



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1J The British Empire, c1857 - 1967
Report on the Examination

7042/1J
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Question 1

On the whole, students were able to identify accurately the arguments put forward in each extract. Most students were able to use a range of contextual knowledge to support the interpretations, although for many this was less specific for extract C. Where missionary activity has been tested on this paper before, many students also had very few specific examples to draw upon, and should be encouraged to learn this area of the specification more thoroughly. Some students used examples from outside the time period or not related to Africa, and these were not credited unless relevant.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to challenge the extract, and therefore evaluate the merits of its overall argument. Many students challenged the extracts indirectly by focusing on what was not there, and minimal reward is given to this approach – students must directly challenge the argument in the extract. For example, students would not have been credited for arguing against Extract A just by stating that the main reason for expansion was international competition rather than the role of individuals, but many took this approach. Most students were able to challenge successfully Extract B by arguing that the government did pursue an active role in expansion, but evaluation of the arguments in Extracts A and C was rarer. Some students also challenged an extract by using material from another extract which is not credited, unless supported by other contextual knowledge. There was some comment on the provenance, tone, value and bias in the students, and no credit is given for discussion in these areas as not relevant to Component 1 options. Even if students ultimately strongly agree with the main interpretation, they should be encouraged to challenge part of the argument rather than just agreeing with it where appropriate to do so.

Question 2

This was the least popular of the essay questions, but there were some very good student responses. Some students had an impressively detailed knowledge of developments in Southern Africa in this period and were able to construct strong analytical responses. Good answers provided a balanced assessment of the extent of challenge, with many students arguing that this intensified over time. Students were able to cover the full date range and were able to identify a variety of challenges that Britain faced - international rivalries, economic, political, challenge from indigenous peoples, and explore the varying degrees of challenge. Whilst many approaches to this question were valid, some students did need to show balance – many responses were restricted to a lower level because they focused on different groups who challenged the British without also identifying how the British were not challenged. It is worth reiterating to students that a balanced answer must always counter the premise in the question. Some students also wrote answers which focused narrowly on the Second Boer War, and so did not cover the time period in the question. There were some narrative responses, with little analysis. Knowledge of the conflicts with the Boers seemed to be much stronger than relations with indigenous peoples, and as ever with questions about Southern Africa, there was a lot of muddled chronology and mixing up various wars.

Question 3

This was a popular question. Many students had a good understanding of Britain's economic needs in this period. Stronger answers were able to link economic weakness to specific policies, rather than laying out weakness more generally. Many students did have specific knowledge relating to Egypt, the Middle Eastern Mandates, Imperial Preference and the Sterling Area, but

many responses just wrote generally about British economic weakness after the First World War. Typically, students were able to construct a balanced answer and explored how policy was driven

by economic need, nationalism and the broader international / political concerns. Any approach was credited where the material was well-deployed. Good answers were able to link the broader context to a specific example of colonial policy. This was often done particularly well in exploring the policy response to nationalism in the colonies. Some students did mix up the post First World War and post Second World War contexts when discussing international relations particularly. Events in Palestine and Ireland also do not seem to be well understood by many students.

Question 4

This was the most popular of the essay questions and many students showed a good knowledge of the broader period of decolonisation and were able to identify a variety of contributing factors – Britain's economic and political position as well as nationalist leaders and international relations. Good answers showed detailed knowledge of how nationalist leaders in a range of areas worked towards independence. There were some impressively argued responses which linked nationalist leaders and British actions before reaching a decisive conclusion. Some student responses were limited as they wrote a great deal, but only referred to one relevant nationalist leader or none at all, so their answer was very unbalanced. Weaker answers conflated nationalist leaders with broader, violent groups (eg Mau Mau) or chose case studies from outside of the question period, for example Gandhi or Aung San (who died in 1947). Some students also wrote about Nelson Mandela – Britain had very little formal influence in South Africa by this point so this was also not relevant. Events in Malaya do not seem to be well understood, and many students confused the various leaders involved or wrote about why Britain initially chose not to decolonise there, without maintaining control of their argument.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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