



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 1G (A-level)
Question 03 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1G (A-level): Additional specimen question paper

03 How successful was Gladstone in improving Anglo-Irish relations in the years 1868–1893?

[25 marks]

Student response

Gladstone was successful to a limited extent in improving the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland. Although he did show strong commitment towards solving the ever-growing tensions within Ireland and produced some reforms to solve the problems of land, politics and religion, a lot of his reforms ended up being unsuccessful.

Firstly, Gladstone faced the problem of religion in Ireland and understood the need for changes to occur. In 1800 the Act of Union was passed which brought Ireland and Great Britain into the United Kingdom. This left Ireland with a protestant church at the head of Ireland; this was a problem because 75% of Ireland's population were catholic. The problem was further shown when Irish Catholics were forced to pay 10% of their wages towards the protestant church despite themselves supporting the catholic one instead. However, Gladstone managed to solve this issue in his first ministry (1868-1874). In 1860 he introduced the Irish Church Act, which disestablished the protestant church of Ireland. As the 25% of Protestants in Ireland were mainly British landowners living in Ulster, Gladstone was able to pass this act. By disestablishing and dis endowing the church, Gladstone managed to successfully solve the issue of religion within Ireland.

Secondly, Gladstone tried to improve Anglo-Irish relations by solving the problems of land. In his first ministry, he introduced his first Land Act in 1870 and this is unfortunately an example of where he was unsuccessful. The Act was intended to solve the problem of Irish tenants being vulnerable to unfair eviction-particularly from their mainly absentee landlords and he also hope it would provide a stimulus for Irish landlords to take a more moral Christian approach towards their tenants. Although the Act set up land tribunals, which had the power to intervene in disagreements over what was classed as a fair rent, the wording of it meant many tenants in reality had little protection against their landlords over rent. The poor wording of the Act combined with the economic hardships of the 1870s led to the inevitable failure of Gladstone's first attempt at solving land.

However in his second ministry Gladstone successfully amended his mistakes over land from his first ministry by introducing a second Land Act in 1881. In this Land Act significant concessions were made which granted the 3 F's, which involved; fixed tenancies whereby tenants couldn't be evicted if they kept up with rent payments; freedom to sell their tenancy should they wish to and finally fair rents through better land tribunals if their landlord tried to charge them unfairly. This act was Gladstone's attempt to repair the mistakes made in his first ministry and to ease the tension in Ireland after the on going Land War. Although it helped to reduce violence and improved British Irish relations, its potential success was slightly weakened a year later in 1882 after the Phoenix Park murders which once again increased the tension between the neighbouring countries.

Gladstone faced many political hurdles in order to improve Anglo-Irish relations between 1868 and 1893 and it can be argued that he was not successful in improving relations from a political point of view for a number of reasons. For example in 1881 he passed a Coercion Act that prompted the arrest of INP leader Parnell. This soured the fragile relationships as it meant that he could not continue his campaign for Home Rule. In addition to this, Gladstone's resistance towards Home Rule until 1885 may have felt like a step back from Ireland's point of view due to Home Rule being their main objective and Gladstone previously having said that it was his mission to 'pacify Ireland'. This suggests that Gladstone was not successful in improving relations between the two countries.

However, the Kilmainham treaty in 1882 was a step in the right direction. Parnell's release meant that campaigning could restart and progress could be made. In addition to this, Gladstone's U-turn on Home Rule in 1885 and subsequently the first Home Rule Bill in 1886 was bound to improve relations as it could be evidence that Gladstone really was committed to pacifying Ireland and was prepared to risk dislike in England. Overall Gladstone was successful to a limited extent in improving relations politically as he let them get worse before improvements and reconciliation began.

Despite causing the split in the Liberal Party in 1886, Gladstone had a second attempt at passing a Home Rule Bill in 1893. This was a bill, which again failed, however, this time it was denied by the Lords instead of the commons. This shows how Home Rule was gaining more support from the House of Commons, more specifically the Liberals, and it was the majority of Conservatives who were voted against the bill, and prevented it from passing in the House of Lords. Michael Davitt saw Gladstone's Second Home Rule Bill as a "pact of peace," which shows how the introduction of the bill had strengthened relations between the Irish and those in Parliament who supported Home Rule.

In conclusion, the weight of the argument suggests that Gladstone's success in improving Anglo-Irish relations was to a limited extent. Although Gladstone successfully solved the issue of religion, political issues weren't solved as he was unable to pass Home Rule and Coercion acts also angered the Irish, which further declined their relationship with the British. The failure of the first Land Act in 1870 could have suggested that Gladstone was half-hearted about improving the situation however he did slightly manage to recover his mess with the second Land Act. Furthermore the unfortunate events such as the downfall of Parnell, the Land War and the Phoenix Park murders weren't dealt with well under his leadership with further prevented the success of improving Anglo-Irish relations.

Commentary – Level 4

The introduction sets out an argument that is then developed in the essay. The answer reviews the main features of Gladstone's Irish policy and offers appropriate assessment as to their success or failure. It does lack some precision in places, especially in relation to Church reform (such as in making references to the protestant rather than the Irish Church and an incorrect date for the Church Act) and lacks full development of the Home Rule issues and why Gladstone himself became committed to this cause. In seeking to assess success and failure, some extended reference to the opposition faced by Gladstone would have strengthened the answer. It is a low Level 4 answer.