

Examiners' Report
June 2014

GCSE History A 5HA02 2C

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Introduction

This year's paper seems to have been very much to the candidates' liking. The 1920s appears to be the most popular section of the course and so questions on mass production, entertainment and the economic boom allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge effectively. What this also means, however, is that candidates are sometimes so keen to demonstrate their knowledge that they fail to address the key focus of the question. They must ensure that they consider, for example, consequence in Question 1c, causation in Question 1d and look at changes (rather than just what happened) in Question 2.

Despite these occasional lapses into narrative-based answers, the performance on this year's paper was very encouraging. Examiners reported many full and analytical responses to Question 2 and 3 in particular, and it was evident that teachers and candidates had addressed weaknesses in examination technique discussed in previous reports.

Question 1 (a)

Candidates had few difficulties with this question, though some weaker answers tended to copy or paraphrase the source by suggesting that we could learn that 'Hoover was the sort of man to do nothing'. Most candidates achieved Level 3 by arguing that Hoover was inflexible (or indeed flexible), optimistic, or most commonly, believed in laissez-faire.

The USA, 1919–41

Answer Questions 1(a) to (d), then Question 2(a) OR 2(b) and then Question 3(a) OR 3(b).

Question 1 – you must answer all parts of this question.

Study Source A.

Source A: From a history of the USA, published in 2001.

Hoover's response to the Wall Street Crash was to do nothing, confident that the economy would soon recover on its own. 'Prosperity is just around the corner', he told the public. He reminded people that prosperity would only happen if businesses were left alone by the government. Eventually, Hoover realised that the government had to do something.

(a) What can you learn from Source A about President Hoover?

(4)

One thing you learn about President Hoover was that he believed in laissez faire, which is shown when the source says that "he reminded people that prosperity would only happen if businesses were left alone by the government. This implies that Hoover felt businesses should run themselves. Another thing you learn is that laissez faire wasn't working, as Hoover eventually "realised the government had to do something". This suggest that things got bad enough for Hoover to abandon his original policy.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer reaches Level 3 from the very start with the inference that Hoover believed in laissez-faire well supported from the source. There is a later inference suggesting that laissez-faire isn't working, but even if full marks had not already been achieved, this would not have been rewarded. The question asks for inferences about 'President Hoover'.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

As in this example, candidates should make the inference in the first line of the response and ensure that they provide support from the source, not general knowledge.

Question 1 (b)

Mass production is a topic which candidates seem to know well. To score high marks in this question, their task was to organise their answers into a number of features. There was a wide variety of approaches to this. Some candidates described how mass production involved using the assembly line, others gave details of its impact on the car industry, whilst it was not uncommon to read accounts of how mass production underpinned the general economic boom of the 1920s by producing goods at an affordable price. All were valid approaches and, if supported with contextual detail, resulted in high reward.

(b) Describe the key features of mass production in the 1920s.

(6)

One key feature of mass production was that lots of cars, radios, ~~and~~ telephones and other products were being made on a very large scale. Because more were being produced it meant that the goods could be made cheaper, this meant that they were more affordable for people so not only the rich had these products. The increase in sales as a result of this meant that businesses were earning more profits and were able to pay higher wages.

Another key feature was that mass production included division of labour, standardisation and the moving assembly line which were invented by Henry Ford to speed up production. Division of labour was when big tasks were split into smaller ones so that each individual worker had a few tasks to do. This meant that workers became specialised and the productivity increased. This made mass production achievable, ~~was~~ a car came off the production line every 10 seconds.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer was typical of the approach adopted by many candidates. Two features were addressed: one concerned the variety of goods which became available as a result of mass production. The second feature described was how the process actually worked. This answer scored highly in Level 2.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The question asks for candidates to describe features. Best technique, therefore, as in this answer, is to begin each paragraph 'One feature was', 'A second feature was' etc.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates showed a sound knowledge of the effects of new forms of entertainment in the USA with answers generally concentrated on the impact of radio, film and jazz. It seems that some candidates are of the opinion that all women in the USA at the time were drinking, smoking and attending speakeasies, but equally, it is true that greater freedoms for women were part of the impact of a more 'open' society brought about by the new forms of entertainment. Better answers were able to see the link between the economic boom and the entertainment industry and some perceptive candidates noted the importance of advertising in helping stimulate economic growth.

It was a little unfortunate that so many candidates believed that television played an important role in the development of American society in the 1920s.

Question 1 (d)

The Wall St Crash was an event which had significant repercussions in both the United States and Europe. Many candidates explained those repercussions, even though this question was about the causes of the Crash, not the impact of it. Unfortunately such material could not be rewarded.

Where candidates did focus on the causes of the Crash, there seemed to be some general confusion between why there was an economic depression in the 1930s and why the Wall St. Crash occurred. The causes of the Crash are quite specific. By the autumn of 1929 prices in shares had begun to fall and by late October panic selling had set in. This selling was fuelled by the fact that some purchases had been through 'buying on the margin' and the fact that banks had over invested their clients' money on Wall St. Some candidates seemed unclear that this was the immediate cause and instead wrote on overproduction, tariffs, and declining company profits. Certainly, it is true that declining consumer confidence and a general slow-down in the economy were important background causes of the Crash, but some candidates wrote on these features to the exclusion of the events of September and October 1929.

(d) Explain why the Wall Street Crash happened in 1929.

(8)

One of the main reasons for the wall street crash was companies were making less profits*. As hire purchase was invented it meant, ^{more} people could buy goods. Once those goods had been bought they would no longer need to buy again. This meant that the companies had less profits so their values in shares went down so people panic sold.

Another key reason on why the wall street crash happened was people believed that the boom would last forever. People, including

banks gambled with their shares and then lost everything. People ~~became~~ became too over confident and started taking loans from the banks with money they could not pay back. [□] People guaranteed that they were going to make a fortune with over-speculation.

The Wall Street crash happened in 1929 because of mass production. As ^{more} less goods were bought people wanted shares in that company. Therefore people had loans from the ~~best~~ banks and grew over confident. As less people bought the goods, shares went down and people panic sold.

* because of mass production.

□ As the shares increased people were hoping for more and more money. Greed was a big factor of the Wall Street Crash. People thought it would just keep going up.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer is typical of those produced by many candidates. It shows an understanding of the background economic events and how overproduction brought a fall in share profits. This enabled it to reach the bottom of Level 3. It would have been greatly improved with a more precise explanation of the events around the activities in the market in September and October 1929.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Candidates need to remember to make sure that their explanation clearly links the explained reason to the outcome. In this case, why did falling share prices bring about the Crash?

Question 2 (a)

Candidates had few difficulties relating the impact of the economic boom of the 1920. There were many detailed accounts of the growth in the number of cars, refrigerators and radios in society. Candidates also wrote about the booming film industry, developments in sport, and inevitably, about changing fashions for women and how they visited speakeasies.

Such detail took most candidates to Level 2. Where a discussion of the wider impact was given, Level 3 was achieved. These answers usually focussed on how the United States became a more consumerist society, how the role of women began to change, or how better communication reduced parochialism. The very best answers also noted that for some elements of American society, the changes were not always positive.

Chosen Question Number: Question 2(a) Question 2(b)

The USA changed for better and ~~worse~~^{worse} during the economic boom of the 1920s.

Industries used the economic improvement of the economy of America after the first World War to increase ~~the~~ commercialism and therefore increase consumerism. Increased consumerism meant that more money was spent, more money was earned by workers due to large profits generated from increased sales in consumer goods. The cycle of prosperity with cheap costs and high income means businesses and people wealth were growing with various industries like entertainment benefitting as well as the prosperity heightened morale.

Older industries ~~suffered~~^{suffered} in the economic boom ~~as~~^{though} ~~well~~ with industries such as cotton, railroad and coal benefitting less from it. With the car industry booming, railroad ~~had~~^{had} a plummet in demand ~~for~~. Same can be said with cotton, in which nylon (^{synthetic} ~~synthetic~~ cotton) was used in manufacturing more due to low cost, and coal, in which oil was used to

generate electricity. New industries replaced these old ones meaning ^{these} companies suffered large losses and also meant that also jobs were lost as well. More demand was on these new industries instead of old ones.



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Examiner Comments

This answer scored well by explaining both the positive and negative aspects of change in the 1920s. The answer begins with a discussion of commercialism and consumerism and ends with an explanation of how the 'older industries' suffered.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

On a question on 'change', don't just describe what happened. Candidates must point out how things were different during the period.

Question 2 (b)

Although this answer was considerably less popular than Question 2a, it did not seem to provide any great difficulties for those who attempted it. Candidates readily achieved Level 2 by providing details of Roosevelt's measures in this period, with the Emergency Banking Act and the Civil Works Administration proving to be the best known. When candidates were able to explain how Roosevelt's policies represented a change, Level 3 was awarded. Most common analyses in Level 3 revolved around how Roosevelt abandoned laissez-faire and brought about a period where the American economy was heavily dependent upon government intervention.

Chosen Question Number: Question 2(a) Question 2(b)

Roosevelt's 'Hundred Days' changed the USA in many ways, having a huge impact.

His first action was to close all the banks on 6th March 1933 and on the 9th of March the Emergency Banking Act allowed him to ~~and~~ inspect them, reopening only those which were financially stable. This restored confidence in the Americans, so when the banks re opened, there was no 'run on the banks'. This was greatly significant towards changing the USA because the previously very unstable economy was becoming more stable.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, was set up in May 1933 to provide employment, which was one of the greatest problems the USA was facing in the 1930s. The CCC provided work for men between 17 and 23, planting trees, digging ditches and building dams. It provided work for 4 million people across the most states, so was very important as a change. However, in my opinion it ~~was~~ ~~not~~ did not change the USA as much as the Emergency Banking Act did by

restoring confidence, but it did amplify the Banking Act's effect.

Roosevelt also introduced the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, to give subsidies to farmers to encourage them to produce less. Farmers had been overproducing since 1919, and wheat was worth less than half of what it had been before (\$2.16 in 1919, \$1.04 in 1930). The AAA also bought up surplus grain and animals, so managed to effectively regulate the industry of Agriculture. This change had been so long awaited that I think it was more important in the change to the USA, however it would have had little effect if the banks were not stabilised by the Emergency Banking Act, which I believe was crucial to the other changes because without it the economy would not have been safe enough for the other agencies to work.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer has a good understanding of the Emergency Banking Act, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Agricultural Adjustment Act. For each measure there is a discussion of how it changed the United States, so a high Level 3 was awarded.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

This question is about change. Candidates should, therefore make sure they do more than just explain what happened. To score highest marks they must show how those events made a difference.

Question 3 (a)

This question addressed features of the United States in the 1920s of which candidates seemed to have a very detailed knowledge. They were long, though often descriptive, accounts of prohibition and gangsterism and racism, particularly in the South. These descriptions did not always lead to discussion on the importance of their impact and so some answers remained in Level 2. Most candidates, however, reached Level 3 by explaining how the events 'caused problems'. Knowledge of problems in farming was less secure and there were many answers which discussed the impact of Dust Bowls, a problem of the 1930s.

Where candidates were able to compare the relative impact of the features, usually through considering how widespread that impact was, highest marks were awarded.

A final problem facing the US was within its agricultural sector. Following World War 1 there was a huge demand in Europe for US products as European countries had been severely weakened by the conflict. This meant that US farmers were engaged in a huge amount of trade as their products were in high demand. But when European countries began to rebuild themselves the demand decreased and farmers were left with a lot of wastage and product loss. Also the Emergency Tariff Act 1923 increased the tariff on US exports which reduced trade with the US and weakened the agricultural output even more. Farmers were left poor and working up to 16 hours everyday to produce a pitiful living. This was a serious problem but it only affected the agricultural workers whereas racism was affecting the majority of the US society.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer begins by discussing the problems created by racism and crime before discussing agriculture. Here a very sound knowledge of the problems facing farmers is shown. The paragraph shown also concludes with a direct comparison of the impact of racism and agricultural problems, taking the answer to the highest level.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

When dates are given in the question, take care not to provide detail from the period outside those dates. So Dust Bowls should not be discussed when addressing problems in farming.

Question 3 (b)

This was very much the less popular of the two alternatives given at Level 3.

Those candidates who attempted this question knew the material, but found it difficult to prioritise between the different factors. There was a good understanding of the importance of the Supreme Court and its ability to declare Roosevelt's measures as unconstitutional. Better answers also discussed how Roosevelt's measures to control the Supreme Court may also have damaged his reputation. Discussion of the importance of opposition from businessmen and the Republican Party was best done when candidates explained that it was not just money or knee-jerk party politics which brought the opposition. To some Americans, Roosevelt threatened their very way of life. They saw his interventionist policies as 'Un-American'. Knowledge of opposition from Huey Long and other 'radicals' was less secure.

Where prioritisation was carried out effectively, it tended to focus on the constitutional importance of the Supreme Court or, in the case of Huey Long, on the limited geographical spread of his opposition.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Make sure you are aware of the different skills tested in each question (eg Question 1d is always about causation).
- When you are asked about a topic you know well, give full details, but don't forget to address the concept set in the question e.g considering effects (Question 1c) or change (Question 2)
- Always look for the wider implications. What did the surface changes cause to happen on a more general scale?
- Always take note of the dates given in a question (eg Question 3a). If you are asked about the 1920s be careful not to include material from the 1930s.

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