



AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2S
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2S

The Making of Modern Britain, 1951–2007 **Component 2S: Building a new Britain, 1951–1979**

General Comments

It was good to find that most students took the new AS format in their stride and used their time to the full to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q03 proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very good and weaker answers to both and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further guidance as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question.

Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

As far as the second element is concerned, the majority of students had little difficulty in understanding the content of the two sources and commenting on the opposing views which they represented. However, a few took the phrase, 'should continue to be largely dependent on the USA' out of context, suggesting it meant that Sandys wanted to keep a dependence on the States; the reverse of what he was actually arguing. This is an example of some students' failure to read the entirety of the source before jumping to conclusions. The sentence that followed made Sandys' stance clear. A few made a similar mistake with Source B, suggesting that Priestley was content to campaign for rejecting nuclear warfare because 'she (GB) has the H-bomb'. Generally, students who addressed content through a sentence-by-sentence (or even phrase-by-phrase) approach produced far less satisfactory answers than those who summarised and commented on the overall arguments. These errors aside, most students tried to evaluate the content of the sources, using contextual knowledge, for example of the Cold War, Suez, Britain's post-war situation, the 'special relationship', CND campaigns, the Labour Party and public attitudes, to both corroborate and criticise the comments made. The best showed a good, detailed awareness of the context; less able students provided no contextual support, strayed well beyond the 1950s or filled their answers (irrelevantly) with their own views on the nuclear debate.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was generally less effective than consideration of content, with too many students believing they could implicitly trust a Minister of Defence to tell the truth, whereas Priestley was overly 'biased'. Answers where the comments on provenance were developed and supported, for example, by the suggestion that a Minister would be subject to public

(and media) scrutiny or that Priestley represented a specific socialist stance, were obviously more impressive. Similarly, the difference in quality between the answer which simply said the tone of Extract B was 'argumentative' and the one that said Priestley had to adopt a forceful tone with hard-hitting detail (of the US takeover of East Anglia) because CND represented a minority which had to fight hard to get its message across is clear. Students need to be reminded that comments on provenance, as much as those on content, need support. Simple statements of 'unreliability' or 'bias' were insufficient.

In terms of the comparison, better students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the nuclear deterrent debate. Most concluded that Source A was the more reasoned, while Source B was overly emotive, but some suggested that Source B was more 'honest' and heart-felt, or that it provided an awareness of both sides of the debate, whilst Source A represented an outmoded 'government' stance and was overly narrow in outlook. Many emphasised that both sources would be valuable in explaining the debate from two contrasting angles, and, if well-reasoned, such a judgement was equally acceptable. However, students who merely asserted the superiority of one source over another, talked of the 'validity' – usually meaning accuracy of content – of the sources, or, in a few cases, simply ignored the requirement to address comparison, showed little understanding of what this question asked for.

Section B

Question 02

Many students were well aware of the 'teenager' phenomenon of the late 1950s and 1960s, although a good number went well beyond 1964 in their discussion of anti-war protest movements, hippies, skinheads and even punk rock. What differentiated the good from the more mediocre essays was the ability to link change to affluence and to consider and evaluate, in addition, a number of other factors producing the new teenage culture. Weaker students generally fell back on a description of that culture, often with assertions, but no reasoned explanation, of how everything was linked to affluence. Obviously, high employment and wage rates, producing more leisure time and the growth of consumerism, were important here. The ending of National Service, the spread of new technologies, the media and the availability of goods as well as a change in attitudes from a post-war generation, were the most frequently cited alternative reasons. As always, the more precise the information and the tighter the links to the question, the more likely the answer was to reach the higher mark levels.

Question 03

Most students who attempted this question had a fair to very good knowledge of both the economic problems of the later 1960s and the attempts of the Labour governments to deal with these. Some students spent too long discussing the problems and some went beyond 1970, but, for the most part, issues such as 'stop-go' economics, the DEA, prices and incomes, devaluation, union challenges and the failure to gain entry to the EEC were evaluated in varying degrees of depth. There were a number of more descriptive responses which, despite some good knowledge, received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical stance, and it was disappointing to find that even among the more able students, some failed to offer any balance in their essay and presented a wholly negative account of the Labour governments' record. Whilst it was hard to agree entirely with the quotation, some awareness of the positive results of devaluation, of the redistributive effect of taxation policies or of the benefits of the renationalisation of the steel

industry would have enabled such students to produce a better balanced and therefore more highly-rewarded answer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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