden on Ireland, which ~~was~~ ^{war} indeed struggling at this time (1845) ~~the~~ Over 50% of Ireland's crop had failed, forcing Peel to import American maize in an attempt to reduce the death toll, which was already reaching 1 million. Peel confirms in this source that their situation could not possibly improve without raising the restrictions on the price of grain. This is unconvincing, as many recognised at the time, such as Cobden, that this famine was a crisis of distribution, not supply. This meant that even if the price of corn was reduced, the poorest members of society would not necessarily benefit, although Peel suggests otherwise in this source, stating that price decrease will make the 'sustenance of any considerable portion' of the people affected, more achievable. Peel may also be using this reason as a mere excuse to conceal his innate desire for free trade, as Source A suggested. Overall, this source is ~~not that~~ weak in supporting the statement, as Peel blames the 'shortage of food' as ~~the~~ his motivating factor for repeal, just to

win his party over, who were ~~again~~ unsympathetic to free trade.

Source C is also written from a direct account of Peel, and supports the statement to an extent. Although Prince Albert repeats the conversation he had with Peel, one must consider that Albert would speak truthfully to his ^{family} ~~state~~, as would Peel to the royal family. Source C argues that Peel was forced to accept the terms of the Anti-Corn Law League, in order to avoid 'national calamity,' implying the destruction and unrest that was stirring in the UK. Whilst this doesn't directly address the issue of food shortages, Albert may have abbreviated Peel's terms, which still imply that the nation was suffering and would need to experience repeal, to improve. Increased bread prices were also met with a period of high unemployment, as a depression hit Britain in the 1840's. Many workers faced unemployment, and therefore high bread prices was causing 'national' unrest. This makes Peel's reasoning to Prince Albert convincing, as he was a man willing to adopt more humanitarian values, and therefore wanted the price of ~~bread~~ corn to decrease so money was in more people's pockets. Overall, I would agree this source is quite ~~useful~~ for supporting the statement.

Source D focused more on the humanitarian approach of Peel to the nation, as he wanted to improve the lives of people by alleviating economic depression. Whilst this disagrees with the statement, focusing on morals as

his drive, rather than food mortgages, it poses ~~an~~ ~~strong~~ ~~argument~~ it does imply the ~~strong~~ impact that repeal would have on the state of supply. Peel addressed the House of Commons, suggesting a sense of truth in this source, as Peel's desire for free trade were already known by many by 1846. As it is his last debate with them, this sense of honesty is strengthened. Peel saw repeal as benefitting all classes, not just those faced by unemployment such as ~~handloom weavers~~ those in the cotton industry, or textile, whom ~~the~~ jobs were replaced by industrialised machinery, but also the agricultural workers faced by ~~both~~ bad harvests and ^{harsh} weather conditions in the 1840s. Peel goes against the interests of his party who consist greatly of ~~landlords~~ the landed class, as he states their interests are 'subordinate' to stabilising Britain's economy. This gives the source a strong sense of truth, making it plausible. Overall, it doesn't provide much evidence in supporting the view, yet poses ~~as~~ ~~strong~~ a strong, convincing argument for why Peel repealed the Corn Law in 1846.

Overall, source C and D pose the strongest arguments, yet C poses the most successful regarding re-support of this view.

Exemplar 1 illustrates a good response which evaluated using both provenance and contextual responses but was capped at Level 4 because of the lack of judgement in the conclusion. With both interim and concluding judgement, this would have reached Level 6.

Assessment for learning

On the source question there should be a judgement made on the reliability of each source relating to their provenance. There should be interim as well as concluding judgements made to reach Level 6.

Section B overview

In Section B, two essays are set, each from a different Key Topic. The candidates were asked to examine Pitt's successes in improving finances through his economic and trade policies or whether Britain's intervention in the Peninsular Wars was the main reason for the French defeat in Spain. The questions set required candidates to analyse causes and consequences of major historical issues.

Question 2*

British Government in the Age of Revolution 1783–1832

- 2*** 'Pitt the Younger's economic and trade policies succeeded in improving the nation's finances.'
How far do you agree? **[20]**

This was the more popular of the two essays and was generally well answered. The majority of candidates were able to provide contextual understanding of the problems faced by Britain and its National Debt in 1775 and were then able to argue for and against the proposition accordingly.

Most candidates were able to differentiate between economic and trade policy, although a significant number could not, preferring to group these together and then examine other aspects of Pitt's policy, including his 'terror' as being more successful. Such responses were restricted to the lower levels of the mark scheme.

More successful responses were able to evaluate Pitt's measures such as the Sinking Fund, anti-smuggling measures, introduction of new taxes as well as trading opportunities provided through the Eden Treaty. Good responses distinguished between the success of Pitt's policies in peace and during wartime as well as differentiating between short- and long-term debt reduction.

The best responses demonstrated opposition to his reforms from manufacturers as well as the anger caused by some of his new taxes but this was not common. Many candidates argued that his successes should be tempered by the fact that he copied Walpole's ideas.

Exemplar 2

When Pitt the Young came to power, the nation's finances were certainly in trouble. The government was in a £273 million debt, with 1/5 of imports to Britain being illegal contraband. Furthermore, British trading interests were imperative to the domestic and foreign markets, the nation's wealth

resting on its trading links with other countries, an element of British policy which was delicate when Pitt came to power in the aftermath of Britain's war with America. Pitt's ability to therefore succeed in both economic and trade policies was imperative, and it can certainly be concluded that he did just that in both: Succeeded.

Overall, Pitt's trade policies did succeed. He implemented tight control and harsh implementation of the Navigation Acts in order to ensure that Britain's commercial relationship with the US was kept ~~friendly~~ beneficial to British trade, with his making of ~~trade~~ US trade ~~via Britain and~~ of meat and fish via Spain and France illegal to ensure the protection of British merchants. Both of these trade policies were particularly successful, with ~~the~~ the US being forced to trade with Britain in almost a reflection of their earlier mercantilist system. ^{which saw Britain benefit from US goods such as fish and wool.} Pitt's most successful trade policy in its improvement of the nation's finances was most definitely the Eden Treaty with France in 1786; the reciprocal trade treaty

ensured Britain benefitted from French luxuries of French goods such as silk and wine, and the circulation of goods in the British market as a result of the treaty was evidence of its benefits in improving Britain's access to foreign, much-sought after goods. Additionally, the treaty also saw Britain able to ~~also~~ increase exports, bringing in money which did work to help improve the nation's financial state.

Nevertheless, Pitt's commitment to free trade has been questioned by historians since. Whilst there remains the argument that, particularly in comparison to later government actions such as the trading policies of the Tories in the decade of 1820-30, ~~the~~ Pitt was ~~at~~ somewhat reluctant to move towards freer trade and his policies consequently focused on ~~a~~ a protectionist approach to the British market, this interpretation fails to appreciate the ~~improvement~~ context of Pitt's trading policies. The financial state of the nation limited his effective commitment to free trade and it was only a later stabilising of currency under the gold standard

as well as a period of economic consistency, which saw the government able to ~~fast~~ move to towards free trade. Nevertheless, under Pitt's trading policies, exports trippled and imports doubled, and therefore it ~~can~~ is evident that they worked effectively to ^{ultimately} improve the nation's finances.

Pitt was similarly very successful in his economic policies; faced with the £293 million government debt, as well as the deep-rooted issue of smuggling, he ~~for~~ his 3-tiered approach of targeting tax, ~~decreasing~~ cutting government expenditure, and stimulating trade was overall successful. The 1787 Moresby Act, which allowed trade vessels to be searched within 12 miles of ~~the~~ the British coastline instead of 6, worked well to prevent actions of smuggling of goods, which had been damaging the British market for some time. Furthermore, the 1787 Communication Act, which saw duty on ~~tea~~ ~~legat~~ ~~tea~~ reduced from 119% to 25%, as well as Pitt's extension of the system of bonded warehouses, was extremely effective;

government yields increased much the same way that the importation of legal tea did, and the value of raw materials rose significantly. Pitt was similarly successful in his financial policies which targeted the nation's financial system; the 1787 Consolidated Fund Act saw exchequer accounts replaced by a single fund in a successful scheme which saw a form of national banking achieved for the very first time, and Pitt's creation of the Sinking Fund was imperative. The Sinking Fund not only ^{reduced} ~~cut~~ the government debt by £10 million, but ~~the~~ its placing of it under 6 ministers to prevent ministers raiding it saw ~~the~~ the economic benefits that it brought ~~actually~~ work most effectively to increase the nation's confidence and security in their finances instead.

Evidently, the ~~the~~ Pitt's economic policies were extremely successful in ~~how they~~ their improvement of the nation's finances.

However, some of Pitt's policies were less successful, most notably the taxes he implemented on luxury goods.

Intended to add to the nation's growing economic prosperity by taxing items such as ~~coal and~~ ribbon and silk, they faced so much opposition from the public that Pitt was forced to repeal them, rendering them as universally a failure. Furthermore, some historian opinion has argued that Pitt's economic policies were hardly his own, and rather borrowed from the work of previous prime ministers. This ~~is not~~ has been particularly argued about the sinking fund, which had been proposed by Wootton initially. Nevertheless, it can certainly be argued that Pitt

be credited for its success given that he implemented it, and whilst his taxes were deemed a failure, the fact he was able to improve the nation's finances without them is ~~the~~ all the more impressive.

To conclude, both in his economic and trade policies, Pitt was overall very successful. The Eden Treaty of 1786 was imperative to the wealth it brought Britain, and his firm rejection of the Navigation Acts saw ~~the~~ Pitt ensure Britain's relationship with the 15 colonies to be economically beneficial. Furthermore, his economic policies such as the Herring Act and the Communication Acts of 1789 ~~and~~ ~~the~~ had the desired effect of targeting smuggling, and both the Consolidated Fund Act and the implementation of the Sinking Fund saw huge benefits to the nation's financial state. Overall, Pitt's policies were very successful. Evident from how ~~highly~~ ^{highly} ~~successful~~ ^{successful} imports doubled, and the debt decreased by £10 million.

Exemplar 2 illustrates a good response showing these counter arguments as well as an overall judgement. The first half of the exemplar showed strong understanding of the successes of Pitt's economic and trade policies with good assessment of these. In the final part of the exemplar, the candidate engaged with the question by assessing the areas where Pitt's policies might be questioned.

Question 3*

3* 'Britain's intervention in the Peninsular War was the main reason for the defeat of French forces in Spain.' How far do you agree? **[20]**

This question was answered by fewer candidates and overall responses were of a weaker quality than the responses for Question 2. The majority of candidates wanted to discuss the reasons for Napoleon's ultimate downfall rather than discuss the defeat of the French forces in Spain and so were capped in Level 2 or below.

More successful responses were able to offset Britain's intervention against other relevant factors including the resistance of the Spanish, French mistakes, British contributions to the allies and the strength of Spanish nationalism.

In this question, successful candidates examined Britain's military role in the Peninsular Wars, with specific understanding of the role of Wellington, for example, and offset this against other reasons for Napoleon's defeat including the resistance of the Spanish and their guerrilla tactics, French mistakes including the role of Joseph Bonaparte, British financial contributions to the allies as well as the strength of Spanish nationalism.

Misconception



The question was about the defeat of French troops in Spain, not Napoleon's overall downfall.

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