

Teaching Guide: AO4 questions

Introduction

This guide is designed to give you a greater understanding of the four AO4 interpretation questions featured on our exam papers. It will explore the general principles of progression in AO4 questions, and how this Assessment Objective shapes the mark schemes. To illustrate the qualities seen at each level of response, we've selected student responses at each level and have provided accompanying written commentaries for each.

The questions we will focus on in this guide are:

- Question 1 Period Studies: 'How do the interpretations differ about...?'
- Question 2 Period Studies: 'Why might the authors of the interpretations differ about...?'
- Question 3 Period Studies: 'Which interpretation gives the more convincing opinion about...?'
- Question 1 British Depth Studies: 'How convincing is the interpretation about...?'

Please note, separate guides have been published for the AO1/AO2 8-mark questions, the AO1/AO2 extended writing questions and AO3 questions.

Assessment Objective

AO4 focuses on the analysis and evaluation of sources.

AO4

Analyse, evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations (including how and why interpretations may differ) in the context of historical events studied.

Interpretations are considered to be an attempt to portray and/or make meaning of the past that is a deliberate construct created **after** the period being discussed.

We'll use different types of interpretations in our exams. Previous exams have used written interpretations. For the Period Studies, these have been accounts written after the event, often written by people who were there at the time. For the British depth studies, academic texts written by historians have featured on previous exam papers.

What AO4 means in the classroom

AO4 questions ask students to use three key elements associated with analysis and evaluation of interpretations:

Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the interpretation saying?• What is the message?• Does it have a particular point to make?
Provenance (relevant for Q2 on period studies only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who was the author/artist of the interpretation?• Who was its intended audience?• How does this affect the interpretation's motive or purpose?• How does the time and place in which the interpretation was created, influence the motive or purpose of the interpretation?
Historical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the interpretation relate to students' understanding and knowledge of the historical period?• How does their knowledge and understanding explain the features of the interpretation?

What are the key principles of progression for AO4 questions?

As for all other questions on the assessment, responses to AO4 questions must link their analysis and evaluation to the given issue in the question in order to progress to the upper levels of the mark scheme. Also, with the exception of Question 1 on the Period Studies, relevant knowledge and understanding must be used in order to explain the features of the interpretation(s) and to place the interpretation(s) in context.

To exemplify how these principles influence progression in responses to AO4 interpretation questions, it may be helpful to think in terms of a commonly used writing structure such as Point – Evidence – Explain (PEE). To avoid confusion, we'll focus for the time being on progression in the 8-mark 'convincing' questions, though we will return to the 4-mark 'How do the interpretations differ?' and 'Why do the interpretations differ?' questions later in this pack.

- At a Basic level (Level 1), students are able to identify features of the interpretation and may show basic understanding of the opinions expressed. At Level 1, answers may include knowledge that is related to the enquiry topic specified in the question.
- At a Simple level (Level 2), students can make a simple inference or point (P) about the interpretation(s) and will support it with relevant knowledge and understanding or some further expansion (E) of the point only. The understanding will remain implicit because the connections between points and evidence/expansion are not made explicit through a relevant explanation.
- At a Developed level (Level 3), students will provide inferences or points (P) about the interpretation(s). They will demonstrate developed reasoning by supporting at least one of these points with relevant knowledge and understanding (E) and explanation (E) which is linked directly to the question.

Note: for the 'convincing' question on the Period Studies, students must address both interpretations to progress to Level 3 and Level 4.

- At a Complex level (Level 4), responses will build on the qualities shown at Level 3 above by also making a substantiated judgement about the interpretation(s). The judgement will be supported by reasoning, and relevant knowledge and understanding.

What is a 'substantiated judgement' in AO4 questions?

A 'substantiated judgement' contains complex reasoning that is backed up by historical knowledge and understanding. A judgement about an interpretation or interpretations might be complex in the way that it questions or explores the typicality of the interpretation(s), or the range, comprehensiveness or accuracy of the interpretation(s). It may show understanding of the interpretation(s) in a broader historical context. It may also show an appreciation and exploration of a broad argument expressed in the interpretation(s), or it may address an abstract, substantive concept in relation to the interpretation(s).

Where the question requires students to evaluate two interpretations, students will often come to a judgement about which interpretation is more convincing about the issue in the question. However, it is frequently a characteristic of Level 4, and perfectly acceptable that the judgement appreciates the validity of both interpretations. It may seek to reconcile them or recognise aspects of both interpretations that are convincing or valid, and there may be judgements about each interpretation within the response.

What about challenging an interpretation?

It is not necessary for your students to challenge or look at the limitations of an interpretation in order to form a judgement. Much like for AO3 questions, students tend to produce stronger responses when they are positive with the interpretation(s) and explain how it is/ they are convincing, whereas points about limitations often take the form of an assertion or are only partially relevant.

An evaluation that challenges or addresses the limitations of an interpretation will, of course, be credited, though only if this is supported by knowledge and reasoning that is relevant to the focus of the question. However, limitations are not required or expected in order for a student to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. In all cases, students should focus on what is in the interpretation(s), rather than what is not included. Excessive commentary on what is not included in the interpretation(s) is very likely to produce an answer that is not relevant to the question set.

Question 1 Period Studies ‘How do the interpretations differ about...?’

This 4 mark question requires students to explain how the content of the interpretations differs concerning the issue in the question. Students need to identify and explain one difference between the two interpretations in their response.

The examples below draw from *1A/B Germany 1890-1945...* and demonstrate qualities shown at each level of the mark scheme for this question type.

Beginning with the 2020 examinations series, the wording of this question has been altered to encourage students to focus on the content of the interpretation. The student responses beginning on the following page are taken from the June 2019 papers and we have updated this question to reflect the new wording.

Question

Q1. How does **Interpretation B** differ from **Interpretation A** about the Stresemann era (1924-1929)?

Explain your answer based on what it says in **Interpretations A** and **B**.

[4 marks]

Interpretations

Interpretation A Adapted from William Shirer’s book, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’, 1960.

Interpretation B Adapted from ‘Account Settled’ by Hjalmar Schacht, 1948.

To locate the interpretations, please refer to Paper 1 Section A/B: Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and dictatorship, Interpretations Booklet from June 2019.

Level 1 response

June 2019 1A/B Germany 1890-1945: Democracy to Dictatorship

Interpretation A is an American journalist, whereas interpretation B is from the German national bank. The interpretations are different because one view is saying that the loans were a good thing. It helped rebuild Germany, but the other view is that the money was wasted and pointless.

The response is credited at Level 1 because it identifies a difference based on the content of both interpretations. It recognises that Interpretation A takes a positive view of the loans organised in the Stresemann era whereas Interpretation B is critical. The response remains at Level 1 because the explanation of the difference is implicit.

L1: 2 marks

Level 2 response

June 2019 1A/B Germany 1890-1945: Democracy to Dictatorship

Interpretation A is all about the benefits of Stresemann being in power and is all about how he rebuilt Germany to be even better than it was before. For example, the loans Stresemann borrowed from America meant they had money for luxuries such as stadiums and theatres. This differs from interpretation B which is about the disadvantages and long term effects that would affect Germany as a result of taking loans from America. This is because eventually, these loans had to be paid back which Germany could not afford to do, and this caused them to regress because unemployment rose and businesses failed as a result of the Great Depression.

At Level 2, responses explain a difference between the two interpretations in relation to the issue in the question, and support the explanation using the content of both interpretations. Responses at this level are often specific about a way in which the interpretations differ, or what it is they differ about. This response is therefore credited at top Level 2 because it goes beyond identifying differences by contrasting the benefits of the loans as expressed in Interpretation A, to the long term disadvantages caused by the loans as expressed in interpretation B.

L2: 4 marks

Question 2 Period Studies ‘Why might the authors of the interpretations differ about....?’

This 4 mark question requires students to explain why the authors of the interpretation might have different views about a given issue. Students need to use the provenance of interpretations, and relevant knowledge and understanding in support of their explanation(s). In doing so, they may refer to aspects of provenance such as the authors’ experiences and/or beliefs, their purposes and/or audiences, the time and place of writing and their access to information.

The examples below draw from *1A/B Germany 1890-1945...* and demonstrate qualities shown at each level of the mark scheme for this question type.

Question

Q2. Why might the authors of **Interpretations A** and **B** have a different interpretation about the Stresemann era (1924-1929)?

Explain your answer using **Interpretations A** and **B** and your contextual knowledge.

[4 marks]

Interpretations

Interpretation A Adapted from William Shirer’s book, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’, 1960.

Interpretation B Adapted from ‘Account Settled’ by Hjalmar Schacht, 1948.

To locate the interpretations, please refer to Paper 1 Section A/B: Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and dictatorship, Interpretations Booklet from June 2019.

Level 1 response

June 2019 1A/B Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy to Dictatorship

Interpretation A is written by an American journalist called Shirer. He describes how the money coming from America has helped Germany. Interpretation A therefore shows how great of a country America is which will boost its power and wealth. However, interpretation B was written by the President of the German National Bank, Schacht, who says that borrowing money and getting loans can cause problems and don't always have a positive effect.

At this level, responses often identify one or more relevant reason why the interpretations differ about the issue in the question, but the reasoning behind their choice will often require further substantiation using relevant contextual knowledge. This response is, therefore, credited at Level 1 because it identifies relevant aspects of the provenance of both interpretations relating to the authors' background and professions. The explanation as to why they differ is left implicit.

L1: 2 marks

Level 2 response

June 2019 1B Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

Interpretation B is by the ex-President of the German Bank. This suggests that he knew a lot about the economy at the time whereas Shirer was only an American journalist so he didn't have as much insight and only saw the impact on people rather than the economy as a whole. Further, Shirer is American, therefore he might be more inclined to speak of the positive aspects of American involvement in German affairs. Also, being a journalist, he might try to exaggerate the impact to engage readers. Schacht, on the other hand, is more likely to be speaking from a political and economic perspective, being an economist.

At this level (Level 2), responses will provide reasoning and supporting contextual knowledge to explain why the interpretations differ about the issue in the question. This response references the background and nationality of the author of Interpretation A to explain his purpose, and contrasts this with the professional background and approach taken by the author of Interpretation B. It is, therefore, credited at the top of Level 2.

L2: 4 marks

Question 3 Period studies: 'Which interpretation gives the more convincing opinion about...'

This 8 mark question requires students to evaluate which interpretation is more convincing in relation to the given issue in the question using the content of the interpretations and the student's own contextual knowledge and understanding. Both interpretations must be addressed, and responses must contain a substantiated judgement in order to be credited at the highest level.

The examples below draw from *1A/B Germany 1890-1945...* and demonstrate qualities shown at each level of the mark scheme for this question type.

Beginning with the 2020 examinations series, the wording of this question has been altered to encourage students to focus on the content and what the interpretations say in relation to the question. While some credit at the lower levels is given to evaluation based on provenance, students should be reminded to concentrate on the opinions expressed and what it says in the interpretations about the issue in the question, as only the evaluation of content is credited at the higher levels.

The student responses beginning on the following page are taken from the June 2019 papers and we have updated this question to reflect the new wording.

Question

Q3 Which interpretation gives the more convincing opinion about the Stresemann era (1924-1929)?

Explain your answer based on your contextual knowledge and what it says in Interpretations A and B.

[8 marks]

Interpretations

Interpretation A Adapted from William Shirer's book, 'The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich', 1960.

Interpretation B Adapted from 'Account Settled' by Hjalmar Schacht, 1948.

To locate the interpretations, please refer to Paper 1 Section A/B: Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and dictatorship, Interpretations Booklet from June 2019.

Level 1 response

June 2019 1B Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

Interpretation A shows what Germany was going through and how loans going in to Germany helped because it saw employment go up, even though he is an American journalist and so has a biased view towards Germany. Interpretation B says that German governments borrowed millions and these loans were dangerous because they were often used for luxuries and non-essentials. It was written by a German, and therefore we can see clearly how Germany struggled.

Responses at Level 1 tend to be descriptive, often identifying some relevant features of the interpretation(s). While the focus of the question should be on the content, responses at Level 1 will often contain reference to provenance. This response, therefore, is credited at top Level 1 because it shows basic understanding of the opinion expressed about the Stresemann era in Interpretation A. No credit is given for what is written in relation to Interpretation B as much of it is copied from the interpretation.

L1: 1 mark

Level 2 response

June 2019 1B Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

I think that Interpretation B is more convincing on the Stresemann era as we can see from it that Germany clearly struggled because it shows the results of the Wall Street Crash on the Germans and how 'many Germans struggled' when they lost their lifetime savings. It is also correct that it was risky for Germany to rely on the Dawes plan as we know what happened in 1929 when America's economy collapsed and they demanded money back from Germany which left Germany bankrupt.

Interpretation A is also convincing as it shows how Germany looks to be going forward under Stresemann and how life was freer, more modern, and more exciting. Germany was stable in this time, which is shown when Stresemann signed treaties with other countries. However, interpretation B is more convincing because it shows how risky things were for Germany.

At Level 2, responses will offer simple evaluation of one or both interpretations. In doing so, they may expand on the features of the content of the interpretation(s) using relevant contextual knowledge in a way that implicitly addresses the question.

The above response is credited at the top of Level 2 because it uses simple knowledge to confirm relevant aspect of both interpretations. There is an attempt to come to a judgement, though this is asserted and, therefore, does not add to the response.

L2: 4 marks

Level 3 response

June 2019 1A/B Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

Interpretation A is convincing as we know Stresemann made Germany stronger and led Germany to the golden ages of 1924-1929. Interpretation A suggests that 'life seemed freer, more modern and more exciting.' I know this was the case as Germany managed to explore new German culture and Berlin challenged Paris as the cultural centre of Europe with its theatres, music, operas and books. The 'Kroll Opera' 'Zeittheatre' and 'All quiet on the Western Front' are all examples of popular cultural elements of things that made life for German citizens much better under Stresemann. Stresemann also improved international relationships for Germany through things like the Locarno treaties, which helps to explain why Stresemann won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on fixing Germany.

Interpretation B is also quite convincing as he was correct stating that 'loans were dangerous' as America could ask for the loans back at any time. However, he exaggerates when he says that the loans were used for luxuries and non-essentials as although they were spent on entertainment, they were also spent on factories and job opportunities to help lower employment and increase economic growth in Germany which was essential if Stresemann wanted to improve Germany.

To conclude, I believe that Interpretation A is more convincing as although B was correct in the fact that there were some problems, the Stresemann era was great for many German citizens.

Responses at Level 3 must address both interpretations and will show developed evaluation in the response. Developed evaluation entails using detailed and relevant knowledge and understanding which is explicitly related to the content of the interpretations, and to the question. The above response is credited at Level 3 as it shows developed evaluation of both interpretations. It initially corroborates Interpretation A using well selected contextual knowledge about cultural life in Germany under Stresemann. It then successfully challenges what is said in Interpretation B about the use and impact of American loans. There is an attempt to come to an overall judgement about which interpretation is more convincing, though this is not substantiated, meaning that the response remains in Level 3.

L3: 6 marks

Level 4 response

June 2019 1A/B Germany, 1890-1945: Democracy and dictatorship

Interpretation A is convincing to a large extent about the Stresemann era. This is because it correctly mentioned some of the improvements Germany experienced between 1924 to 1929. For example, it mentions how 'industrial production recovered to well above pre-war levels'. We know this is true because industrial output was greater in 1928 than it was in 1913 before the war. In addition, it mentioned how consumer spending went up by 20% in 1926, This is likely to be correct, as hourly wages rose every year between 1924 and 1929, meaning workers had more money to spend. It is also true that 'life seemed freer, more modern, and more exciting in the Stresemann era, as Weimar culture flourished with artists like Otto Dix and Bauhaus architecture.

Interpretation B is also quite convincing to a small extent. This is because it correctly identifies how Germany's economy failed in the long-term. We know that 'Germany borrowed millions' through the Dawes plan of 1924 where it was agreed that the US would loan Germany 800 million marks. In addition, we know that many German factories relied on these loans as when the US called their money back at short notice in 1929, the German economy collapsed. Moreover, it is true that this created unemployment because by the time Hitler came to power in 1933, a third of Germans were unemployed. However, interpretation B is slightly unconvincing because Stresemann's policies only failed due to the Wall Street Crash in the USA in 1929, and therefore they can not be blamed on him.

In conclusion, interpretation A is more convincing, because it focuses on the Stresemann era alone, whereas interpretation B talks mainly about the negative impacts of his policies that occurred after he died. A is also more convincing because it recognises the other effects of the Stresemann era and gives a more comprehensive picture 1924-1929 in Germany, whereas interpretation B only focuses on the economic issues.

Responses at Level 4 will build upon the qualities seen in Level 3 by including complex thinking in the form of a substantiated judgement. It is common for these substantiated judgements to evaluate which interpretation is most convincing for the issue in the question. The above response is an example of how this can be done effectively. Here, detailed and well selected knowledge is used to evaluate both interpretations. The judgement is signalled at several points in the response, and in the concluding paragraph the response substantiates the judgement with reference to the breadth and comprehensiveness of the interpretations.

L4: 8 marks

Question 1 British Depth Studies: ‘How convincing is the interpretation about...?’

This 8-mark question requires students to evaluate how convincing an interpretation is in relation to the given issue in the question, using the content of the interpretation and their own contextual knowledge and understanding. Responses should attempt to address at least two aspects of the content of the interpretations, and must contain a substantiated judgement in order to be credited at the highest level.

The examples below draw from *2B/A Norman England...* and demonstrate qualities shown at each level of the mark scheme for this question type.

Beginning with the 2020 exams series, the wording of this question has been altered to encourage more students to focus on the content/what the interpretations say in relation to the question.

The student responses beginning on the following page are taken from the June 2019 papers and we have updated this question to reflect the new wording.

Question

Q1. How convincing is **Interpretation A** about the Domesday Book?

Explain your answer based on your contextual knowledge and what it says in **Interpretation A**.

[8 marks]

Interpretation

Interpretation A An interpretation of the Domesday Book.

Adapted from an article by David Roffe in ‘History Today’, in 2007.

To locate the interpretation, please refer to Paper 2 Section B/A: Norman England, c1066-c1100, Interpretations Booklet from June 2019.

Level 1 response

June 2019 Norman England, c1066-c1100

The Domesday Book was ordered by William in 1085. It was a list of taxes, and showed who had paid and who hadn't and what land was William's and what wasn't his, which William could use to work out everything he owned in England. Having a list would help William know what was really his and what wasn't. This is why the interpretation is very convincing.

At Level 1, students are able to quote or paraphrase relevant parts of the interpretation, but struggle to support their points with accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding. This response was credited at Level 1 because it identifies a number of relevant features of the interpretation and makes an assertion about how convincing the interpretation is.

L1: 2 marks

Level 2 response

June 2019 Norman England, c1066-c1100

Interpretation A is very useful. Firstly, it is historically correct. It states that the book was 'ordered in 1085' by William. This is true and the year is correct, which means that it is convincing. It also gives us what is stated in the Domesday Book. He states that it can be seen as a list of taxes paid, taxes owed and a reassessment of taxes, a record of land-ownership.' He lists many reasons which shows that he knows what the book is about. He also states that the book had more than one purpose, which is true and which makes it more convincing.

The author ends the interpretation giving a reason why William would have needed the book. William's most urgent need in 1085 must have been for money. The author is saying that the book meant he could see where he can get taxes from. Normandy was under constant threat from the French, so William needed money to defend Normandy.

To conclude, the interpretation is very convincing. The author gives us historical and accurate dates, what it shows in the book and the reason for its creation.

The mark scheme for this question operates in much the same way as for the corresponding 'convincing' question on Paper 1. Responses that show simple evaluation of the interpretation will often expand on the features of the content of the interpretation, using relevant contextual knowledge in a way which implicitly addresses how convincing the interpretation is about the issue in the question. This response begins with several points of basic analysis, though there is evidence of simple evaluation at the end of the second paragraph. Here, the student uses their understanding of William's need to raise money to defend his lands in Normandy to link the motivations/purpose of the Domesday book.

L2: 3 marks

Level 3 response

June 2019 Norman England, c1066-c1100

Interpretation A is very convincing about the Domesday book as it correctly states that it was ordered in 1085. The interpretation also says that it recorded land ownership which is true as the Domesday book was also meant to settle land disputes that had occurred since 1066. William did demand the survey so he could tax landowners more efficiently this is so William could extract as much money from his tenants as possible. The interpretation states 'his most urgent need in 1085 must have been for cash'. This is convincing as in 1085 he was concerned about an invasion in Normandy from the French so required significant amounts of money to raise a force.

The interpretation convincingly states that the survey was a confirmation of Norman rule. This is true as the survey showed the English people just how powerful and efficient the Normans were. The survey recorded 13,418 different towns and villages which was impressive.

Interpretation A is therefore very convincing about the Domesday book as it correctly states the purpose of the book as well as what it recorded.

At Level 3, responses will address more than one aspect of the interpretation and show developed evaluation, supported with specific knowledge and understanding in the response. The above response is credited at Level 3 because developed evaluation of the interpretation is shown in the first paragraph, where knowledge of the motives for creating the Domesday book is used to confirm what it says in the content. It recognises that the threat to William was specific to 1085 and relates it to his financial worries. A second aspect of the interpretation is addressed later in the response, though this remains simple as the evaluation is implicitly relevant to the question.

L3: 5 marks

Level 4 response

June 2019 Norman England, c1066-c1100

Interpretation A is very convincing in displaying the many different purposes of the Domesday Book. It says 'Taxes paid, taxes owed' which shows one of the many reasons why William introduced the Domesday book as England faced invasion from the King Cnut and the Vikings and Robert, who was the Count of Flanders. Therefore, the book would allow him to increase income and money as it enabled him to monitor taxes and who owed money as well as military service.

Furthermore, Interpretation A provides insight in to the change of landownership after the Norman conquest in 1066 as the Domesday book provides evidence of the exchange of land especially from Anglo-Saxons to loyal Normans. During Anglo-Saxon times land had allowed some nobles to become extremely powerful as shown by the Godwinson rebellion against Edward. However, as shown by the Domesday book 200 barons replaced 6 Anglo-Saxon nobles. This shows the cause for William to demand 'information about land-ownership' because he wanted to know which Norman Barons owned which land after all the changes made following the conquest, and the Domesday book showed them this and how much money they owed him.

At Level 4, the most successful responses often recognise and evaluate the broader argument in the interpretation relevant to the question, which is one way of demonstrating complex evaluation.

This response is credited at Level 4 because it demonstrates complex evaluation in the second paragraph, where understanding of the broader historical context is shown to create a judgment about the interpretation in the final lines. The complexity of the response is shown in its appreciation of the time that has elapsed between the Conquest and the compilation of the Domesday book and why in that intervening time, given that there has been so much change, William wanted an accurate picture of the land he now ruled.

The first paragraph shows evidence of developed evaluation where detailed knowledge of the purposes of the Domesday book is used to make a point about why the interpretation is convincing. Both points do not need to be equally balanced in order to secure Level 4.

L4: 8 marks