

History

Answers and commentaries A-level (7042)

2Q The American Dream: reality and illusion, 1945 — 1980

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

Contents

The below content table is interactive. You can click on the title of the question to go directly to that page.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Question 1 | 3 |
| Question 2 | 9 |

Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History 2Q The American Dream: reality and illusion, 1945–1980 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

Question 1

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Carter and Ford and the election of 1976.

[30 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25-30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19-24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13-18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7-12**

A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2Q THE AMERICAN DREAM – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

L1: The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**

Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Source A is from Carter's TV broadcast shortly before the 1976 presidential election. This means it will be carefully crafted to garner support in the election and is thus not candid. Carter being shown against a background of images of the USA suggests he was calling upon a desire for the nation to feel united, as it had lost its sense of national identity in the previous years – everything from 1971 Pentagon Papers to the Church Committee's exposure of CIA wrongdoing led to the nation being thoroughly insecure, and Carter was speaking to that feeling. The tone of the source is inspiring and acknowledges the shameful past events in a showy honesty, which Carter, despite his later failures as president, was consistently admired for, as in his 1979 'Malaise' speech. His mentioning that he has 'gotten to know the people of this country' shows he is aware of one of his main strengths as a candidate – he is a relatively ordinary man, who grew up as a peanut farmer, and more importantly a Washington outsider with no scandals. The source also refers to this, as he has seen an America that 'has turned away from scandals and corruption', referring not only to the 1974 Watergate Scandal but also subsequent issues of corruption plaguing the Ford administration; for example, his pardoning of Nixon, which effectively doomed his presidency, but also Earl Butz' racist comments. Carter's assertion that his presidency will be full of 'vigor' and 'positive leadership' suggests Ford did not do this, and was seen as weak (which is especially true of the media, which showed him falling down the stairs several times, weakening his image), Carter's assertion that he 'feels your pain' again reasserts that Ford was seen as out of touch, and possibly that the Watergate scandal had cemented the image of the president as an untrustworthy figure. Again, the tone is hopeful, with languages such as 'majesty' 'simple decency' reaffirming the image of the US government as leader of the free world while also asserting Carter as a normal person. Overall, Source A tells us that Carter campaigned as being a scandal-free Washington outsider who was in touch with regular people – everything that Ford was seen not to be and is this very valuable.

Source B is from Ford's 1979 autobiography. This means it will be sympathetic towards his own experience, and provides a valuable insight into his perspective as the president while the image of the presidency was falling apart. The tone of the source is noble and portrays Ford as someone who merely wanted America to heal, however towards the end it suggests that Ford is, despite what is written, sympathetic to Nixon. Ford accepts his own failures, that he 'failed to anticipate' the reaction of his pardoning Nixon in 1974, although the language 'vehemence' and 'hostile' suggests he feels this response was unjustly antagonistic towards him. It is true there was an awful reaction; his pardon effectively doomed the presidency as Ford was then forever linked to Watergate. This is valuable as it suggests Ford, although connected with corruption, may not have seen his (or Nixon's) actions as reprehensible (although the fact it is his auto biography, sold for commercial purposes, means it likely would not be fully honest about the extent of corruption between him and Nixon). Furthermore, Ford had to stand before the House Judiciary Committee in 1974 to assure them the pardon was not a 'quid pro quo' situation, suggesting Congress was also 'hostile'. The language of 'fellow citizens' again portrays Ford as on the side of the people. The source suggests that, despite claiming the pardon was to begin the nation's 'healing', Ford was

A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2Q THE AMERICAN DREAM – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

sympathetic to Nixon, who 'suffered enormously' and was 'fighting for his freedom'. As his Vice President, Ford and Nixon had a positive relationship, with Ford later confirming they were friends. This source is then valuable in relation to the 1976 election as it shows the extent to which Ford was clearly associated with corruption and how he made the wrong moves politically – he is antagonising both the government and the people and siding with the unforgivable Nixon. It is also valuable in relation to Carter's victory, as it justifies Carter's lack of experience; anybody who was not associated with Watergate or scandals would have been preferred. Overall, Source B is a valuable source of Ford's perspective and how he antagonised voters and supports and how his presidency was doomed even if he had positive intentions.

Source C is from the New York Times which, as it favours Democrats, will likely be supportive of Carter. The source overall is hopeful for Carter's presidency but suggests an underlying persistent lack of faith in the government, or Carter's 'vague and ambiguous language'. The source refers to Carter being an 'unknown' to some offhandedly – despite Carter being president-elect he had no major media background possibly a reason for his victory as he was seen as less manipulative of his image and more open and honest. The source acknowledges that there 'may be doubt' that Carter will fulfil his promised – a reasonable idea after Nixon, who promised law and order, having a major corruption scandal in Watergate. Furthermore, the mounting inflationary pressures and recovering foreign markets would undoubtedly put Carter in a difficult position, as well as social divisions such as NOW against STOP ERA that were emerging. This source is sympathetic, is hesitant, saying Carter will be 'relentless' in advocating for change. This is valuable as it shows people genuinely believed in Carter, despite later evidence showing he failed in regards to negotiating with Congress – people elected him because they wanted change and believed he would bring it (unlike the stagnant, untrustworthy Ford). The source even portrays his 'vague' campaign somewhat positively, as it gave him 'elbow-room', presenting Carter as having some political expertise. This again is valuable as it shows people not only elected Carter because he wasn't Ford, but that he was truly believed in. The tone of the source is largely sympathetic and hopeful although too hesitant to be fully supportive, a rational approach considering the string of scandals prior to the election. Overall, Source C is valuable in that it shows Carter was not only elected because he was simply a Washington outsider, but that he inspired a genuine level of faith and inspiration in a thoroughly doubtful population, which Ford simply could not do in the election of 1976.

This is a Level 5 response

The response balances tone, content and provenance very well and uses specific quotation in order to support observations. Whilst the phrase 'value' is not used very often in the first paragraph of the response, it is clear that the intention behind the analysis is to consider how the historian might use the source. Subsequent paragraphs are much more directed in proving value. It is clear that the student arrives at an overall judgement for each source after presenting a balanced argument. The specific nature and precision of the supporting information is a particular strength of the response although there is a momentary veering away from the focus set in the question when assessing source A.

Response B

Source A is not valuable in as far as it highlights that America had recovered after Nixon's presidency. Carter states that he sees an America, on the move again, united, its wounds 'healed'. This optimistic tone displayed by Carter is far from the truth, America had not had its 'wounds' healed. Despite being after the source, the 1976 presidential election was not well received. It saw a major decrease in voting with 46% of people not submitting their votes in this year. After Nixon and Ford's presidencies, the trust in the American political system had dissolved. Therefore, this is the reason for Carter's overly optimistic and positive tone. In addition to this, being a TV election, the value of this source is lessened as Carter wanted to appear to the American population as the new trustworthy president far from corruption.

On the other hand, source A is valuable in as far as it highlights Carter's desire to improve America. Although being genuine about wanting to govern with vigor and positive leadership Carter found this extremely hard as he encountered many objects throughout his presidency. After his election the approval rating was extremely low. It was evident that the aftermath of Nixon's presidency was still ongoing. Even at the time of the 1976 election, the previous 2 presidents meant that those to follow would suffer greatly, not 'being able to govern with vigor...and positive leadership.'

Overall, Source A is not valuable because of the overly optimistic and enthusiastic tone displayed in the broadcast by Carter. The corruption of the Nixon presidency and incompetence of Ford meant that Carter would have to appeal to the American public that the situation had changed.

Source B is not valuable in as far as it highlights Ford's lack of understanding for the public. It is stated in source B 'that Ford failed to anticipate the vehemence of the hostile section to my decision to pardon Nixon', despite saying this, at the time of the Nixon presidency before he resigned, 60% of the US population wanted to see Nixon be impeached, Ford completely went the other way to the public, the public wanted justice which Ford did not allow and he was accused of making a deal with Nixon to become president and pardon Nixon. Furthermore, this led to Ford being the only non-elected Vice President and President further decreasing the number of people with faith in the presidency.

On the contrary, Source B is valuable in as far as it highlights Ford's belief for doing the correct thing. As this comes from an autobiography, it is likely that Ford was speaking the truth / what he thought to be the truth. 'It was the state of the country' that worried Ford which led to his pardoning of Nixon in 1974. The public wanted to recover with their trust being broken. Ford saw the opportunity of people not reliving it and therefore pardoned him.

Overall, source B is somewhat valuable because it highlights Ford's worry for the country and the need for it to return to normal, the country needed to heal.

Source C is valuable in as far as it highlights the lackluster achievements by President James Carter. Firstly, the source is from the New York Times which is a more respected company compared to many other tabloids. It mentions that 'there is doubt that he will try to fulfil his campaign commitments'. It was difficult for Jimmy Carter as the presidential approval rating

A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2Q THE AMERICAN DREAM – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

had gone significantly low and even reaching 15%. The challenges that Watergate brought to the presidency was long lasting and undoubtedly hindered the progression for both Ford and Carter so there was most certainly 'doubt' about his campaign commitments as the faith in the United States politicians was no longer therefore making source C have greater value.

On the other hand, source C is not valuable in as far as it highlights Carter's force of change regarding policy and programs, 'Mr Carter will be relentless in trying to guide and, if necessary, force through his programs and changes'. Carter did not see much of anything during his time in office and he only achieved a small number of policy and progress changes. Furthermore Carter was also hindered by the actions of his 'hill billy' brother who after appeared on television, drunk. The circumstances surrounding Carter's presidency meant that he was often unsuccessful purely due to the view of American politics.

This is a Level 3 response

Whilst the response uses the phrase 'of value' quite regularly, this is done in an assertive manner. The evidence, although reasonably precise in places – for example the opening page- is not keenly directed to the precise historical focus set in the question. Very little of the evidence given is explicitly linked to supporting a judgement about value, and much of the material is consequently contextual. However, there is an attempt to offer an answer for each source and also to cover both content and provenance. There are consequently a few occasions in which an answer to the question is delivered with some support as demanded at Level 3 even if the security of the response is weak especially in relation to the last source.

Question 2

'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Following the second world war, the USA experienced a turning point whereby there were significant economic, political and social changes. These changes under Truman threatened to divide the USA and although there were some areas where the USA appeared united, the USA became more divided economically, socially and politically.

After, 1945, the USA experienced a post-war economic boom as a result of technological advancement, loans to the allies and war bonds. This contributed to a growing confidence and strength in the US economy, which was only strengthened by the GI Bill of 1944. The Federal government helped successfully demobilise veterans and return them to society through \$20 billion of funding of the GI Bill over 10 years providing help getting a 40% mortgage, access to college loans and providing 52 weeks of unemployment benefits. Although inflation hit 25% in 1946 as a result of the transition from war time to civilian industry that created a shortage of goods exacerbated by the baby boom and return of peacetime spending. The economy stabilised by 1948 and the GNP had grown from \$200 billion in 1945 to \$300 billion by 1950. This is clear that the USA was experiencing an economic boom and the USA united behind the strength of their economy. However, despite the economic success, the divide between rich and poor grew as a result. The economic disparity can be highlighted by the fact that the 1/3 of the population was living in poverty, and in the south it was nearly as high as 50%. This was a result of a lack of infrastructure in rural areas as they often lacked electricity and sometimes running water. The huge migration of workers to cities especially from African Americans suffered from poor housing, overcrowding and poor sanitation in inner cities. It is clear that although the USA was experiencing economic prosperity, not everyone benefited and if anything it only threatened to widen the disparity between rich and poor and divide the country even further.

Although there was a greater recognition for change within society following the second world war, on the grounds of race. The nation was still incredibly divided. The migration of African Americans to northern cities led to greater black consciousness and led to the increased membership of civil rights groups like the NAACP which grew from 5,000 to 450,000 members. In addition, the success of the Double V campaign and the horrors of nazism during the second world war highlighted the need for change and the potential dangers of racism and continued discrimination and segregation. There was success in trying to end discrimination through court cases in the supreme court like *Morgan v Virginia* in 1946 in regards to interstate travel and *Shelley v Kramer* in regards to housing. However, the idea that these rulings were never enforced and the violence that occurred on the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947 highlights the race was still incredibly divisive. Additionally, the beatings and extreme violence against returning African American soldiers and continued use of the poll tax and frequent practice of lynching highlights that the USA was incredibly divided on race as highlighted by the horrific treatment of African Americans in the south and poverty present in African American communities with over 50% living in poverty. Overall, although there was some attitude for change as seen by the growing support for civil rights and Truman's

A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2Q THE AMERICAN DREAM – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

recognition of the NAACP at the Lincoln Memorial in 1947, it is clear that US society, as a whole, was still incredibly divided.

The USA was united behind a hatred of communism and the USSR but internally, the USA was politically divided. Divisions within the Democrat party between the southern 'dixiecrats' and more progressive democrats threatened the effectiveness of the federal government and Truman's attempt at civil rights legislation only served to exacerbate these issues.

Additionally, although externally united against communism, internally, the USA was divided on socialism and perceived communism. Truman's attempts to veto the Taft Hartley Act in 1947 shows his reluctance to restrict the power of trade unions and his proposals for universal healthcare that were attacked as 'socialised medicine' also highlights there were differing strengths of opinion. This was further exacerbated by the rise of McCarthy. The anti-communist hysteria, and the backlisting of teachers, Hollywood actors and directors and politicians in the State Department overall, this highlights that despite appearing externally united politically against communism this cannot be mistaken for political unity within the USA.

In conclusion, the United States became a more divided nation under Truman as the economic prosperity threatened to widen the gap between rich and poor and both politically and socially, the USA was still far from being united. Therefore, the USA became more divisive due to the extensive change experienced politically, economically and socially.

This is a Level 5 response

The introduction establishes a judgement with some rationale. The wide-ranging supporting information in the following paragraph is precise and carefully selected and serves to indicate an excellent understanding of the period and of the arguments presented. It is impressive that there is logical paragraphing as is typical of the higher levels, and that the depth of supporting information is even across all themes addressed. At no times does the response become narrative but instead remains keenly focused on developing a judgement which the knowledge is closely linked to. The conclusion is plainly a consequence of a sustained and effectively balanced response which is fully indicative of a Level 5 response.

Response B

The view that 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view. Of course there were divisions in America at this time but they did not worsen under Truman's leadership, in fact, in many ways the country became more united under Truman. The factors that will be discussed are the effects of World War Two, the 'red-scare' and civil rights.

Firstly, the view that 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view because of the effects of World War Two. World War Two, which ended in 1945, the year that Truman began his presidency, had made the United States of America a much more united nation and this did not end when the war ended. As the soldiers returned home, the country was engulfed in a spirit of unity and patriotism. This was aided by a consumer boom and post-war prosperity. Truman made the decision to not demobilise all 12 million soldiers at once but to go in smaller groups, the first group of 9 million returning in 1945. This action helped the economy and despite some short term unemployment that some may argue led to division, overall the economy was booming, which meant that the people were happy. The end of World War Two as well as the post-war prosperity meant that the nation was experiencing a period of unity like never before. This suggests that the view 'The United States become a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view.

Secondly, the view that 'The United States become a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view as the country became united in the 'red-scare'. America, of which is a capitalist country, became very fearful of the idea that communism was spreading after World War Two. When senator Joseph McCarthy further ignited this fear of communism by suggesting that there were already communists infiltrating America, which became known as McCarthyism, Americans became united in this fear. The population became hypervigilant in this phobia. Importantly, they became united in this. Although this wasn't as a direct result of Truman's actions, as Truman did not particularly fan the flames of this fear, it still occurred under his leadership. Some may argue that McCarthyism caused division as people would turn those of whom they suspected of harbouring communist ideologies, there were in reality, more people united in their fear than divided for this reason. Overall, the view that 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view as people were united in the 'Red Scare' and their fear of communism.

Lastly, the view that 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view because of the civil rights movement. Although some people may think that the civil rights movement caused division as there were those who were a part of the movement and those who were not, in reality, this movement actually led to more unity. The movement helped educate people on civil rights issues which led to equality being progressed into. During Truman's presidency, more people joined the movement, the NAACP increased the amount of members they had and the group CORE was founded. The problem of racial inequality was by no means new in America and so the progression of these groups actually led to more unity because of the united journey toward equality. Overall, the view that 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view.

In conclusion, the United States actually became more united under Truman's presidency rather than divided, due to a fear of communism; civil rights and post-war prosperity. This means that the view 'The United States became a more divided nation under Truman' is not a very valid view.

This is a Level 3 response

Whilst the introduction gives a view, this is entirely assertive. This sets the tone for the entire response which is certainly judgemental, but rarely goes beyond the simple identification of some general supporting information, rather than developing any of this in any great depth. The frequent quotation of the question itself suggests that the student has perhaps run out of things to say, although it does at least result in a consistent focus in response. It is this lack of depth that is the most significant reason why the essay is limited to Level 3. Whilst there is an attempt to balance a judgement, this judgement cannot be considered to have been supported in anything other than a quite generalist manner as indicated by the Level 3 descriptor.

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