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# GCSE HISTORY

8145/1A A/B/C/D

Report on the Examination

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8145

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**8145/1A/A****Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World****Section A: Period Studies****1A America, 1840-1895: Expansion and Democracy****Question 1**

Despite Covid-enforced interruptions, students impressed examiners with the general quality of their work. It was clear many had a sound understanding of the key issues in this period study. Most demonstrated a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the assessment objectives. The evidence contained in students' responses suggested they had planned and structured their answers and that they had considered carefully the interpretations provided for use with Questions 1, 2 and 3. Understandably, some were more confident than others in developing answers to these questions.

In Question 1 the majority of students successfully understood and were able to explain differences about the experiences of Homesteaders from the interpretations provided. Most responses, being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference were placed in Level 2, though weaker answers were characterised by an over-reliance on the interpretations with many students copying indiscriminately. Quotations, when over-used, tended to hinder students' answers rather than support them. The weakest answers, moreover, were filled with quotations and little development of the key differences between the interpretations. There was a tendency for some students to write unnecessarily long answers, losing sight of the marks available for this question. Answers placed in Level 1 tended to identify the features of each interpretation without any direct comparison, and making only simple inferences. Some answers or parts thereof, were not credited because they considered the provenance of the interpretations.

At Level 2 students were typically able to make comparisons between the interpretations, indicating that Interpretation A was very morose about the experience of homesteading, whereas Interpretation B was much more enthusiastic. There was some accurate understanding of the language used. The stronger answers were focused and cogent; it was clear what each interpretation was suggesting about Homesteading and many students deployed high level vocabulary to make clear the different opinions provided in the two interpretations.

**Question 2**

The weaker responses to this question made simple statements and undeveloped assertions such as "the author is biased". Such comments were often unsubstantiated. Weaker answers stated the differences in the times of writing, without extending the answer to suggest why or how that might have an impact on the nature of the interpretations, or indeed without acknowledging that the two interpretations were in fact, written at similar times. Many students focussed on the author of Interpretation A as a woman who had originated from the east of America and so had experience of a (presumably) more comfortable way of life in her earlier years, while the author of Interpretation B was a third generation homesteader who had known nothing other than sod-house living and whose parents and grand-parents had (again presumably) gone through, and crucially overcome the hardships experienced by the author of Interpretation A. As with Question 1, some answers were too long considering the marks available for this question. Many weaker answers remained fixated on **how** rather than **why** the interpretations were different.

The stronger answers to this question were able to relate their contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations and use this to explain why they might have had different interpretations about homesteading and some impressive contextual knowledge was displayed in these answers.

### **Question 3**

A range of responses were produced in answer to this question. Some chose to dwell on the provenance of the two interpretations and were usually placed in Level 1, or in exceptional cases, Level 2: some examiners pointed out that some responses would have been more appropriate as an answer to Question 2 or even Question 1. In answers of this sort students frequently relied less on contextual knowledge about the experiences and progress of homesteaders, but looked to the motives of the authors and asserted that the interpretation with the least ‘bias’ was the more convincing.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach which was unlikely to allow the student to show any overall understanding, and often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question. There were also many references to the provenance of the interpretations intermingled with context used to test for accuracy.

There were, however, many answers which displayed sound, relevant contextual knowledge and which debated and judged which Interpretation was the more convincing. Some students presented a strong case for just one Interpretation being the more convincing, often with excellent contextual knowledge but there was a limit to the credit that could be earned by taking this approach. This was because it was necessary to provide a developed explanation, to some extent, in support of the validity of the arguments provided in both interpretations. There were a small number of very good answers from students who made links between the two interpretations. Some very good knowledge was often deployed on this question. Higher-level responses were frequently characterised by reference to such as crop blights, prairie fires, grasshopper plagues, the innovation of Turkey red wheat, and the invention of the Sodbuster Plough and the mechanical wind pump. Some students went on to, or included on the way, a substantiated judgement about the more convincing interpretation. Examiners were not looking for a particular Interpretation to be favoured in students’ answers, so long as a sensible and substantiated argument was made: indeed, some of the more effective and successful responses concluded that both interpretations were accurate representations of homesteading, the first summarising the initial experiences of homesteaders, the second addressing the experience of the established homesteader.

### **Question 4**

While this question was accessible at all ability ranges, it should be stated that a number of students did not fully address the question, which asked for two problems faced by people attempting to cross the Plains before 1865. Many students simply wrote too much in their answers; many wrote about the experiences of people attempting to settle on and farm the Plains; many seemed confused in their knowledge of events. The mistake made by the Donner Party for example, was beginning their journey too late to be able to avoid the snowstorms that saw them trapped in their camp, not failing to take sufficient food and water.

Nevertheless the majority of students appeared to be concise in their answers and related their descriptions to the demands of the question. There were many Level 2 responses. Most cited bad and extreme weather and the possibility of Indian attacks, but others wrote about the hostile terrain and its effects on wagons, as well as the difficulties travellers sometimes experienced trying to remain healthy. The structure of the answers was exemplary in many cases with responses clearly signposted, including such as ‘firstly’ and ‘secondly’ and being divided and organised into two clear and distinct paragraphs.

**Question 5**

In answering this question the majority of students drew on the experiences of the African-American population in both the southern states. Weaker responses considered only how their lives were affected by the American Civil War, making simple points that were often accompanied by accurate, if undeveloped, knowledge.

There were many good answers to this question with several developed aspects. Many identified the effects of the Civil War on distinct groups of American people and in so doing gained a mark within Level 3. There were lots of strong answers that defined the various groups and were able to differentiate between some positive as well as the obvious negative impacts. More effective answers showed a basic understanding of the wider experiences, for example, of plantation owners, women, and white American soldiers.

The most successful responses were marked by clear discussions of the impact of the Civil War on different demographic groups with supported references to their changed circumstances and status. It was encouraging to see students working at this level using historical facts and figures, where appropriate, to substantiate their points.

**Question 6**

It was understandable that the weaker answers to this question were descriptive and often overly narrative. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient knowledge of the reasons for the successful lifestyle of the Plains Indians by 1895. The weaker answers lacked structure and did not demonstrate a clear line of argument. It is important in this Period study that students deploy second order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements.

On the other hand, many students were able to show off some secure knowledge in formulating responses to this question. Most of these were able to develop a balanced and detailed assessment to show the impact of both the buffalo herds and the Plains Indians' beliefs and societal structures in contributing to their successful lifestyle. Arguments for both were often well done though

Level 2 responses were almost exclusively typified by a preoccupation with the uses to which buffalo were put once hunted and killed. Some students at this level provided superficial and assertive statements lacking precise historical support.

Stronger answers were able to secure Level 3 marks with both aspects discussed in detail so that supporting knowledge was clear, accurate and appropriate. Level 4 responses often maintained relevant reference to both reasons throughout the answer and cogently articulated a well-supported judgement. It was noticeable that the better answers were coherent and structured in clearly defined paragraphs. Such answers went much further with a depth of knowledge that was particularly impressive. Perceptive judgements made complex links between the reasons for the successful lifestyle of the Plains Indians and commented on how the nomadic lifestyle of the Plains Indians was supported and reinforced by their beliefs, values and attitudes towards, for example, the land and human relationships.

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**8145/1A/B****Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World****Section A: Period Studies****1 B Germany, 1890 – 1945: Democracy and dictatorship****Question 1**

The general quality of the work produced by the students was good and it was evident that they had understood the topic well. Most students demonstrated a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key assessment objectives. There was evidence that students had taken time to consider and plan their responses and there was some careful reading of the interpretations in Questions 1, 2 and 3. Not surprisingly, some were more confident than others in assembling their answers to these questions.

Examiners noted in the weaker answers that students typically neglected to develop their points and merely repeated what the Interpretations said. On the one hand there were some students who made simple, abbreviated and descriptive observations, on the other, examiners noticed some students who wrote unnecessarily long answers. All students should be mindful of the number of marks available for this question. Some answers failed to gain any credit because they discussed the provenance of the interpretations or copied out parts of the interpretation.

However, in answering Question 1 the majority of students successfully comprehended and explained differences about the reasons for Hitler's rise to power from these interpretations. Many responses reached a high Level 2, being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference about his success. At Level 2 responses were typically able to make comparisons between the interpretations and in particular to recognise that whereas Interpretation A focused on the actions of Hitler and use of propaganda, Interpretation B considered other factors. There was some sensible understanding of specific words and phrases.

**Question 2**

Many weaker answers did seem to remain focused on how rather than why the interpretations were different. Examiners reported that there were some answers which showed that students seemed to have confused Questions 1 and 2; as a result of which they wrote a considerable amount about the content of the interpretations, rather than the reasons why they differed. As in question 1, at times, considering the marks available, the answers were too lengthy.

The stronger answers were able to relate their contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations and use this to explain why they might have differed about their views of Hitler's rise to power. A few students went so far as to try to develop an argument about how the time period in which both interpretations were written, might have influenced the views they contained, but these responses were rare. The stronger answers on provenance were usually focused on the role or location of the authors. The more successful answers relating to Interpretation B were about his opinion being influenced by his role in the July Bomb Plot, although some students were able to discuss political motivations. Students tended to be less successful in developing a motive or purpose for Interpretation A with many failing to get beyond, 'she was in the Hitler Youth', although many students expanded upon the impact of 'brainwashing' to impact her opinion. Students who made simple assertions usually did not go on to develop their answer to explain why the authors might then possess different interpretations regarding Hitler's rise to power. Overall, this question was answered well by most students who understood what was expected of them and discussed the provenance of the sources in enough detail to be rewarded with a level 2 mark.

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**Question 3**

This question produced a wide range of responses. Weaker students gave brief comments about propaganda. Other answers focussed generally on the provenance which impaired their ability to gain credit usually beyond level 1. Examiners noted that some responses were more appropriate as an answer to Question 2 or even Question 1. Answers at this level frequently relied upon contextual knowledge but looked to the motives of the authors and stated that the interpretation with less 'bias' was the more convincing.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach. This was unlikely to allow the student to show any overall understanding, and often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question. There were again many references to the provenance of the interpretations intermingled with context used to test for accuracy. A notable weakness of answers was an inability to offer appropriate contextual knowledge to evaluate Interpretation B. Most answers which offered contextual knowledge to evaluate Interpretation A focused on the content of Hitler's speeches and chose to include knowledge about Hitler Youth at length (linked to the provenance), ignoring the factor stated in the question.

There were, however, many answers with relevant contextual knowledge which debated and judged which was the more convincing. Some students who presented a strong case for just one Interpretation and with good contextual knowledge were limited in the credit that could be earned. This was because it was necessary to provide, to some extent, a developed explanation in support of the validity of the arguments provided in each interpretation.

There were a small number of good answers from students who made links between the two interpretations, for example discussing the extent at which Germany was impacted by the Depression and the Weimar Government and Nazi responses. There was some good knowledge used on this question. Higher-level responses often were achieved by reference to the specifics of the interpretations to discuss effectively the political and economic impacts of the Depression. Some students went on to, or included on the way, substantiated judgements about the more convincing interpretation, noting that the interpretations shared a focus on the inadequacies of Brüning and the Weimar Government. Examiners were not looking for a particular Interpretation to be favoured in answers so long as a sensible and supported argument was made.

**Question 4**

This question was accessible at all ability ranges, but it was noticeable that many students wrote too much. Many answers partly or wholly referred to rationing and other aspects of the war such as the bombing raids and were confused by the term, 'German people' specified in the question, meaning some students' responses lacked a focus on the question. In terms of answers that did adhere to the German people during the war, a significant proportion of answers did not demonstrate knowledge of specific problems affecting the Second World War. Typically, though, such answers offered generalised references which could apply to either war, with many referring to 'turnips'. Most answers that referred to specific events had secure but limited contextual knowledge. There were many Level 2 responses. Most cited women returning to work as one of the main effects on the German people. Answers often offered a simple understanding of a shortage of the workforce. Only rarely did answers refer to the impact of the war on specific groups of German people such as Hitler Youth and Volkssturm.

Nevertheless, many students who were concise in their answers and related their description to the demands of the question achieved level 2 marks. The structure of the answers was exemplary in many cases as well. They were clearly signposted, such as, 'firstly' and 'secondly'.

**Question 5**

In answering the question at levels 1 and 2, a significant number of students tried to consider the lives of German people with general reference to the police state but were not always secure on the detail, missing specific examples. There were a few answers that wanted to discuss the lives of young people and general statements about the treatment of Jews, but these references were usually outside the scope of the question or generic. Most students were able to provide an answer which simply identified and explained the effects of the police state on German people and gain a mark at Level 2. Answers that did successfully identify the impact of the police state always described the Gestapo and role of the SS. Several responses did, however, make some reference to specific effects, such as the opposition to the police state from groups like the Edelweiss Pirates. Many answers mentioned themes about the impact of the police state such as fear and control, referencing propaganda as well as the actions of the SS and Gestapo, but mostly described the experiences without explaining their impact on people.

There were many excellent answers to this question with several developed aspects. The answers, which secured Levels 3 and 4, made specific reference to identified groups or themes, how the police state affected them, and gave specific details. There were lots of strong answers that defined the various effects, and some were able to differentiate between the extent of the impact of the police state on the German people.

**Question 6**

The weaker answers to this question were descriptive and often overly narrative. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient knowledge of the ways in which Stresemann secured recovery. Some students tried to use general statements about trade, although this was not made specifically relevant to the question. Answers at Level 1 and 2 often made simple or generalised comments about Stresemann's loans or foreign policy which lacked links to the question or specific examples. The weaker answers did not show a clear structure or a clear line of argument. It is important in this Period study that students deploy second order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements.

Generally, the answers of weaker students lacked an understanding of how economic development or international agreements led to recovery under Stresemann. Many of the answers dealt in an often rambling fashion, with the need for recovery, speaking at length about hyperinflation. Some also wrote about the 'Golden Age' losing focus on the argument for recovery. Many answers offered a description, narrative or combined description and narrative of Weimar history between 1923 and 1929 rather than a focused response to the question.

Many answers addressed the question and the bullet points with the argument that economic developments were the main factor in recovery under Stresemann. Such answers demonstrated an awareness that the Dawes and Young Plans led to recovery socially and economically. Most answers at level 2 could explain how international agreements led to a growth in trade. However, relevant specific knowledge about the names of the agreements was lacking by some students. Fewer answers mentioned the Kellogg-Briand Pact and League of Nations as examples of the use of agreements.

However, at Levels 3 and 4 most students were able to show off good knowledge in answering this question. They were able to develop a balanced assessment to show Stresemann's agreements and policies for recovery. Students' answers explained how different aspects of economic development were able to aid trade and therefore recovery. Thus, it was observed how the international agreements were pivotal in the influence of economic development, thereby using both aspects of the question in conjunction with each other. Stronger answers were able to secure Level 3 with both



bullet points discussed in detail. The Level 4 responses often maintained relevant reference to both points throughout the answer and clearly made a well-supported judgement often, though not solely, based on how the features of Stresemann's work together. It was noticeable that the better answers were well structured.

## **8145/1A/C**

### **Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World**

#### **Section A: Period Studies**

##### **1c Russia, 1894 – 1945: Tsardom and communism**

###### **Question 1**

In the non-compulsory period study, the general quality of the work produced by the students was good and it was evident that they had understood the topic well. Most students demonstrated a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key assessment objectives. There was evidence that students had taken time to plan and structure their answers and there was some careful reading of the interpretations in Questions 1, 2 and 3. Not surprisingly, some were more confident than others in assembling their answers to these questions. There was a tendency for some students to write unnecessarily long answers, particularly on questions one and two, losing sight of the marks available for this question.

The majority of students successfully comprehended and explained differences about Rasputin's relationship with the Tsarina and some were able to gauge the level of his political influence from these interpretations. The majority of responses reached a high Level 1, or bottom Level 2 being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference. At Level 2 responses were able to make comparisons between the interpretations, particularly to recognise that Interpretation A was different because in A Rasputin's political influence was vital to the running of Russia, whereas in Interpretation B the focus was on his personal relationship with the Tsarina and her emotional dependence on him due to his ability to heal her son. There was some good understanding shown of specific words and phrases. However, there were relatively few answers which gained top Level 2, due in part to the fact that there was a tendency to quote directly from the interpretations. There were a small number of answers that highlighted reasons for the differences, thereby mistakenly addressing the second question.

###### **Question 2**

As in question 1, at times, the answers were too lengthy for the marks available. There were too many answers that were placed in Level 1 as they merely acknowledged the potential for bias; it was suggested as it was written by a supporter or opponent, this must therefore explain why it was positive or negative. However, the information provided about both authors afforded the opportunity to explore their purpose. There were still some weaker answers that remained focused on how rather than why the interpretations were different. A few answers tried to develop an argument about how the time period or the country in which their work was published might influence the views they contained. This was particularly evident for interpretation A, with answers exploring how democratic America would have viewed Russia at that time.

The stronger answers were able to relate their contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations to explain why they had different interpretations about Lenin's Government. The

stronger answers using the provenance were usually focused on the purpose of the authors. More students' answers stressed the Countess's desire to protect the reputation of her former employer rather than explored how Kerensky's role in the events of 1917 impacted on his views of Rasputin and the Tsarina. However, there were a number of excellent answers that considered the purpose of both the authors which, in the case of Kerensky, was used to justify the actions of the Provisional Government.

### **Question 3**

This question produced a wide range of responses. Weaker answers were narrative answers, sometimes dwelling on the provenance which this year again impaired their ability to gain credit usually beyond Level 1. Examiners noted that some responses were more appropriate as an answer to Question 2 or even Question 1. Frequently, students relied upon contextual knowledge but looked to the motives of the authors and stated that the interpretation with the less 'bias' was the more convincing.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach. This was unlikely to allow the student to show any overall understanding, and often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question. There were also many references to the provenance of the interpretations intermingled with context used to test for accuracy.

There were, however, some answers with sound contextual knowledge which debated and judged which was the more convincing. Some students who presented a strong case for just one interpretation being the more convincing with good contextual knowledge were limited in the credit that they could earn. This was because it was necessary to provide, to some extent, a developed explanation in support of the validity of the arguments provided in each interpretation. There were a small number of very good answers from students who made links between the two interpretations. There was some good knowledge used on this question. There were a number of answers that referenced the decision of the Tsar to go to the front line in 1915 leaving the Tsarina in charge, her German background and the role of the Duma as well as the various and frequent changes of personnel. Examiners also saw reference to details of Rasputin's role as a healer, treating the Tsarina's son for haemophilia, the role of the Orthodox Church in Russia as well as the reputation of Rasputin, his debauchery and the various attempts made to take his life. Some students went onto, or included on the way, sustained judgement about the more convincing interpretation. Examiners were not looking for a particular interpretation to be favoured in answers so long as a sensible and supported argument was made.

### **Question 4**

This question was accessible at all ability ranges. The majority of students appeared to be concise in their answers and related their description to the demands of the question. There were many Level 2 responses. The structure of the answers was exemplary in many cases as well. They were clearly signposted, such as, 'firstly' and 'secondly'. Most focused on the Great Terror of the 1930s and cited the Show Trials, the Purges and the fear of being sent to a Gulag as being key factors. There were some knowledgeable answers, which referenced specific statistics involved in the numbers sent to the Gulags as well as an understanding of the nature of the Show Trials and naming high profile individuals such as Kirov, Kamenev and Zinoviev. There was a clear understanding demonstrated of the impact of the Purges in longer term, particularly in World War Two for the army. There were some answers which read the question as meaning the Red Terror of the earlier period. This was duly credited, albeit these answers tended to be less well developed and generalised, citing the

problem as being one of general fear. There were a small number of answers that incorrectly focused upon collectivisation and industrialisation in the 1930s rather than the Terror.

### Question 5

This question saw a significant number of students trying to consider both the positive and negative impact of the Second World War, albeit they inevitably tended to be a focus on the latter. Weaker answers provided generalised comments regarding the impact of war on people generally. These answers were not necessarily focused on World War Two specifically and could have been equally plausible comments on the impact of World War One or the Civil War. These tended to be Level 1 responses. Better answers cited specific examples of the impact of World War Two, such as that on civilians in Stalingrad as they grappled with living in a war zone and relocation of industries to the Urals. Such answers were well supported with statistics, reference to the “not a step back” policy and the expectation for all civilians to become snipers. Some answers focused on the impact of Nazi occupation of areas such as Belarus, Ukraine other western areas of Russia and the subsequent targeting of minority groups. Better answers acknowledged the impact of World War Two on specific groups. One example was the opportunities war provided for women both in the factories and in agriculture. The answers that explored the impact of World War Two on workers in industry were able to highlight the increasingly harsh conditions faced with longer hours, increased prevalence of accidents and rationing. There was an understanding that the Five Year Plans continued despite the onset of war, though sometimes weaker students merely described the Plans and did not directly link it to the impact on the people of Russia as a result of war. Peasants were another group cited and the impact of conscription on agricultural production was deemed negative. The scorched earth policy was also a feature of many answers and was well understood. A few answers drifted onto describing the cult of personality and the use of propaganda that did not always relate back to the effect on Russian people during a time of war. There were some answers which focused wholly upon describing Stalin’s introduction of collectivisation and industrialisation in 1930s as preparation for a potential war. This approach and those answers that described the impact of the Purges could gain little credit. Examiners were pleased to see many strong answers that defined the various groups and were able to differentiate between some positives as well as the obvious negatives.

### Question 6

The weaker answers to this question were descriptive and often overly narrative. It is important in this Period study that students deploy second order concepts such as change and continuity as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient understanding of the terms economic changes and methods of rule and control, sometimes muddling the two. Predictably the weaker answers lacked structure and did not display a clear line of argument. Some students tried to link changes in the economy and methods of rule and control, although not always convincingly. Answers at Levels 1 and 2 often made only basic and generalised comments about changes in the economy and these were often limited to the immediate impact of World War One; these lacked links to the question or some specific examples. All too often they were reliant on Lenin’s slogan promise of “Peace, Bread and Land” as evidence and were not able to securely explain whether he achieved any of these changes. In some cases, there was confusion with Stalin’s economic changes with incorrect attempts to credit Lenin with the introduction of Collectivisation and the Five Year Plans.

However, many students were able to show off some pleasing knowledge in answering this question. Most were able to develop a balanced assessment to show how both changes in the economy and methods of rule and control saw differing levels of transformation as a result of Lenin’s policies. The argument and knowledge used in support of the aspect of economic changes was better done than

that which examiners saw to support the changes as a result of the methods of rule and control. However, when students' answers relevantly considered methods of rule and control, they were often excellent. In the strongest answers they were able to discuss the impact of the various Decrees issued by the Sovnarkhom, opportunities for equality, the role of the Cheka and the decision to close the Constituent Assembly, despite allowing the vote to go ahead in December 1917. Some of the strongest answers claimed that the methods of rule and control were similar in some respects to the Tsarist period with the use of the Okhrana. The way in which economic changes developed as a result of Lenin's policies was well understood in stronger answers; there was some excellent detail outlining the changes brought about by the policies of War Communism initially and the changes following the introduction of New Economic Policy in 1921 as a result of the Kronstadt Rebellion. The main features of both policies were well understood and evidenced in stronger answers. At the top level, answers were able to reconcile how the New Economic Policy could be considered an ideological compromise, albeit intended to be temporary, unpopular with many of the Communist Party members.

Stronger answers were able to secure Level 3 with a focus on the extent of change for both the economy and methods of rule and control which were discussed in detail. There were good comparisons made with the earlier Tsarist period to evaluate the level of change. The Level 4 responses often maintained relevant reference to both factors throughout the answer and clearly made a well-supported judgement. It was noticeable that the better answers were well structured. These answers went much further with a depth of knowledge that was impressive.

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**8145/1A/D****Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World****Section A: Period Studies****1D America, 1920 – 1973: Opportunity and inequality****Question 1**

The general quality of the work produced by the students was good and it was evident that they had understood most of the topics well. Most students demonstrated a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key assessment objectives. There was evidence that students had taken time to plan and structure their answers and there was some careful reading of the interpretations in Questions 1, 2 and 3. Not surprisingly, some were more confident than others in assembling their answers to the differing demands of these questions.

In Question 1 many students successfully comprehended and explained differences in the success or otherwise of popular culture including Rock and Roll from these interpretations. Many responses reached a high Level 2, being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference. At Level 1 responses were typically able to make comparisons between the interpretations, particularly to recognise that Interpretation A had a positive impact whereas Interpretation B was negative. With support from the interpretations, they were able to reach the top of the level. There was a tendency for some students to write unnecessarily long answers. There were some answers which gained Level 1 and those that did tended to identify the features of each interpretation without any direct comparison and with over-reliance on the wording of the interpretations. Some responses failed to gain any credit by looking at the provenance of the interpretations.

The better answers at Level 2 made valid comparisons about popular culture in that it 'enlightened Americans' (A) whereas 'it showed a corrupting influence' (B).

**Question 2**

Answers which achieved Level 1 referred solely to the time period in which both Interpretations were written. As in Question 1, at times, the answers were too lengthy considering the marks available for this question. Many weaker answers did seem to remain focused on how rather than why the interpretations were different. This was a real shame as some students simply wrote again about the content rather the attributions.

The stronger answers were able to relate their contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations and use this to explain why they had different views about popular culture in general suggesting that the increase in spending power of 'teenagers' like Ventura, allowed them to experience rock and roll and other cultural activities such as cinema which contributed to their 'rebelliousness'. The stronger answers on provenance were usually focused on the role of the authors. There were some successful answers relating to Interpretation A which argued that the author would want to maintain his popularity in America and would not criticise its laws. Many Level 2 answers on Interpretation B focused on the author's negative views towards rock and roll by bringing in the 'personal' loss Sinatra felt in terms of the financial impact of him losing his recording contract.

**Question 3**

This question produced a wide range of responses. Once again, a number of students wrote at length about the attribution and authorship of the interpretations which of course is the focus of question 2. They looked to the motives of the authors and stated that the Interpretation with less 'bias' was the more convincing. These answers unfortunately remained in Level 1 unless they were

able to support such arguments with knowledge, which then allowed it to progress to the bottom of Level 2. Weaker students described in very brief and simple terms individuals such as Elvis Presley and James Dean or cinema in general. These answers were worthy of credit at Level 2.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach. This was unlikely to allow the student to show any overall understanding, and often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question.

There were, however, many answers with sound contextual knowledge which debated and judged which was the more convincing. Some students presented a strong case for just one Interpretation with good contextual knowledge, but this limited the credit that could be earned. This was because it was necessary to provide, to some extent, a developed explanation in support of the validity of the arguments provided in each interpretation. There were a small number of good answers from students who made links between the two interpretations. There was also some good knowledge applied to this Question. Higher-level responses were often achieved by reference to the specifics of the interpretations. For example, in relation to Interpretation B, students wrote about most people being horrified about Rock and Roll which then led into very good use of contextual knowledge about Elvis Presley only being allowed to be filmed from the waist up to avoid affecting the conservative values at the time and encouraging impressionable teenagers into acting in a rebellious manner. For Interpretation A, there some excellent wider knowledge of consumerism of the 1950s and 1960s and how teenagers were targeted by advertisements and how they, with more money in their pockets, were able to extend their experiences of influences from popular music and films. Of course, it is possible for students to use those examples and others of a similar nature to contextualise either interpretation, and examiners noted many examples of students doing just that. Some students went on to, or included along the way, substantiated judgement about which they considered to be the more convincing interpretation. Examiners were not looking for a particular Interpretation to be favoured in answers so long as a sensible and supported argument was made.

#### **Question 4**

Weaker answers failed to address specifically the time of the Depression. They made general references to earlier times in the 1920s without referencing how the Depression affected these things. Credit, where possible for these answers, remained in Level 1. Answers which described, sometimes in much detail, the Wall Street Crash, banks collapsing, people losing money and so on usually remained in Level 1 because they did not address the problems such things caused the American people themselves.

Encouragingly, there were many Level 2 marks awarded for this question. These were often clearly signposted “firstly” and “secondly.” The strongest answers focused on the ways that events were problematic rather than specific events themselves. For example, there were some references to loss of jobs which meant that people could not afford to pay their rent/mortgages but crucially then this was linked to the problem it caused—a rise in homelessness/Hoovervilles being created. It is worth noting that this answer requires two problems to be discussed to get into Level 2. The success of these answers was based on always keeping the question in mind.

#### **Question 5**

In answering this question, a number of students failed to pay attention to the periods ‘1960s and 1970s’. They wrote about the feminist movements in the 1920s, with details on women in society in the 1920s, Flappers and the campaign for Female Suffrage. No credit could be given for this

knowledge. Weak answers also sometimes showed a lack of understanding of the term, 'feminist movement', which is a shame as there is lots of coverage in the textbook about this topic.

Relevant answers could obtain marks within Level 2 for mentioning, for example, the 'Equal Pay Act' and 'Roe vs Wade'. These answers included brief reference what they were about and what happened. However, they remained at Level 2 if they did not address the impact they had on American people.

There were many excellent answers with developed explanations because they did explain the impact of events within the feminist movements. At Levels 3 and 4 these went beyond description of features and towards an evaluation of the impact of the changes on peoples' lives. For example, some answers showed how Roe vs Wade led to legalised abortion in America which impacted women who now had 'the right to decide what they do with their reproductive systems'. Some able students explained how American people were affected by the feminist movements in terms of economic impact and/or social impact-a skill which is clearly linked to the requirements of question 4 in paper 2 which examiners thought was very pleasing.

### **Question 6**

Answers at Levels 1 and 2 discussed, in simple and general terms, comments about Prohibition and immigration to America. It was worth noting that in weaker answers much was written about causes of Prohibition and/or immigration. Answers needed some specific knowledge on one or both to reach level 2, such as Speakeasies, Bootlegging and fear of communism. The weaker answers were descriptive, especially about Immigration. It is important in this Period study that students deploy second order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements.

However, many students did show good knowledge in answering this question and it was obvious to examiners that much work had been done to prepare students well in terms of structure and evaluation. Some wrote in impressive detail about Prohibition and considered the impact of this on the American people with how it led many ordinary Americans to become lawbreakers thereby having a big impact on society. Similarly comments about the negative impact on society in terms of increased organised crime resulting from Bootlegging and Racketeering were also well received by examiners especially when the impact resulted in a lack of trust in the police as many were corrupted by organised crime. Similarly developed thinking was evident in answers that explained how, for example, immigration generated a fear within society due to the belief that immigrants from eastern Europe were coming to spread communism (The Red Scare) leading many Americans to become prejudicial towards immigrants.

Stronger answers were able to secure a good Level 3 with both aspects of the question discussed in detail. It is worth noting though that a summary conclusion often did not result in a Level 4 mark and sometimes students would be best advised to avoid this type of concluding paragraph.

Level 4 responses often maintained relevant references to both aspects throughout the answer, making clear and well-supported judgements. The better answers with complex thinking were ones which signposted throughout the response the importance of the bullet point in relation to the question 'tail'. Where students brought a judgement in at the end, the better ones were able to substantiate their argument by weighing up the nature of the impact it or both had.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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