

A-level **History**

7042/1F Industrialisation and the people: Britain, c1783–1885
Report on the Examination

June 2017

Version: 1.0

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General Comments

It was encouraging to find that in this first year of examinations of the new A level specification, there were many students who came to the examination well-prepared and able to write with confidence and enthusiasm about the period they had been studying. Strong knowledge of social and economic change was exhibited in response to the compulsory 01 question and question 03 and of political change in 04. 04 elicited some thoughtful and perceptive answers and showed that students could think effectively across a broad period of History, selecting relevant examples to support a case and providing substantiated individual judgement. The answer to 02 showed a good deal of subject knowledge and awareness of ways of measuring policies. There were, of course, some, whose knowledge of material or understanding of developments, were inadequate for the tasks set. Those who, despite some effective revision, still under-performed and may have failed to take on board some of the new A level requirements and it is largely to help such students that the following comments are offered.

Section A

01

There are three very important points to stress to both students and centres. Firstly, this question is not in the same form as the AS question. The instruction is quite clear – students are to “assess how convincing the arguments in the three extracts are” in relation to the issue identified in the question – in this case social reform. Students are not asked to compare the given extracts which many students did or rate them in order of “convincingness”.

Equally, it is not in the form of the “sources” as in the depth paper options. These are extracts which do not require students to evaluate their provenance and bias. Finally, there is no need for an overall introduction or judgment on the extracts collectively. It is very helpful however for there to be an individual judgment on each extract so that students meet the criteria for the highest marks.

The most obvious differentiator between answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each extract. Far too many students adopted a line-by-line approach, which neither showed any overall understanding, nor kept the answer focused on the issue in the question. For those preparing students for a future examination, it might be worth reiterating the importance of first considering the topic to be addressed (which follows the ‘in relation to...’ in the question) and then assimilating the whole extract before starting to write. Students should be reminded that the key argument of an extract does not necessarily appear in the first line.

Extract A’s argument was that the Whigs aimed to show that an aristocratic government was valid as its social policy was responding to pressures effectively unlike the “Young England” movement amongst the Conservatives. Extract B on the other hand focussed on the role of industrialisation in necessitating the development of social reforms but that these reforms were usually based on permissive and advisory principles; these *laissez-faire* ideas based on the free market (not free trade as many students re-interpreted it) and self-help. Certainly, the implication was that this approach was ineffective. Extract C had a more subtle argument; this was that while the role of Tory paternalism should not be overlooked, it was rarely put into practice because landowners resisted central interference in their control of local affairs. Given these different interpretations, with their very contradictory arguments, it was surprising how many students found all the extracts ‘convincing’. Whilst there needed to be a balanced evaluation, those who took their full import on

board provided much more nuanced judgement, demonstrating comprehension of, and sensible reflection on, the passages concerned.

There were, of course, sub-arguments within each extract which the more able addressed. However, it was not necessary to comment on every statement, and those who did so often finished up providing lots of scarcely relevant information on peripheral details, not always linked to the key topic of social reform. For example, when discussing Extract A many were keen to show off their knowledge of the Reform Act and looked at pressures in the form of Chartism. If these were not being strongly related to the issue of social reform – for example the need to address social issues like the poor law due to the pressure of the middle classes demanding lower poor rates – these could gain little credit. There was much description of the reforms mentioned in each extract but only better students related this to a balanced view of the extracts. However, many students did show that the claim that the Whigs addressed social reforms effectively in A was undermined by the lack of money devoted to education, the lack of inspectors in factory acts and the operation of workhouses. In B students could point to mandatory reforms like the Factory and Mines Acts and in C they could show that Tories did address social reforms in the 1842 Mines Act and the 1844 Factory Act. Students who used Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws or the introduction of income tax in the sense that these had socially reforming motives such as improving the spending power of the poor or providing assistance to the Irish were credited. Better students distinguished between permissive and poorly enforced and between governments and groups within parties, particularly the influence of Ashley out of government. Some students were simply careless in their reading of the extracts and thus argued for or against suggestions that were not actually part of the passage concerned – for example that C argued completely in favour of the influence of Tory paternalism or claims that the extract "ignores Tory paternalism".

Section B

02

Many students were knowledgeable about Pitt's Terror measures between 1793 and 1800 and were at ease in discussing their effect on inhibiting radicalism. However, the question required rather more than this. There needed to be consideration of the period of 1800 to 1812 and they also needed to be consideration of the ways in which the measures were not effective. Some students simply stated that the measures pushed popular discontent underground without producing any supporting evidence. More effective answers pointed out either how discontent changed in form to plots from large-scale movements after 1800 or tended to either contrast the impact of measures in Britain with that in Ireland or that the policies were successful in short term repression but in the long term led to problems after the war for Lord Liverpool in both Britain and Ireland.

Good answers showed an appreciation that government policies could extend beyond repression, for example the use of income tax not only to provide funds but to avoid putting the burden on the poor; however less able students tended to think that everyone paid income tax or drew on policies that were outside the period such as the Sinking Fund. Others commented that the government's *laissez-faire* social policy did nothing to address bad living and working conditions but made the point that this did not directly lead to outright discontent.

03

Most students were able to talk about generalised factors promoting economic development in the period, talking about new machines, inventors or improved breeds of livestock without any detail whatsoever either about names or measures of impact. Some students simply mentioned any policy which they knew something about and claimed this showed that governments were or were

not responsible for economic growth. For example, the 1848 Public Health Act improved the healthiness of the workers which increased productivity, overlooking the general ineffectiveness of the act and the fact that it came rather late in the period to account for economic growth before c1850.

However, unlike the AS exam last year which gave rise to some concern that the economic element of the component was being ignored by centres, there were some very good answers provided. Impressive facts and figures were produced to show the significance of the impact of railways, the application of power looms to the output and export of cotton goods, the use of steam power in coal mines to increase production. However, the key factor in the question was the role of the government and few students could take a holistic approach to the whole period. Some tried to use “free trade” but then had little detail about the actual measures provided; others concentrated almost entirely on Peel’s five-year tenure as Prime Minister, overlooking that the question required consideration of 35 years. More able students discussed ways in which governments could help or hinder the economy and give examples and did try to consider the Whigs as well.

The real difficulty for many students was to achieve a real evaluative argument. There were many claims made without any support. The best responses tended to use examples where government policy enabled or hindered economic development. In hindering economic development, some students saw the harmful effects on industry of protectionism for agriculture by the Corn Laws. Alternatively, some recognised that government legislation on the railways enabled them to prosper and develop. Very few students realised that all railways required an act which involved detailed parliamentary scrutiny. Therefore, there were even fewer who argued that governments harmed economic development by authorising the capitalisation of railways which eventually never got built.

04

This was by far the best answered question. Many students were comfortable with a comparison between the state of democracy in 1846 and 1885 and nearly every student could mention most of the constitutional changes and – to a lesser extent – the continuities over the period. Detail had been well learnt and in some cases, there was actually a danger of an overload of description, rather than too little evidence to back comments. What primarily differentiated between the answers, however, was either the students’ ability to take a comparative approach rather than a chronological approach or the use of a thematic approach addressing in turn issues like franchise extension, corruption, aristocratic influence and more equal constituencies and looking in a balanced way at each – for example that franchise extension by 1885 stretched to heads of household but not to women. The best answers tended to link the points together to form a coherent argument and looked more widely at the development of “democratic” parties with suitable policies. Other students extended the remit of the question by looking at issues like “rights”; this was creditable provided it was produced in the context of “democracy” rather than merely recounting any reforms in the period which the student could remember. However, the Lead Examiner was pleased with the level of knowledge shown by most students on this paper and the level of understanding shown by much of the candidature.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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