GradeMax

CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HISTORY **9489/32**

Paper 3 Interpretations Question **May/June 2026**

1 hour 15 minutes

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** question from **one** section only.
  - Section A: The origins of the First World War
  - Section B: The Holocaust
  - Section C: The origins and development of the Cold War
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 40.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [ ].

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Section A: Topic 1

The origins of the First World War

1 Read the extract and then answer the question.

Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany had written constitutions, but all three left important powers in the hands of the monarch, most importantly the power of declaring war. Moreover, they were not true parliamentary regimes since the ministers, in all three empires, were chosen by the monarch. The ministers were responsible to the monarch and, when no longer in favour, could be dismissed by him. The governing circle, in short, consisted of the monarch and his ministers. The elected legislative bodies provided the principal check on the monarch's power, in particular through their control of finance. However, this formal power on some occasions was not easily used. If the empire faced hostilities or a threatening international situation, voting against a military budget could be a very problematic move. With all of the major social developments of the age running against them, the three authoritarian monarchs felt that their time was running out, but were nonetheless ready to protect their powers. Kaiser Wilhelm's first speech after his accession in 1888 was a message addressed to the Prussian army. He concluded, 'Thus we belong together – I and the army – we were born for one another, and will remain together for ever, whether, through God's will, in peace or war.' Not surprisingly, he and some of his ministers thought about using the military to stop or reverse the prevailing social tendencies.

In Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia it was the governing circle surrounding the monarch that was authorised to make the decisions in July and August 1914. Even for these people, the chosen ones, no fixed rules defined their roles. Much depended on the strength and preferences of the ruler who could make personal decisions about who should be involved. Influence could also be exerted in the opposite direction. A capable or tactically clever subordinate could win the favour of the monarch and might possibly change the monarch's mind on some issue. But it was a chancy business, given the monarch's 'last word' and the deference expected of subordinates. Few would challenge the monarch on whom, accordingly, there would be no serious constraints. One result would be an unusual assurance, or certainty, about the validity of his judgements. But with no controlling logic to govern his thinking, another result could be doubt, delay, and continuous and unpredictable changes of position. Both weaknesses could be found in especially awful form in the mental processes of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Finally, something needs to be said about the outlooks, mindsets or mentalities of the monarchs. It should come as no surprise that the national interest would figure prominently in their thinking. The power, prestige, or influence of the nation, on the continent and in the world, had a central place in their thinking – as may be seen in the justifications they offered during the 1914 crisis. That expression, 'national interest', is misleading in its suggestion of realism, as if one were dealing with something real such as troop strength, industrial capacity, or food supplies. In fact, however, these interests are choices, declarations of perceived needs and of appropriate actions, plus decisions about priorities. In some instances, these needs are claimed to be urgent priorities. A striking feature of the governing circles of the three threatened monarchical powers is the high degree of consensus evidenced with respect to what they saw as vital in the July Crisis. All three believed that a demonstration of their nation's power was necessary. And all three made it clear that they were willing to take enormous chances or, more precisely, willing to pay enormous costs, for the sake of that aim.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the origins of the First World War to explain your answer. [40]

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Section B: Topic 2

The Holocaust

2 Read the extract and then answer the question.

Recent interpretations about the commencement of the Holocaust have stressed that the apparent jump from the Nazi killing of male Jews to the destruction of entire communities was the outcome of a Hitler decision to pursue a genocidal course, a step that Hitler apparently took in July 1941.

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They received both.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Holocaust to explain your answer. [40]

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Section C: Topic 3

The origins and development of the Cold War

3 Read the extract and then answer the question.

In April 1945, Truman became the new US president. He had no experience in foreign affairs, had not been part of Roosevelt's inner circle, and was thus poorly informed about US foreign policy.

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Later, as tensions grew, the Soviets clamped down even harder to avoid losing the valuable prize that the war had given them at such a high price.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Cold War to explain your answer. [40]

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