



AS LEVEL HISTORY

7041/1K The making of a Superpower: USA 1865-1920
Report on the Examination

7041/1K
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General:

Students taking this paper generally demonstrated a good level of preparation as well as an understanding of the different requirements of Sections A and B.

In terms of Section A, students who had limited contextual knowledge successfully used the material in one extract as part of the evaluation of the other, if appropriate to do so.

In response to the essay question in Section B, students have been well trained to offer a balanced response. The result is that very few students offered answers which offered evidence from one side of the argument only. It is also clear that students have detailed knowledge of certain topics, eg the position of African Americans after 1865, and seek every opportunity to show this knowledge, even when it is only loosely related to the question.

Section A**Question 01**

Most students considered each extract in turn and then drew a conclusion as to which was the more convincing. A few better answers offered a running comparison and, in so doing, showed a developed understanding of the question. The challenge for students in respect of A was how to respond to the range of issues raised in the extract. Most students identified the Progressive failure to respond to African- American needs as the key issue. This was frequently well supported with details of continuing discrimination in the south. More able students highlighted other aspects of the extract, although this frequently led to inconclusive comments. In their assessment of B, students identified the aims and achievements of the Progressive movement as the key issues. These, linked with comments on the role of the presidency, produced some detailed accounts of successful legislation. More able students noted that Progressivism was often only one factor in achieving this legislation (eg prohibition, women's suffrage) and other factors (eg protest groups) were also important.

A common conclusion was that A was overly critical of Progressivism and failed to recognise its achievements, while B took an over-generous view of the movement and failed to acknowledge its weaknesses.

Section B**Question 02**

Students found this a challenging question. In many cases the definition of corruption was drawn quite widely to include matters such as discrimination in the south and the behaviour of robber barons – which then became the focus of the essay. Some students simply wrote about corruption with no attempt to explain the response of presidents. Other students simply wrote about the Gilded Age, referring to the era of 'weak presidents'. Apart from Grant, students found it difficult to write accurately about the work of individual presidents. Most students judged that US presidents did not succeed in tackling corruption but they then failed to provide appropriate evidence in support of this.

Question 03

This was a popular question producing some very well-developed answers. The phrasing of the question invited a balanced response with material on both sides of the argument. Very few answers dealt solely with either foreign trade or with the other factors responsible for economic growth. Overall students' understanding of the importance of foreign trade was disappointing with only a few responses outlining the full range of American economic activity abroad. Weaker answers either lacked contextual support or fell back upon rehearsed discussions of imperialism/manifest destiny. In respect of the other factors responsible for economic expansion, students, almost without exception, found familiar material – railways, corporations, immigration. The best answers addressed a full range of factors, often identifying those with primary importance. Unsurprisingly, given the uncertain grasp of foreign trade, the majority of students argued that other factors were more important than foreign trade in securing economic expansion.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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