



GCSE HISTORY

8145/1A A/B/C/D

Report on the Examination

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1AA America, 1840-1895: Expansion and consolidation

Question 1

In this first, “four option choice” GCSE History examination following COVID-enforced restrictions, many students impressed examiners with the general quality of their work. Many had a sound understanding of the key issues in this period study and most were able to show a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through their performance against the assessment objectives. The evidence in students’ responses indicated they had planned and structured their answers and that they had thought carefully about the interpretations provided for use with Questions 1, 2 and 3. Inevitably, some were more confident than others in developing answers to these questions.

In Question 1 the majority of students understood and were able to explain differences about the defeat of the Plains Indians from the interpretations provided. Many 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, hindered rather than supported students’ answers. Indeed, the weakest responses were filled with quotations and little development of the key differences between the two interpretations. There was a tendency on the part of some students to write unnecessarily long answers, losing sight of the marks available for this particular question. Level 1 responses tended to identify the features of each interpretation without making any direct comparison and with simple inferences. A minority of responses (or parts thereof) were not credited because they considered the provenance of the interpretations.

At Level 2 students were typically able to offer developed thoughts about the two interpretations indicating that in Interpretation A the railroad was important in the defeat of the Plains Indians as the army made use of it to move troops and supplies to the forts while in Interpretation B, the buffalo hunters killed the buffalo, which the Plains Indians were almost completely reliant on.

Question 2

Weaker responses to this question were characterised by simple statements and undeveloped assertions such as “the author is biased” either towards or against the army. Very often, these routine comments were either undeveloped or unsubstantiated. Some students attempted to base their answers on 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. Many students focussed on the author of Interpretation A as a retired army General who had led the fighting against the Plains Indians and who was reporting to his former employer, the United States government who had directed and supported Manifest Destiny. The author of Interpretation B, on the other hand, was amongst other things, a former soldier and buffalo hunter who presumably saw, at first hand, the devastating consequences to the Plains Indians of the slaughter of the buffalo herds. As with Question 1, a number of responses were too long in proportion to the marks available for this question. Many weaker answers remained fixated on how rather than why the interpretations were different.

More successful responses 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 the defeat of the Plains Indians and some impressive contextual knowledge was to be seen in these answers.

Question 3

A variety of responses were seen 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. A number of examiners suggested 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 defeat of the Plains Indians, 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 facilitate the demonstration of any overall understanding, and in fact, 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.

On the other hand, many answers displayed sound, relevant contextual knowledge and debated which Interpretation might be 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 is necessary to provide a developed explanation, to some extent, in support of the validity of the arguments provided in both interpretations. A small number of students attempted to make links between the two interpretations and it should be said, some very good knowledge was often deployed on this question. Higher-level responses were characterised by reference to such as the US government's reservation policy, its attendant legislation, significant battles and campaigns, and, of course, the myriad uses of the buffalo. Some students went on to, or included in passing, a substantiated judgement about which, in their opinion, was 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.

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 the Mormons when they moved West. Many students confused the Mormons with the Homesteaders and the Donner Party, or presented erroneous answers: at Salt Lake City, for example, the Mormons did not lack for water, but for drinkable water and so some sort of filtration system.

These issues notwithstanding, the majority of students were concise in their answers and related their descriptions to the demands of the question. There were many Level 2 responses to be seen. Most discussed problems faced on the journey itself, or on reasons for the Mormons deciding they had to make that journey in order to avoid persecution. The structure of many responses was exemplary as students clearly signposted the direction of their answers using such language 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 wrote about the legislation passed by the US government in order to support Homesteading and the references to such as the 1862 Homestead Act and its provisions were plentiful. Others chose to write about the government's support of Manifest Destiny, the railroads and the army campaigns to enforce the reservation, or concentration policy. The more effective responses considered several of these factors, devoting a paragraph to

each of these branches of government influence and provided sound supporting evidence; weaker responses, by contrast, were shallower, making simple, restricted points that were often accompanied by accurate, but undeveloped, knowledge.

Question 6

Understandably, weaker answers to this question were descriptive and narrative in tenor. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient knowledge of the reasons for the outbreak of the United States Civil War. The weaker answers were often superficial and assertive discussions of slavery, lacking in structure and without 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.

Nevertheless, a number of students were able to exhibit 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 economic and political factors on the outbreak of the Civil War. Stronger answers were able to secure Level 3 marks with both factors discussed in detail so that supporting knowledge was clear, accurate and appropriate. Level 4 responses maintained a clear and appropriate reference to both reasons throughout the answer and coherently argued a well-supported case. It was noticeable that the very best answers were planned and carefully structured with clearly defined paragraphs containing an often impressive knowledge of both economic and political causes of the United States Civil War.

1AB Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and dictatorship

Question 1

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, although there still seems to be confusion over the different responses required for questions 1, 2 and 3.

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, albeit briefly with a positive or negative explanation, about the lives of German workers from these interpretations. Many responses reached a high Level 2, being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference about their lives. At Level 2 responses were typically able to make comparisons between the interpretations and particularly in Interpretation B make inferences about the improvements in working conditions whereas Interpretation A focused on the distraction tactics of the Nazis and fraudulent nature. There was some sensible understanding of specific words and phrases.

Question 2

This question continues to be answered well. The majority of students could identify the reasons for the differences, but weaker responses tended to state it rather than explain it. Most students commented on the background of the two authors, with many responses frequently focusing on the author of Interpretation B being a member of Hitler Youth. Student responses were stronger about Interpretation B.

Examiners reported that there were some answers which showed that students seemed to have confused Questions 1 and 2; 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 the lives of the German workers. 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 A were about his opinion being influenced by his travels around the German cities, although some students were able to discuss his role as a journalist. Students tended to be more successful in developing a motive or purpose for Interpretation

B although with some failing to get beyond, ‘he was in the Hitler Youth’, although many students expanded upon the impact of ‘brainwashing’ to shape his 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 the lives of the German workers. Overall, this question was answered well by most students who understood what was expected of them and discussed the provenance of the interpretations in enough detail to be rewarded with a level 2 mark.

Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses, although many students failed to progress beyond Level 1 due to responses providing brief comments about the content of the interpretations. Other answers focussed generally on the provenance which impaired their ability to gain credit beyond level 1 as well. 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 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 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 the interpretations. Most answers which offered contextual knowledge to evaluate Interpretation B focused on the benefits of Nazi policies such as the Volkswagen and the Beauty of Labour, although some incorrectly 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.

Higher-level responses often were achieved by reference to the specifics of the interpretations to effectively discuss the limitations of the Nazi policies towards the workers such as the elimination of women workers in relation to Interpretation A. Some students went on to, or included on the way, substantiated judgements 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, but it was noticeable that many students ignored the wording of the question “establishing his dictatorship”. Many answers partly or wholly referred to Hitler’s opposition in general rather than the problems establishing dictatorship, meaning some students’ responses lacked a focus on the question, considering youth groups and the economic

problems of 1933. In terms of answers that did adhere to the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship, a significant proportion of answers did demonstrate knowledge of specific problems affecting Hitler, such as the influence and power of the SA or the threat of communists.

Most answers that referred to specific events had secure but limited contextual knowledge. There were many Level 2 responses. Most cited a lack of political support as one of the main effects on the establishment of his dictatorship. Answers often offered a simple understanding of events around the Reichstag Fire. Only rarely did answers refer to the role of Hindenburg and Hitler's initial lack of support in the Reichstag.

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 level 1 and 2, a significant number of students tried to consider the lives of German people with general reference to the Depression but were not always secure on the detail missing specific examples. There were a few answers that wanted to discuss the events of the 'Golden Age', but these references were usually outside the scope of the question or were generic.

Most students were able to provide an answer which simply identified and explained the effects of the Depression on German people and gained a mark at Level 2, commonly referring to unemployment or support for extremist parties. Answers that did successfully identify the impact of the Depression always described the impact of the Wall Street Crash, but there was confusion over the dates of the question with students frequently mentioning hyperinflation of 1923. Several responses did, however, make some reference to specific effects, such as reasons why people voted for the communists and Nazis.

Many answers mentioned themes of the impact of the Depression such as loss of jobs or disappointment in the Weimar politicians, but mostly described the experiences without explaining their impact on people.

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

Question 6

Generally, this question was answered well by students. The weaker answers to this question were generalised or descriptive, and often overly narrative. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient knowledge of the ways in which Weimar Germany was more difficult to govern. Some students tried to use general statements about the Treaty of Versailles, although this was not made specifically relevant to the question.

Answers at Level 1 and 2 often made simple or generalised comments about a lack of money or the new political system 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 or political reasons made Weimar Germany difficult to govern. Many of the answers lacked focus when dealing with the impact of the First World War, writing at length about the Kaiser. Some also wrote about Stresemann and loans from America losing focus on the argument about why it was difficult to govern. Many answers offered a description, narrative or combined description and narrative of Weimar history between 1919 and 1923 rather than a focused response to the question.

Many answers addressed the question and the bullet points with the argument that economic reasons made Weimar Germany difficult to govern. Such answers demonstrated an awareness of the events of the Ruhr and hyperinflation which made governance challenging. Most answers at level 2 could explain how the new political system led to a growth in discontent and rebellions. However, relevant specific knowledge about the names of the rebellions was lacking by some students. Fewer answers mentioned the Kapp Putsch and Spartacists as examples of political reasons for the difficulty to govern.

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 reasons for the difficulty to govern. Students' answers explained how different aspects of economic problems hindered governance and how proportional representation impacted the ability to govern. 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 economic reasons created political problems. It was noticeable that the stronger answers were well structured and focused on the question throughout the answer.

1AC Russia, 1894–1945: Tsardom and communism

Question 1

In this 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 the two interpretations of Lenin's leadership and some were able to gauge the level of his political influence and achievements 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. All answers were able to highlight that one was complimentary about Lenin's leadership qualities and the other was not. At Level 2 responses were able to make comparisons between the interpretations, particularly to recognise that Interpretation A was different because in A Lenin's motives were based on his devotion to the people of Russia, citing him as selfless and a hero of the revolution. By contrast, in Interpretation B the focus was on his use of terror to maintain power. There was some good understanding shown of specific words and phrases. However, there were too many answers which gained only top Level 1, due in part to the fact that there was a tendency to quote at length 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, that this must therefore, explain why it was positive or negative. However, the information provided about both authors afforded the opportunity to explore their purposes. 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 B, with answers exploring how freedom to voice opinions would have been allowed in Britain in the late 1920s. There were very few answers that made any reference to the fact that Interpretation A was published in America and intended for a worldwide audience.

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 purposes of the authors, taking into account the timing. Level 2 answers were able to explore beyond the simple bias of Trotsky being a friend of Lenin and stressed that Trotsky had a vested interest in complimenting Lenin due to the power struggle at that time. By highlighting Lenin's positive qualities, answers claimed that he hoped to ingratiate himself with other party members at that time. Most answers were stronger on the reasoning for Interpretation A rather than interpretation B which amounted to being disappointed with the outcome of the revolution. However, there were a number of excellent answers that

considered the purpose of both the authors which, in the case of Trotsky, was to justify the part he played in the revolution and thereby hoping to secure Lenin's legacy and subsequently his own position as a potential successor.

Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses. Weaker students provided 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 presented a strong case for just one Interpretation being the more convincing with good contextual knowledge. However, better answers provided, 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 Lenin's qualities such as the promises made in his April Theses of "Peace, Bread and Land" and the concessions made in the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, the various decrees that promoted equality as well as redistributed land to the peasants.

In addition, there were details outlining his decision to abandon his economic policy of War Communism in favour of the NEP as a result of the famine and Kronstadt Rebellion 1921 which was the "flash that lit up reality". Examiners also saw, by contrast, reference to details of the forcible closing of the Constituent Assembly, implementation of the Red Terror, details of the crushing of the rebellion in 1921 and the murder of the Tsar and his family. 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 for all abilities. 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 problems faced by the people and cited living and working conditions as the two key challenges. There were some strong knowledgeable answers, which referenced specific statistics involved in explaining the hours worked, pay and safety conditions. The lack of Trade Unions to protect workers ensured that exploitation became the norm. There was a clear understanding demonstrated of the impact of these problems which was linked to lack of political rights. However, there were some answers which focused on the problems faced by the Tsar in controlling the people of Russia rather than the people living in Russia. There were a number of answers that tended to be less well developed and generalised, citing the problems as living and working in bad conditions with no specific detail to underpin this. Examiners saw a few answers that incorrectly described the wrong time period and instead described problems for the people living under the Red or Great Terror.

Question 5

This question saw a significant number of students trying to consider both the positive and negative impact of the First World War, albeit there 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 One specifically and could have been equally plausible comments on the impact of World War Two or the Civil War. These tended to be Level 1 responses.

Better answers cited specific examples of the impact of World War One, such as that on civilians in the countryside as they grappled with the loss of loved ones and were left impoverished as war pensions were often not paid. In addition, it was recognised that frontline soldiers were prioritised for food at the expense of many other people in Russia. Some answers were able to link this to the inevitable political consequence of this in the form of bread riots in 1917 and the February Revolution, leading to the Tsar's abdication. For others, war contracts provided opportunities as war contracts created more jobs, albeit there were less people to work in the factories.

Better answers acknowledged the impact of World War One 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 One on workers in industry were able to highlight the increasingly harsh conditions faced with longer hours, increased prices with wages not rising in line with this. Peasants were one group cited and the impact of conscription on agricultural production was deemed negative, although it provided opportunities for women to step in. The impact of war on the aristocracy was a feature of stronger answers and references to the Tsar taking control at the frontline was a typical feature of many responses. Better answers were able to explain how this decision impacted on different groups such as the peasants or the aristocracy during the war years. Others were able to consider the economic and political consequences of this decision.

There were a good number of answers that focused on the aftermath and therefore the longer-term impact of World War One both economically and politically and cited the signing of the Treaty, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks and subsequent descent into the Civil War and all that it entailed. This was duly credited when it demonstrated an understanding of the impact on the people of Russia. 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 ‘agriculture’, and ‘industry’, 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 industry as being dependant on funding gained from the changes in agriculture, although not always convincingly. Better answers were able to cite achievements in defending Russia in World War Two as evidence that modernisation in both areas had been worth the suffering that collectivisation had wrought. There were a small number of students who did not attempt an answer.

Answers at Level 1 and 2 often made only basic and generalised comments about modernisation and these were often limited to a basic description of collectivisation and the Five-Year Plans; these lacked links to the question or some specific examples. All too often they were reliant on the assumption that it was either an overwhelming success or failure. In some cases, there was a misunderstanding of collectivisation with a small number of students assuming collectivisation was an unmitigated success and that peasants were better off with more choice, more food, and more land. A small number of answers deviated into a discussion of the Purges but did not always gain credit for this if they did not link this to the modernisation of agriculture or industry. Few answers made reference to the dekulakisation programme under Stalin, instead focusing on the positive outcome of collectivisation only.

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 agriculture and industry saw differing levels of transformation as a result of Stalin’s policies. Changes in Industry were better known and evidenced than Collectivisation at all levels. In the strongest answers they were able to discuss the impact of Stalin’s desire to catch up with the West and examiners were impressed to see a good understanding of the differing focus of each Five-Year Plan. Some of the strongest answers were able to cite the development of big projects such as the Dnieprov Dam, Moscow Metro and Magnitogorsk.

The propaganda involved in the story of the Stakhanov movement was also well understood alongside the target setting and fear culture that was implemented. There were often statistics used in stronger answers to underpin the students’ arguments. There was an understanding of the positive impact of the electrification of cities which improved communication, transport and domestic life. The modernisation of agriculture was deemed in many answers as necessary, albeit disastrous initially as peasants slaughtered animals and destroyed their crops. The problems with the introduction of tractors and modern machinery was also well understood and explained.

The best answers explained how collectivisation linked to and created the potential for modernisation in industry. Stronger answers were able to secure Level 3 with a focus on the extent of change for both the agriculture and industry which were discussed in detail. There were good comparisons made with the earlier 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.

1AD America, 1920–1973: Opportunity and inequality

Question 1

In Question 1 the majority of students successfully comprehended and explained differences in the lives of African-Americans from these interpretations. Most 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 suggested a positive experience in the north but negative in the south, whereas Interpretation B was positive. 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.

Question 2

Answers which achieved Level 1 referred solely to the 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 than the attributions, however, there were fewer of such responses this year.

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 concerning the lives of African-Americans in general with contextual knowledge to support, such as referring to the pressing issue of the Space Race to help explain why the author of B did not experience racism. In the same way, references of 'Jim Crow' laws were frequently used to provide the context to explain why A was negative in the South.

The stronger answers on provenance were usually focused on the role of the authors. The best answers concentrated on the purpose/motive of the authors, for example, making valid references to B's author being concerned with raising the aspirations of younger African Americans. Centres are right to encourage their students to read the information which accompanies the interpretations carefully so valid inferences can be made about provenance. The attributions are precisely constructed to support this aspect of the assessment.

Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses. Once again, although fewer in number this year, 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 the 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 responses described in very brief and simple terms individuals such as Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks 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 can sometimes be a good idea providing the students use appropriate contextual

knowledge to support their points. At times though, students went off the focus of the question and discussed jobs of women in general as opposed to African American women.

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, an 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 some good knowledge used on 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 the Space Race and how it and relations between Cold War protagonists was more pressing at NASA than racial divides. For Interpretation A, there was some excellent wider knowledge of the 1950's and 1960's and how specific mistreatment of African Americans pervaded society in the south with development of the segregation laws or the ways in which African Americans protested. Of course, it is possible for students to use those examples and others of 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

Unfortunately, examiners saw many answers to this question left blank and or which suggested some confusion. Some answers appeared to not know what McCarthyism was and wrote about crime (including prohibition) or the depression. Some confused McCarthy with General MacArthur and so wrote about the Korean War.

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 surrounding Senator McCarthy were problematic rather than specific events themselves. For example, there were some references to how ‘witch-hunts’ caused loss of employment opportunities which meant that people had to leave to find employment, for example Charlie Chaplin. Similarly, answers which mentioned things like an increased fear or paranoia among the people were also credited. It is worth noting that this answer requires two problems to be discussed to get into Level 2.

Question 5

This question appeared well received by students with many well considered and well supported answers seen. What was pleasing to examiners is the way in which an increasing number of students structured their responses into clear paragraphs or by signposting their different arguments. Relevant answers could obtain marks within Level 2 for mentioning, for example, ‘loss of jobs’ and ‘loss of money’. 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 the depression. 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 the laissez-faire policies of Hoover’s government exacerbated the impact the depression had on the lives of people. Some able students were able to achieve level 4 as they explained how

American people were affected by the depression in terms of groupings, such as, lower-, middle- and upper-class Americans amongst others.

Question 6

Answers at Level 1 and 2 included comments, in simple and general terms, about women wearing shorter skirts and/or mass production. 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. Last year's essay question knowledge was in some cases well linked to this year's question. Some students wrote in impressive detail about Social aspects such as '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. In addition, new music opportunities and freedoms for women were frequently seen by examiners. Strong knowledge relating to economic changes at this level was seen where students explained how changes such as 'mass production' and the 'assembly line' and how they impacted people in that it made more affordable, certain luxuries such as cars and increased employment opportunities. Stronger answers were able to secure a good Level 3 with both aspects of the question discussed in detail with good variety of ways the American people were affected.

Level 4 responses often maintained relevant references to both aspects throughout the answer, making clear and well-supported judgements. The stronger answers with complex thinking were ones which signposted throughout the response the importance of the bullet point in relation to the question 'tail'. Examiners saw many answers of this stature that were able to differentiate impact by class/grouping, time and in terms of positive and negative. Where students brought a judgement in at the end, the stronger ones were able to substantiate their argument by weighing up the nature of the impact it or both had.

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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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