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# GCSE HISTORY

8145/2A A/B/C

Report on the Examination

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8145

June 2023

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Version: 1.0

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## **2AA Britain: Health and the people: c1000 to the present day**

### **Question 1**

The Source was clear and accessible to students, and they were able to interpret and understand it according to their ability. The Punch cartoon was familiar to many students. Basic information (Level 1) in answer to the question was drawn from the source by the overwhelming number of students and most went on to make simple inferences for Level 2 marks. Other students used their knowledge and reasoning to develop points for Levels 3 and offer some historical judgements for Level 4.

Most students recognised the utility of the source to illustrate the environmental health hazards of poorer areas of towns and cities. These, they pointed out, led to epidemics especially Cholera, breaking out in the nineteenth century. Students noted overcrowding in areas of towns inhabited by the poor and piles of refuse and sewage in the streets that was not cleared away from where they lived. Such answers led to Level 2 awards. While the supply of clean drinking water for the people was not a particular focus of the source, many students took some time to recount the narrative of John Snow's work which had not occurred at the time of the source and did not add anything significantly to their answer. The date of the source, however, was important as it came two years before the work of Snow. Students who spotted this could set the cartoon into its correct historical context. They wrote confidently about a lack of accurate knowledge about the cause of epidemics in 1852 and the theories such as Miasma that were current at the time and exemplified by the cartoon. In developed answers links to the work of Edwin Chadwick in 1848 were also made. Such answers led to the award of marks at Level 3.

Students discussed the provenance of the source but many still assume Punch cartoons are always primarily designed to be humorous. Leech was a social commentator and students who made strong comments on provenance spotted that he may have been raising awareness about the plight of the poor. Furthermore, he may have been mocking the authorities for their lack of action to deal with Cholera outbreaks, even in a world where Miasma was believed to be the primary cause. Strong references to provenance and developed answers related to Source content led to high Level 4 marks.

### **Question 2**

This question produced a wide spread of responses from the impressively knowledgeable to those students whose knowledge of medieval medical treatments was vague and limited to the sensational.

At Level 1 students identified some treatments like bloodletting and trepanning and flagellation without explaining how they had been developed or why they were used. For higher marks the question asked for an understanding of the significance of treatments that went beyond basic description.

Most students were able to identify and explain at least one significance behind Medieval treatments. This was often a reliance on treatments pioneered by Hippocrates and Galen and supported by the Medieval Church. They explained the theory of humours and use of opposites and pointed out their limitations. Students also stated how the Church held medical development back by supporting these ideas. Simple explanations could also include broad references to supernatural treatments and the role of prayer in Medieval society. Such answers were rewarded at Level 2 in the mark scheme. Developed answers rewarded at Level 3 discussed the significance of more than one type of treatment and often brought out the range of treatments on offer in a world where the real causes and cures of disease were unknown. Answers pointed out the mix of supernatural and rational cures used by medical practitioners at the time and in a range of settings, where they came from and why

they were used. They noted and explained issues around continuity in medieval treatments and drew out significance such as the power of the Medieval Church and its control over the education of physicians as well as the hindering of development and change.

At Level 4 answers saw the complexity and contradictions in approaches to medical treatment in the Medieval world. For example, how rational thinking led to helpful patient observation and prognosis but where experimentation was banned. They considered the significance of such things as the use of Islamic medical knowledge alongside ancient and supernatural treatments. Answers also sometimes noted the operation of the 'medieval marketplace' where the wealthy could choose different treatments and medical theories to use while the poor were limited to the herbal (but often efficacious) treatments of wise women and the more brutal services of barber surgeons.

### **Question 3**

This question was answered well by many students, and it continues to be evident that opportunities are taken during teaching to consider similarities between different people and events.

At Level 1 students showed some basic knowledge of the work of Jenner and Koch and implied or asserted similarities. Sometimes the work of one, usually Jenner, dominated the response to the question.

At Level 2 Simple explanations of at least one point of similarity were made such as both had a connection to work related to vaccines or used testing and scientific method. Other answers noted both practitioners making important discoveries that helped to prevent killer diseases like smallpox and tuberculosis. Some students took time to describe aspects of Jenner's work which supported their answer but did not really develop points of similarity with Koch.

At Level 3 students deployed accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding in referring to two or more points of similarity between the work of the two individuals. Issues of work on vaccines or support from governments were added to by such things as examples of where opposition to the work of the two came from at the time and its impact. Other areas developed were the ways other individuals took their work further such as Pasteur in the case of Jenner and vaccination, and Behring (diphtheria) and Ehrlich (Salvarsan 606) in the case of Koch.

Complex explanations of similarity between the work of Jenner and Koch built on Level 3 answers and these were rewarded at Level 4. Answers might show how the two individuals were influenced by and subsequently improved and built on the work of others. Jenner, for example, developed and refined the work of Inoculators of the eighteenth century, and Koch on the germ theory of Pasteur.

### **Question 4**

Students showed in their answer to this question that they were well prepared for and understood how different factors have affected medical developments across the Thematic Study. Thematic Studies are distinct from Period and Depth Studies and in this question, given the large time period they cover, it is now expected that in order to reach Levels 3 and 4, responses will use examples to support the argument made from at least two of the four parts of the specification. Students showed themselves able accurately to apply medical developments to relevant factors and many were able to explain the impact and significance of them. The strongest answers challenged the premise of the question that Chance was the most important factor in medical development across time and were able to offer judgements about the importance of other factors in comparison with it.

Nearly all students addressed the factor named in the question and some other factors in their answers. At Level 1 students referred to developments generally, asserting the role of the named factor or other factors in medical developments without explaining them or offering supporting detail. At Level 2 Students provided simple explanations of developments and the factors that influenced them. Examples of Chance discoveries frequently referred to were the work of Fleming in discovering penicillin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Pare's development of a more painless alternative to cauterisation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Many also cited the work of Jenner and Simpson as examples of chance discoveries though without considering other factors that were also important aspects of those discoveries. Students also referred to the role of other factors in medical developments such as the role of the Individual or War mentioning the important work of people like Pasteur, Koch and Gillies. In discussing the role of the Individual at this level students asserted their importance without identifying their personal characteristics of patience, dedication, persistence etc that helped them achieve what they did. Similarly, students referred simply to the importance of Communication and the role of the printing press in spreading information without identifying specific works such as those of Vesalius that benefitted from it. Judgements about the significance of factors tended to be 'bolted on' at the end of an answer at this level and again were characterised by assertion rather than considered explanation.

At Level 3 students offered a developed answer that had a sustained line of reasoning and a logical structure in answer to the question asked. They not only identified factors and attached development to them but offered details of those developments and the precise role the factors played in them. Students were able to deploy detailed knowledge drawn from their studies and while some narrative played a part in their answers, at this level students concentrated on an assessment of the role of factors in named developments and the overall significance and impact of them. For higher awards in this level students offered a range of developments and factors in discussion and also showed, for example, how one development led to another. Such an example was the way that the emergency of war led to the development of blood transfusions for soldiers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which in turn led to the development of the National Blood transfusion service in 1946. Judgements at this level tended to be analytical and showed how one factor or another carried more weight over time when set against others.

Level 4 awards were attached to answers that extended those at level 3 and offered a complex explanation of factors leading to a substantiated judgement. Throughout these answers students showed how many medical developments were affected by multiple factors. An example of this would be the discovery of penicillin, which was not only affected by chance, but also by the role of Fleming as a unique individual scientist. Answers went further and showed how Fleming used scientific method and available technology, as well as the influence of the Second World War. Students explained how the work of Florey and Chain led to American Government action and mass production using the resources and skills of the pharmaceutical companies which made penicillin available to a worldwide audience. Answers at this level made judgements both throughout and at the end about the significance of factors and the impact of them on developments and wider humanity.

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## **2AB Britain: Power and the people: c1170 to the present day**

### **Question 1**

The source, both in its detail and caption, appeared to be clear to most students. It was possible for most students to show an understanding of the source that might be rewarded at Level 1, by selecting details from the source. Many made simple inferences such as commenting on the violence of the soldiers or spotted simple aspects of provenance for Level 2 such as the publisher being present at the event. Many had lots of knowledge of the Peterloo Massacre. Students often commented on the contrasting nature of the crowd, observing that they were dressed in their Sunday best and that many were women and children hence emphasising the peaceful intentions of the protesters. More able students demonstrated knowledge of the subsequent Six Acts and made links with government fear of revolution. Students dismissing the source for not being useful were fewer than in previous years.

### **Question 2**

This question was answered well by many students. Less effective answers described the ‘middle passage’ or conditions of slaves. Most were able to recognise the movement led to abolition and referred to the key people involved such as Wilberforce, Granville, Sharpe and Equiano and their tactics such as producing memorabilia, petitions, boycotts. Many students approached the answer by addressing ‘short term’ and ‘long term’ significance and this often worked well. However, many tried to link the movement with 20<sup>th</sup> century events such as ‘Windrush’ and even the Brixton Riots and BLM campaigns which proved challenging.

### **Question 3**

Many students showed a good knowledge of both King John’s disputes with the Barons and the Pilgrimage of Grace. The majority of students were at least able to identify a similarity. Some answers were kept in level 2 as they addressed only one similarity even if they were well developed. This was unfortunate as the question now clearly states that ‘two ways’ are required.

There were a range of approaches. One was to look at it in terms of causes and consequences. Another approach was to use the factors and discuss similarities in terms of economy or religion for example. Both these worked effectively. Important understanding that secured reward at Level 3 and 4 was often displayed in answers which selected examples of impact at the time such as both events resulting in failure – King John ignored Magna Carta and the Pilgrimage led to Henry VIII effectively speeding up the Reformation and the closing of the monasteries. It was pleasing that students rarely wrote about the differences between the two events.

### **Question 4**

Many students showed in their answer to this question that they understood the importance of parliament in Britain in over a thousand years of history. Nearly all students addressed the factor named in the question, the role of the individual, in their answer.

At Level 1, students, usually briefly, showed some knowledge and understanding of events. Responses at Levels 1 and 2 reflected an understanding that the individual was only one factor that might have influenced Parliament. Many used the example of Simon de Montfort to good effect. Examiners did note that answers often lost a focus on the tail of the question, which was about the development of Parliament; such as when students chose examples that linked to other themes such as democracy or protest but lacked links to Parliament thereby not addressing the

precise demands of the question set. There was also a tendency to include introductions, some of which were rather detailed. This is not a necessary requirement and students should be discouraged from doing this due to the time constraint of the papers.

As a Thematic Study, 'Power and the people' covers over a thousand years of history. Thematic Studies are distinct from Period and Depth Studies and in this question, given the large time period they cover, it is now expected that in order to reach Levels 3 and 4, responses will use examples to support the argument made from at least two of the four parts of the specification. The majority of students met this requirement though the level of development varied.

At Level 3, responses clearly explained the identified factor. Answers showed how students had reflected on their knowledge and then related it to show how the contribution of individuals led to the development of Parliament, such as Simon de Montfort developing Parliament by being the first to introduce the 'Commons' to it. Answers at this level were based upon a consideration of at least two factors, one of which was the factor stated in the question. Many students appeared to find this straightforward to do.

Some students however, made up their own factors rather than keeping to the eight outlined in the specification. Some answers at Levels 3 and 4 used the Point Evidence Explanation (PEE) structure to ensure that they developed their examples in relation to the question. The question clearly invited students to consider the 'main factor' and answers that did that directly, with some substantiated judgement, were rewarded at Level 4. The more effective examples at Level 4 considered how the relationship between factors might have operated to develop Parliament and were able to interweave their examples, coming to a valid judgement.

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## **2AC Britain: Migration, empires and the people: c790 to the present day**

### **Question 1**

This question was attempted well by many students. The source attribution added important information, which supported students to interpret the source accurately. However, students at Level 1 might have exploited it further in developing their answers rather than just repeating the detail of it. At this level, a small number of students incorrectly suggested Europe and Britain enjoyed a positive relationship. At Level 2, students correctly wrote about Britain's declining relationship with Europe and many were able to explain the significance of MacMillan's exclusion from the 'Restaurant of Europe'. Whilst some students began to assess the utility of the source, others needed to develop a better understanding of the Second Order concept of utility.

For Level 3, students connected good knowledge to the source, for example, about Britain's membership of the EEC and France's opposition to it. Others discussed the decline of the British Empire and the emergence of the Commonwealth. Britain's poor relationship with Europe was often contextualised with excellent knowledge about Britain's favourable relationship with the USA after World War Two and the prioritisation of its former colonies. When discussing provenance some students were confused about the nature of political cartoons and did not grasp the significance of the date provided. Those that were aware of this were generally placed at the Level 3 or 4. There were pleasing Level 4 responses that addressed the content and the provenance of the source impressively.

### **Question 2**

This question was attempted well with many impressive responses. Students possessed a good knowledge of Viking invaders, often explaining significance in the long and short term. It was notable that weaker answers were narrative about the Vikings which drifted away from a sharper focus on significance. Some basic answers at Level 1 often just told a story with limited knowledge. Answers at Level 2 referred to a wide range of significances, most commonly the violent nature of Viking invasion and their economic impacts.

At Levels 3 and 4 students showed an awareness of a range of additional significances including the religious and imperial impacts of the Vikings, political impacts on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and their leaders, and the even longer-term cultural impact on British society, notably in terms of language. There were many pleasing responses that considered a range of Viking invaders with particularly impressive analysis of the political impacts of King Guthrum and King Cnut.

### **Question 3**

This question was answered well by many students. Many students showed a depth of knowledge about both the American War of Independence and the Boer War. There were some impressive answers showing an understanding of the short-term and long-term impact of both conflicts on Britain's empire. Many astutely discussed the economic causes of both wars and participants' violent nature in the face of oppressive monarchs and imperialists.

The stronger answers to this question showed a good grasp of the concept of similarity and effectively discussed various impacts in the long and short term, as well as a wide range of causes. It was noticeable at Level 1 and 2 that students grasped a stronger understanding of the American War of Independence, with less developed understanding of the events surrounding and including the Boer War. This meant some exploration of similarity was underdeveloped and simplistic.



Effective teaching of how events, periods and people may be similar continues, with examiners noting that students were generally successful in answering this type of question in the examination.

At Level 3 a more developed understanding was evident in answers where students focused on economic causes of the Wars relating to tax and land, the role of key individuals, the negative impact of the Wars on Britain's global reputation, and the tactics implemented in both Wars. Many students, impressively, could discuss the impact of the Wars on the growth of the British Empire in the short and long term, notably how the Wars' outcomes triggered further expansion of the British Empire in Asia, Australasia, and Africa.

#### **Question 4**

Examiners noted that many students had been well prepared to discuss factors contributing to the development of empires. Most students could offer examples of how empires developed from across the Thematic Unit. Many referred, with a good range of examples, to the named factor of ideas, such as imperialism. Weaker answers tended to focus solely on the stated factor, often accompanying it with less developed alternative factors that often achieved lower Level 2 marks. Some students focussed their answers around migration and did not engage effectively with the concept of developing empires. These answers were usually limited to Level 1.

Migration and the People is a thematic course, covering over a thousand years of history. It requires students to show knowledge of the earlier Medieval and Early Modern periods, as well as the Modern period. To reach Level 3 and Level 4, students had to provide examples from at least two of the four parts of the Specification. This was a change to the marking guidance for the 2023 series and meant more answers were able to access at least Level 3. There was no expectation that all examples would be developed to the same level of detail but some knowledge and understanding of two or more parts of the Specification's was required for the higher levels. Pleasingly, many students offered an impressive range of relevant examples from the course.

Nearly all students addressed the factor named in the question, ideas such as imperialism, in their answer. At Level 1 students showed a weaker knowledge of factors, occasionally employing factors that were of their own design. It is hoped that students will have had an opportunity during this study to consider all the named factors in the Specification. At Level 2 students began to show a better grasp of how ideas drove the expansion of empire. The most common ideas cited by students were Imperialism, Social Darwinism, and white supremacy. Whilst some knowledge was accurate, examiners noted that the level of supporting detail at Level 2 was simple. Level 2 responses often lacked a range of examples.

It was at Level 3 and beyond that students began to show a clear understanding of the identified factor, as well as displaying a detailed knowledge of other factors. Answers that were given Level 3 marks chose examples from at least 2 parts of the Specification. Many answers at Level 3 and 4 displayed an impressive knowledge about a wide range of empires, spanning the thematic source. There was impression knowledge of the Vikings and the North Sea Empire, Henry II and the Angevin Empire, as well as various colonies within the British Empire.

Some answers discussed the role of individuals in developing empires, notably Robert Clive and Cecil Rhodes. Level 4 could only be achieved with a strong level 3 which sustained a line of reasoning that was sharply focused and led to a substantiated judgement. There were impressive arguments by some students relating to how a given factor could both develop an empire, but also cause its decline. Some students at Level 2, and more commonly at Level 3, displayed an argument and attempted to make a judgment but it was not substantiated by knowledge or based on an

understanding of the relative importance of factors in either isolation or working together. Many students offered Migration as a factor, which did not effectively address the question given.

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

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