
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2J: America: A Nation Divided, c1845 - 1877
Report on the Examination

7042
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Section A: Question 01

The responses to the source question this year were mixed, with some very strong answers and some that fell into the lower mark boundaries. Whilst knowledge overall didn't seem to be the issue, the main focus students should take into future series is the requirement to address both content and provenance in depth, with a consistent focus on the value of the source and its relationship to the focus of the question. There still remain many responses offering a comparative judgement on the sources to evaluate which was the more valuable, which is not needed in this paper and therefore should be avoided. The focus on 'value' should be much more deeply and consistently addressed by students, and avoidance of Paper 1 commands such as 'convincing' should be stressed.

Source A

The first source had very mixed responses. The stronger answers avoided generic commentary on the provenance and analysed well the value of the authorship and audience in relation to the issue of slavery expansion, correctly using appropriate knowledge to support value and limitations. Weaker answers misunderstood the provenance and some very generic and unsupported assertions on tone were made, weakening the quality of many answers. The content was addressed to a mixed degree: whilst the source significantly emphasised the Dred Scott decision, many responses were narrative in approach rather than offering an analysis to the question of how the decision affected tensions surrounding slavery expansion. Tone was commented on but not consistently: some major misunderstandings of tone were seen, especially when the audience was misunderstood by some students.

Source B

The greatest area of concern with this source was the provenance. Students need to be very aware of chronology. There were too many responses incorrectly stating that the source was part of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of August-October 1858, however, the source was from March 1859, after the debates, therefore there was significant misunderstanding of context. However, analysis on the author was better, and significantly, the analysis of the content was better in many cases too. Better responses evaluated the source in relation to the fears of slavery expansion well, however some responses cited the events of Harper's Ferry: this was abolitionist action, not fears of slavery expansion. Tone was evaluated well with good use of supporting knowledge and well selected examples of language to emphasise the points made.

Source C

The responses to this source were also very mixed. Similar to Source B, errors were made in relation to the date, with many students believing it to be part of the congressional debates. There was more appropriate knowledge of Douglas himself and his purpose in the source. Good knowledge was applied of his argument on popular sovereignty with the better answers making reference to relevant knowledge such as the issues of the Lecompton Constitution or his defence of popular sovereignty through his Freeport Doctrine.

Moving into future series, it is essential that greater preparation on the evaluation of provenance is taught. Aspects of provenance such as purpose, date, audience, location, author were addressed, but not evaluated in many cases either to the question, or for their value. For stronger responses, provenance and tone (where appropriate) must not be treated as minor areas, but need to be explored fully with the content to achieve the higher marks..

Section B: Question 02

Responses to this particular question were varied and covered a wide range of marks. The focus of the question was the impact of westward expansion on the Southern states by 1850, and many responses appropriately focused on this. There was an appropriate focus on issues such as the Missouri Compromise 1820 and the Mexican War, with the better answers continuing to refer back to the question of whether these events posed threats or opportunities to the South. However, some answers approached the question from a whole Union perspective, not solely on the South as the question required, resulting in many responses being in the lower levels. There still remain some misconceptions on admission of some states into the Union e.g. Texas, and students must observe the chronology in the question and not go beyond this. For instance, there were some responses going further to refer to events such as the issues with Kansas, which were irrelevant to the specific chronology of the question.

Section B: Question 03

This was a very popular question.. The stronger answers identified the question as addressing the key concept of ‘consequence’ and focused strongly on relevant factors such as loss of manpower, economic decline etc. whereas many responses unfortunately focused on events of the war and, in many cases, appeared to produce pre-prepared answers for why the Union won the war, or why the Confederacy lost. Many responses demonstrated convincing knowledge of the events of the war, ranging from key battles to the impact of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, but as events of the war rather than consequences an approach that limited many students progressing to the higher levels. Those who answered it well correctly argued with good understanding and evidence that the South suffered to a higher degree than the North, with effective analysis present throughout to reinforce conclusions.

Section B: Question 04

This question was responded to relatively well by the students and there was a significantly clear demonstration of effective knowledge on both the role of Andrew Johnson, and the part played by Congress in the increasing tensions between the conflicting positions of the federal government. Many of the responses were strong in consistently finding a balanced argument to address both Johnson and Congress, with areas such as Johnson’s use of vetoes against significant legislation such as the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 and Congress’s removal of presidential powers such as the Tenure of Office Act. . The question required a balanced analysis of Johnson and Congress. . The less effective responses either focused too heavily on one or the other, leading to unbalanced answers, or in some very few cases, compared Johnson to Grant which was not relevant to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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