



A-level
History

7042/1K

Report on the Examination

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General

In Section A it was clear that students had been well prepared and were familiar with the issues surrounding US foreign policy in the period 1890 to 1920. The topic, however, does remain complex for many students unable to easily reconcile the different strands in US policy. In Section B there were many well-constructed essays showing knowledge, understanding and an ability to focus clearly on the point of the question.

The difference in skills required for Section A and Section B was again a feature this year. Students have been well trained in how best to respond to the specific challenges of Q1, although at times this led to mechanical answers which did not necessarily engage with the content of the extracts. Students are well aware of the importance of evaluation, with more able students offering a range of support and challenge, with weaker students often relying on support and a general agreement with the extract. All three essay questions were accessible with Q3 and Q4 slightly more popular than Q2.

In general there were no issues relating to the management of time, although there was some evidence that students who started with the Section B essays may have left themselves insufficient time to do justice to the extract question.

Section A, 01

Extract A proved the most challenging of the three extracts. The absence of a clearly defined key issue meant that students identified a range of different factors as being important. One student argued that the contradictions in the extract simply reflected the contradictions in US foreign policy. More able students argued that the extract was in fact a series of linked ideas referring to different aspects of US foreign policy. Weaker students tended to identify one of the sub-themes and focus on it to the exclusion of other issues.

The most common theme related to the US's more interventionist policies with students offering a range of evidence to prove the point. Some students linked "expansionist doctrines" with the US's "more active role in the world" while others linked the idea that the US did not become a "major player" with the idea that the US did not "acquire new colonies".

In Extract B most students were able to identify the idea that economic factors, and the search for overseas markets, were the driving forces behind the new directions in US foreign policy. Contextual support was readily available in support of this argument. Some students were able to develop at some length the "moral/racial" pressures behind expansion but often this point was neglected completely. Students were less happy dealing with the impact of the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny, the latter often involving largely irrelevant sections on westward expansion.

With regard to Extract C most students identified political considerations as being important factors in the development of US foreign policy. Weaker students tended to focus on the Populist Party with reference to the problems of western farmers and the emergence of the Granger movement. More able students argued that fear of the Populist Party was overplayed in the extract, that the Populist threat had receded and that Republican policies were driven by other, more traditional factors.

Section B, 02

Most students accepted that big business posed problems, although these problems were rarely defined. Where they were defined, they often related simply to the size of individual operations. Only a few

able students sought to explain the nature of some of the abuses which accompanied the predominance of big business.

Higher level responses showed range and balance, often contrasting the comparative inaction of the Gilded Age with the more interventionist approaches of Roosevelt and Wilson. The best answers focused clearly on the work of individual presidents. Weaker answers lacked range, largely ignoring the Cleveland/McKinley era, and focusing mainly on Roosevelt.

Most responses concluded with the judgement that, although considerable progress had been made, big business still retained an overly powerful and influential role in the nation's affairs.

Section B, 03

Students found this a relatively straightforward question with many responses focusing effectively on the work of the four presidents. More able students recognised the importance of other factors, although this often meant no more than reference to the impact of the Second World War. Nearly all students had something valid to say in respect of Roosevelt's New Deal as well as Hoover's response to the 1929 crash. Students found most difficulty in assessing the significance of the 1920s and the work of Harding and Coolidge. Knowledge was often insecure, particularly in respect of the policies and actions of Harding and Coolidge. In addition, there was difficulty in measuring the significance of *laissez-faire* - viewed alternatively as the key to economic success or the policy of inaction which led directly to the crash.

Section B, 04

Three movements accounted for the majority of answers - the American Civil Rights Movement, anti-war /student protest, and the feminist movement. Mention was also made of the American-Indian movement and the gay rights campaign. When these issues were included, accounts were developed and well supported. The best answers sought to link activities and outcomes and were aware of the wider context in each case.

Students clearly felt most comfortable when explaining the progress of the Civil Rights Movement. In higher level responses, landmark events - Brown v Board, Rosa Parks, Little Rock, March on Washington - were linked clearly with landmark outcomes - the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Weaker answers tended to focus on one or two events only and did not always identify the movement's successes. Some clearly felt that the later, more militant examples of African-American protest were seriously damaging to the movement's reputation.

Overall there was some hesitancy in explaining the anti-war movement. A number of students saw it simply as an extension of the student protest; others saw it as existing in its own right with a much wider appeal. Generally there was some difficulty in defining exactly what it achieved and only a few responses linked the protests clearly with actual events in Vietnam. Comments on the feminist movement were often limited to general comments on domesticity, Betty Friedan, and the Roe v Wade judgement. Again there was some uncertainty over what it achieved.

Most students agreed that the Civil Rights Movement was the most successful of the protest groups. Students who restricted themselves to one or two protest movements - and therefore could not make an effective comparison - found difficulty in making a convincing final judgement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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