



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2G The Birth of the USA, 1760 - 1801
Report on the Examination

7042/2G
June 2023

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2023 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Question 1

The three sources proved accessible for many students. Consequently, there were few responses in Level 1 and relatively few in Level 2. At the other end of the mark scheme, there were few responses in Level 5, however some answers were solid Level 4, but imbalance in analysis on occasions prevented the answer being awarded Level 5. Also, some students failed to provide substantiated judgement on the value of each source, while some were hindered by an overly prescriptive approach to the question, writing separate paragraphs on provenance, tone and content; this prevented them from fully analysing the value and limitations of the sources leading to less convincing and thorough analysis. As a result, comments on provenance were often generic and non-specific. Lastly, most answers made comments and focused on the question, however contextual information varied, or its support was less convincing leading to an award in Level 3.

Source A

There were few poor responses regarding this source as almost all students were able to comment on the provenance as a personal letter and make some comments on the value of the source. However, of the three sources, this source was the most challenging. At the weaker end of Level 3, some students took the source at face value and declared that it was valuable evidence because it was a personal letter written by a plantation owner, to a plantation owner, without considering the inherent limitations. Mid-level 3 answers tended to point out the limitations of the source for its date and reference to the failure of the 'Articles of Confederation' but did not go much further than that. In Level 4, students developed the balance further and offered greater depth, in some cases identifying aspects of problems under the Articles of Confederation to make comments on the content and tone of Source A.

Most students were able to provide supporting contextual information about the problems in the 1780s, including state disunity and weakness of Congress. Some students drifted into an explanation of the failures of the Articles of Confederation, which was not precisely focused on the content of the source. In Level 4, some students expanded the breadth of contextual knowledge to include explanations of the failure of the Articles in relation to America's domestic weaknesses affecting its weak foreign status in the 1780s as a problem for Congress. As above, for Source A, there were relatively few students who developed the balance achieved in Level 4 into substantiated judgement about the value of the source overall.

Source B

Students liked this source and it proved to be the source which students analysed most effectively. As with Source A, there were very few students who did not show an understanding of the content and provenance of the source to a reasonable degree. The author and date allowed most students to make valid comments about provenance. Although less able students, did support assessment with contextual information, often it was generalised about Washington, leading to an unconvincing analysis of the source. Therefore, many did not show an effective understanding of the content of the source. Many students were able to link the content of the source to some supporting contextual information about Washington, and the debate for a stronger federal government. The range and depth of this contextual knowledge was a key differentiator between Level 3 and Level 4 answers.

Most students were able to offer some comment on the problems in the states in the 1780s and the issues surrounding the ratification of the Constitution, with detailed contextual information used to support analysis of the value and limitations of the source. More effective responses developed the explanation of context, often focusing on the extent of the failures of the Articles of Congress to

support the content and argument of the source. In terms of provenance, the source proved accessible to most students who often referred to the date of the source, as well as the fact that the author was Washington. In Level 3, these comments tended to lack depth and, although there may have been some balance, there was often no judgement. In Level 4, some judgement was offered although this tended to lack depth. As mentioned above, few students provided sufficient depth of judgement to access Level 5.

Source C

In terms of content, many students were able to make reference to the ratification debate and support their answer with specific contextual information. At the lower end of Level 3, responses did not go much beyond surface level assessment of the content of the source. Some lower Level 3 answers also got side-tracked by the author and proceeded to provide quite a lot of information about Patrick Henry, which, whilst partially relevant, lacked precision in relation to this source. In Level 4, students were able to provide more precise supporting contextual information about the issue of slavery in the southern states in the 1780s period to support the analysis of the source. They were also able to relate this to the claim that 'our rights and privileges are endangered' to demonstrate contextual understanding of the slavery debate in the ratification of the new Constitution.

Regarding provenance, most students highlighted the source was by Patrick Henry, stating he would have a good understanding of the problems in the new in the 1780s. Most answers also referred to the date of the source, arguing it was the height of the ratification debate, and therefore more likely to be valuable in studying the ratification of the US Constitution. In Level 3, there was some balance which tended to be limited to assertions such as Patrick Lee was a radical but failed to explain how or why he would be feeling fearful of the situation in America by the mid-1780s. In Level 4, the quality of balance was better developed, for example some students argued that Henry's claim that the Constitution would 'threaten our rights and privileges' was supported with relevant contextual information, with some identifying limitations with the source for instance in failing to acknowledge the Bill of Rights. As above, not many of these Level 4 answers developed into the substantiated judgement required for Level 5.

Question 2

There was a full range of answers to this question across all levels of the mark scheme. For many answers, across all abilities, students grasped the demands of the question, and wrote about the extent of similarity and differences within the thirteen colonies, presenting valid arguments focusing on social, economic, and political similarities with varying degree of depth and detail. Level 2 responses showed some awareness of the question but supporting detail was inaccurate or very limited in scope. This often came in the form of vague generalisations about similar characteristics.

Most students were able to provide a balanced answer, with very few one-sided answers. Contextual support was valid in most cases, with very few students going beyond the focus of the question. Some Level 2 answers became overly descriptive and/or lacked precise relevance. One example of this was answers which gave a detailed description of the similar or different characteristics, which many students evidently knew a lot about, but which lacked any precise detail or clear focus to the question. References to the system of mercantilism and extent of economic characteristics made regular, and often lengthy, appearances in responses credited in Level 3.

Whilst relevant, content and comment on how far the thirteen colonies shared similar characteristics varied in degrees of precision and development. For some students there was a tendency to go beyond 1763 and include references to taxation which was irrelevant to question. Level 3 answers tended to be somewhat generalised in context. Students in this level often provided relevant factors about similar social, political, and economic characteristics, with some citing the impact of the war as an argument to compare how far the colonies shared similar characteristics, which was credited where the argument was developed and linked to the question. However, there were some competent explanations of the extent of shared similar characteristics in the short and long-term, without linking these explanations to the question resulting in some rather superficial comments.

In Level 4, students were able to offer some specific details about how far the thirteen colonies shared similar characteristics by 1760. Knowledge of the social, economic, and political features of the colonies was often strong, as was detail concerning the degree of similarity between the colonies. More able students also offered evidence about the war and the development of the colonies by 1760 to assess how far they shared similar characteristics. The most successful answers, in Level 5, developed the specific points mentioned above into convincing and consistent judgement as to how far the thirteen colonies shared similar characteristics. Most often, these answers concluded that the thirteen colonies shared more similarities than differences by 1760.

Question 3

This question was one of the most popular essay questions. The focus of this question proved to be an accessible one for many of the students who attempted it. The main differentiator in quality between responses was the depth and precision of supporting evidence offered. There were few responses in Level 1. In Level 2, less able students tended to lack the necessary factual knowledge to build an effective balanced answer to the question. For example, some essays were limited to a discussion of the events in 1774 and failed to assess the full contextual period of the question, therefore, only provided a partial response.

In Level 3, students were generally able to achieve some balance. This was commonly achieved through contrasting colonial and British actions in the years 1774 to 1776 and demonstrating an understanding of the impact both sides had on increasing tension in this period. These level 3 answers tended to refer to aspects of British actions such as the Coercive Acts, rather than exploring colonial actions in much depth. There was also some inaccuracy in some of these answers, most commonly around British actions, with some students writing about the Townshend duties 1767 rather than the Coercive Acts 1774.

Level 4 and 5 answers provided a greater range and depth of supporting information and explanation. There was often effective balance in the assessment of the actions of the colonists and the British. For example, the Coercive Acts were often assessed effectively both in the context of the role of British and the role of the ideological motivations of the colonists in escalating tensions. Similarly, the outbreak of hostilities 1775, was assessed as a way of demonstrating the increasing tension between the British and the colonies, which resulted in the colonies passing a resolution for independence in 1776, thereby demonstrating good conceptual awareness of the period to reach a well-supported judgement for the question.

Question 4

This question was the second most popular essay question. The scope of the question enabled many students to provide a balanced answer, with contextual information focused on the requirements of the question. Almost all students showed an understanding of Washington's tenure as the first President of the USA, demonstrating an understanding of his influence, domestic and foreign policies and the development of political parties, therefore, there were very few answers in Level 1. However, there were some responses in Level 2 as some students wrote an answer focused on either the successes or failures of Washington, discounting the work Hamilton, or Jay, as not by Washington himself, resulting in thin, generalised judgements for the question. This included several very knowledgeable and eloquent students who, unfortunately, launched into a general analysis of Hamilton and his financial reports without directly addressing the question.

In Level 3, students tended to make links to the question, but these were often superficial and not very convincing. These answers tended to have imbalance, showing some understanding but failing to grasp the full demands of the question. Effective focus in these answers was more likely to come from the argument of the impact of Washington's policies and influence, with some students showing good conceptual awareness of the problems in Adams' presidency to assess the extent Washington was a success in the years 1789 to 1796.

There were plenty of Level 4 and Level 5 answers from students who recognised the precise focus of the question and were able to organise their knowledge effectively in response. The point referred to above, about the influence of Hamilton's financial policies for instance, was included in most answers, but there were additional effective points in balance about the role of other factors such as fiscal, domestic and foreign policy, to reach a substantiated judgement for the question. The more effective answers often assessed the development of political and geographical divisions in America as an indicator of the extent Washington was successful. In balance, these responses offered a range of effective points to support the argument that Washington was motivated by his desire for a strong central government, and implementing the new Constitution, following the failed Articles of Confederation, along with a range of other factors to reach a well-balanced and supported judgement for 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.