



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 2S (A-level)
Question 01 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2S (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Britain's invasion of Iraq in 2003. **[30 marks]**

Student response

Source A is a confidential memo. When it was written it was not meant for a wider audience. Its provenance, therefore, is useful to historians because it gives a valuable insight into the debates going on 'behind-the-scenes' within the Foreign Office, as early as March 2002, in terms of how best to present the government's case to the British public for taking action against Saddam.

The content of the source is valuable precisely because it was not meant for public disclosure. It argues that President Bush's focus on 'regime change' as a justification or excuse for war was unlikely to win wider British and European public support. Indeed, it argues that the most effective justification for going to war would be to focus on WMDs as a reason 'worth sending our troops to die for'.

The tone is very frank and open. This is something you might expect in a confidential memo not meant to be seen by the public. Its emphasis is purely on presentation – about how best to 'spin' the message that Iraq was a threat to Britain. It is valuable for historians to have evidence of the 'behind-the-scenes' deliberations because it demonstrates how important it is in a democracy to gain public support for a decision to go to war. It is also important in the wider debate about the legality and morality of the British government's decision to go to war without UN authorisation and about the relationship between Bush and Blair, who presented himself as America's closest and most dependable ally.

Source B is a key source because it is written by Tony Blair introducing the government's dossier of evidence to Parliament justifying the urgency to remove Saddam. It is very useful because it helps historians question the truthfulness of the dossier material, given that no WMDs were found following the invasion of March 2003.

The content of the source focuses on the threat presented by Saddam. It is arguing that all previous attempts to 'contain' Saddam had failed and that he must be stopped, though Blair does not explain precisely how. In September 2002 Blair was still insisting that weapons inspections in Iraq remained the best approach to bring pressure on Iraq, though Blair seems to be arguing here that Saddam must be removed whatever.

This is a carefully and cleverly presented document intended to emphasise the current and actual threat offered by Saddam. Its tone is very measured but it is designed to convey the government's heightened anxiety of the threat to world stability posed by Saddam. The use of words such as 'unprecedented' and Blair's reference to 'the intelligence', are chosen to emphasise how the government is convinced that Saddam is out of control. For historians, this source illustrates how Blair was convinced already by September 2002 that Saddam could not be contained. Blair had already shown himself to be a strong anti-appeaser, arguing in a speech in Chicago in 1999 that it was legitimate to use force to remove aggressor regimes. Given that no WMDs were ever found, and that Iraq's nuclear capability was a myth, historians could use this document as evidence of government over-exaggeration to persuade

parliamentary and public opinion that nothing short of an invasion was likely to safeguard Britain's security.

The provenance of source C is of value to historians because it is a transcript of oral testimony and is, therefore, unedited; it is not 'presented' in any particular way by an author. By June 2003 the government was coming under fire from investigative journalists such as Andrew Gilligan, a BBC correspondent, and this source shows that the allegations of misrepresentation were obviously serious enough for a parliamentary committee of enquiry to be set up.

Campbell is defending the government's actions in this source, denying that the government lied. He is arguing that the government's integrity should not be questioned in this way and that the credibility of the government he represented was much greater than that of the journalists who were criticising the government. Historians will find this source of value in assessing whether Blair's government consciously misled parliament given Campbell's unequivocal defence of the rightness of their actions, particularly in the context of the suicide in July 2003 of Dr David Kelly, the defence expert who had been revealed as Gilligan's informant.

The tone and language used is very emotive and robust. Historians will find this source useful as an indication of how fiercely Blair's government was prepared to defend its actions. Indeed, the tone is a mixture of being not only highly defensive but also remarkably aggressive, indicating to historians the intensity with which the government's actions and motivations were debated. Campbell appears angry that the government's integrity could be questioned in this way; his entire emphasis is to damn the journalists as liars.

Commentary

There is effective comment on the provenance of each source and how this links to value (but this could have been developed further) and some useful assessment of the tone of each source. Some key references to the content of each source are made and there is supporting contextual knowledge in places. There are, however, a number of weaknesses. The content of Source A is not comprehensively assessed: the references made to the current status of Iraq's WMD and the threat posed by Iran, are not picked up. There are, on occasions, generalised comments which have not been validated. For example, Source B is cited as 'evidence of government over-exaggeration' which has not been proven in the preceding analysis. There is also limited developed reference of contextual knowledge in relation to Source C.

This is a Level 4 answer, clearly meeting the requirements of the question without, however, full development.

Level 4 (mid)