



AS LEVEL HISTORY

7041/1K: The making of a Superpower : USA, 1865-1975.
Report on the Examination

7041
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General.

This paper produced a wide range of responses. Students earning the higher marks used extensive knowledge to underpin their answers. These students used well-selected and relevant evidence which frequently led to convincing judgements. Answers from students earning lower marks were characterised by irrelevance and /or lack of knowledge.

Again, some students clearly prefer Q1 where the prompts in the extracts offer a ready structure. In some cases it appeared that the reading of the extracts was superficial, opening the door to lengthy accounts of isolationism/imperialism which were only thinly related to the question. The majority of students managed their time well, although those who started the paper with a lengthy essay response (often Q2) appeared to be pressed for time at the end.

Question 01.

Most students were familiar with the important issues in American foreign policy 1890-1917. At times the desire to write at length about what they knew prevented a close analysis of the two extracts. Answers which focused on different types of imperialism were rarely able to relate this material to the question.

Extract A proved accessible to most students, seeming to reinforce a view which they already had in respect of the direction of US foreign policy. In many cases evaluation consisted of a range of convincing evidence supporting the idea of a new interventionism. Students who challenged this view tended to argue that the late entry of the US into First World War showed a reluctance to intervene in global events.

Extract B proved more challenging with students uncertain about what was meant by the suggestion that the US had “world power thrust upon it”. Students often provided an array of evidence challenging the idea that the US was anti-imperialist. Material supporting the idea tended to come from outside the time-frame, frequently drawing on isolationist themes from an earlier period.

The best answers were able to identify the key issues in each of the extracts and then evaluate these issues with a range of relevant contextual evidence. The skills required to do this effectively, providing both support and challenge for both extracts, are considerable. Some of these answers showed detailed knowledge not only of the years in question, but were also able to place these events within a broader historical context.

Those who found the extracts challenging tended to resort to simplistic, frequently inaccurate, summaries or to focus on a point-by-point description. These answers, at best, paraphrased the extracts without highlighting the key arguments. The failure to identify the key arguments in the extracts does make meaningful evaluation very difficult. In these cases evaluation may mean little more than fact-checking some of the points raised in the extracts. In a number of answers, where knowledge was limited, evidence was simply taken directly from the other extract. In a small number of cases, students who worked their way methodically through the extracts – and therefore thought their way through the extracts – did emerge with an effective summary of the key issues.

There was widespread agreement amongst students that A was the more convincing extract.

Question 02.

This was a very popular question which in the end proved to be quite challenging for many students. Very few students appreciated the full implications of the question with the result that many responses were quite narrow and lacked range. There was very little agreement between students on what constituted the appropriate subject matter for this question and responses therefore varied considerably.

Most students accepted that the relationship between the white settlers and Native Americans was an important theme and some reference to this appeared in most responses. In some answers this aspect of the question brought detailed and thorough accounts, charting the turbulent history of settler/Indian relationships.

Essays achieving the highest marks invariably brought together a range of factors focused on the levels of division and lawbreaking in the American West. The most common weakness was to focus at length on one or two aspects and neglect the broad range of issues raised by the question.

Misjudgements included the following : describing the process of westward expansion with no valid reference to lawlessness / division ; making the experience of African Americans the central theme ; transferring issues relating to the South (or in some cases the North) to the West ; describing the expansion of transcontinental railways without assessing their impact on rural and urban communities.

The judgement of most students was that the West was a pretty brutal place. Students did not find it easy to argue the opposite case and therefore some imbalance was found in many responses.

Question 03.

Most students who answered this question showed considerable knowledge of American politics in the period 1896 to 1912. There were therefore many well-developed and balanced answers focusing on both Republican strengths and Democratic weaknesses. These answers understood that the question covered a period of sixteen years and required some reference to each of the five elections included in the question. Some of the better answers drew attention to how things changed over time, contrasting the changed situation in 1912 with Republican success/ Democratic failure in 1896 and 1900.

Weaker answers often lacked balance and concentrated on either Republican strengths or Democratic weaknesses, although the treatment of these issues by themselves could be very effective. A further feature, common to many students, was to focus on the early years with very little on events after 1904. These answers often included extensive material on 1896 (and sometimes 1900) with very little reference to 1908 and 1912.

In terms of judgement students were equally divided on whether the key issue was Republican strengths or Democratic weaknesses

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.