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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

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

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## **Section A: Question 01**

The responses to this year's source question, overall, showed some improvement in comparison to the previous series. The sources were accessible, and there seemed to be few problems for the majority of students. There was good understanding of the question, with an appropriate range of contextual knowledge applied to the sources.

Whilst there was an improvement in the evaluation of provenance, it still remained less well done element than other requirements for answering the question. It is recommended that generic and non-specific statements regarding the purpose, author, date, nature of the sources are avoided: developed reasoning and judgement of how each selected element affects the 'value' of the sources in relation to the question, with appropriately selected knowledge, are required for higher level marks.

It is emphasised that, whatever commentary students make about the provenance, tone and content of the source, their evaluation must be supported with relevant, specific knowledge at all times. Making inferences, or creating arguments without appropriate evidence to support this, weakens the responses. Students will find it difficult to progress to the higher levels if this is not applied. It is not about 'how much knowledge should I use?': it's about 'which knowledge do I use, and why is this particular piece of knowledge relevant now?'

Students evaluation of tone, varied in relation to supporting detail. Students are advised, when making commentary on tone and language of each source in relation to the question, to add explanation/justification as to why it offers value, or limitation. Better answers made some link to contextual knowledge to support this.

There is no prescribed manner for approaching this question but many of the answers followed a tone/provenance, then content, then judgement formula. It clearly works well for many students. With judgements, it is strongly encouraged that students make a substantiated, firm, and confident judgement on how the source offers value in relation to the question, rather than simple assertions or bolt-on statements.

### **Source A**

This source was answered, overall, stronger than the other sources. Charles Sumner, a very well-known character within the course, was the author, which opened up many students' responses to show a very strong understanding of how Sumner offered value, and limitations in respect of the context and the question. Evaluation of tone was the strongest on this source, with well selected source evidence, and supporting knowledge of the context and the author to support such evaluation.

The weaker answers tended to turn the opportunity of having Sumner as the author to recreate a narrative account of the full events of 'Bleeding Sumner', rather than continue to return to the main focus of the question. In future series, if a well-known individual of the course appears as the author of the source, students must not begin reciting everything they know about the individual, but consider how or why this person has value, or limitation, in regard to what the question is asking.

**Source B**

There were more mixed responses to this source. Some student answers still tried to offer some comparison for value in relation to Source A: this was not needed. The stronger answers to this source balanced content and provenance well, with good knowledge applied across both aspects. Many of the stronger answers considered the perspective of the paper from Massachusetts for its intended audience and how its potential limitations could hinder the source's value. Similar to Source A, many answers recited the events of 'Bleeding Sumner', which took some answers off focus. Weaker answers remained very generic about the nature of a newspaper, especially a local newspaper. Few answers aimed to focus limitations based on omission of knowledge, which should be avoided.

**Source C**

There were some good responses on this source, with a greater range of contextual knowledge used by the students. As chronologically the later source, and from a very different context and authorship, it invited students to reflect on the social impact of the issues in Kansas, rather than the 'one hell of a storm' it caused in the political halls of Congress. This allowed more knowledge to be deployed here than the earlier sources, such as the future issues with the Lecompton Constitution. There were some good, balanced reflections on the provenance and emphasis in the sources, with good commentary on the author being an eye-witness to the issues within Kansas.

**Question 2**

This was the most popular essay choice by the students on this year's series, with a broad range of responses. There were some very good responses addressing states' rights disputes with the federal government such as the Nullification Crisis, and the existence of slavery, which many Southerners argued that keeping slavery was a constitutional right and couldn't be abolished.

Counter arguments included the issue of westward expansion, which was covered to effectively, with other arguments including the rise of the abolitionist movement, and the social differences between the North and South causing greater tensions. Weaker answers tended to be very narrative of the events they chose, or did very little on the 'states' rights' issue, showing a lack of understanding of this concept.

It is advised with 'c1845' questions, answers need to focus on the situation in 1845 and what led up to it previously (the outcome of the 1844 election: the admission of Texas in 1845; the inauguration of Polk 1845) and avoid comment on events after the date, such as the Mexican War, or the 1850 Compromise. There were still some answers not observing the terminal date and this led to some irrelevancy.

**Question 3:**

This proved to be the least popular question on the paper. The concept of 'national reconciliation', in Part 4 of the specification, focuses on the relationship between the Union and the ex-Confederate states on a different level to that of political 'Reconstruction'. The process of 'Reconstruction' focuses on the readmission of states into the Union, under Congress' supervision. This was a political, legal matter. The 'national reconciliation' aspect focuses on feelings towards each other.

Some good answers focused on the impact of Lincoln's leadership in relation to the Emancipation Proclamation decimating the Southern economy, leaving a bitterness made worse by the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Unfortunately, many responses misunderstood the question, and focused on reasons why the Union won the war, or the disputes over Reconstruction with the Radical Republicans. Overall, this question performed weakly in comparison to the other options and it was evident that the description of Lincoln's leadership was unfamiliar to some students and the marking was adjusted to reflect this.

**Question 4:**

This was the second most popular question answered, but the best answered from the three essay choices. The description 'violence and the threat of violence' was well explored and many answers were well developed. .

Many, if not all, of the responses to this question addressed confidently key individuals, groups and case studies relevant to the concepts of violence and threats of violence, and how such groups sought to regain political control of the South. Names such as Nathaniel Bedford Forrest: groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the White League, and case studies such as the Colfax Massacre were appropriately selected and explained very well in relation to the question. Rarely did answers drift off into a narrative on these examples.

The better answers continued to focus on the Redeemers, Southern Democrats etc. regaining political control within all of their arguments. Strong responses, of which there were many, compared the violence to other developments, such as the declining economic status of the North following the Panic of 1873 causing carpetbaggers to re-evaluate their priorities: the declining power of the Radical Republican faction and a desire for the Republicans to become more conservative, and the numerous scandals associated with President Grant and the Republican Party being addressed well to offer balanced responses.

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

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