



# Examiners' Report

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel  
In GCE History (8HI0/1F)  
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1F: In search of the American  
dream: the USA, c1917–96

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## PE report 8HI0 1F

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, Advanced Subsidiary Level, paper 1F.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause and/or consequence. Section B offers a further choice of essays, targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates in the main appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. This was most evident on Section C, as would be expected. Whilst the impact of this cannot be fully mitigated against, and the best advice is thus to plan time accordingly in the first place, the responses that appeared to experience such timing issues yet overcame them to some degree were those who offered more direct responses. To wit, those who wrote abbreviated question 5 responses that focused sharply on arguing and analysing the given views, rather offering extensive explanations and quotes, were more likely to still produce a reasonably effective response, than those failing to reach any comparative analysis and evaluation.

In sections A and B most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question. A minority of candidates, often otherwise knowledgeable, wanted to focus on causes and engage in a main factor/other factors approach, even where this did not necessarily address the demands of the conceptual focus. Candidates in the main were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections in terms of the greater depth of knowledge required where section A questions targeted a shorter-period, as compared to the more careful selection generally required for the section B questions covering broader timespan.

Candidates do need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer comparative analysis of the merits of the different views, exploring the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence, both from the within the extracts, and candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence, or a drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider taught topic.

## Question 1

Question 1 was the more popular choice with candidates in Section A of the paper. The vast majority of candidates were able to engage with the conceptual demands of the question sufficiently, and apply appropriate knowledge in order to allow them to access levels three and four. Candidates offered a range of issues related to the given reason, with the impact of the 1920s boom, of the Great Depression and women's work in the Second World War featuring most commonly. With regards to alternatives, political emancipation, the growth of suburbia and technological and cultural changes featured in many responses. A minority did go beyond the date range in examining the role of Betty Friedan, NOW and subsequent legislation, and whilst in the main this did not significantly detract from the overall quality of their work, candidates should be minded to pay careful attention to the precise demands of the question. What distinguished within these tended to be down to two issues. Firstly, the extent to which candidates were able to go beyond descriptions and explanations of particular reasons, in order to explore and assess the impact this actually had on the position of women. The second issue was the depth and precision of supporting knowledge. Those who were able to precisely examine and substantiate arguments as to the extent to which economic or other factors were responsible for changing the position of women were best placed to reach the highest levels, particularly where they explored the relationship between different factors, or weighed their relative importance. Some candidates offered a nuanced analysis in relation to distinctions between different groups of women, although in some cases this did lead to responses straying from the focus of the question.

## Question 2

This was the less popular of the two questions within Section A, and produced a more varied set of responses. The majority of candidates were able to produce responses in levels three or four, demonstrating a sufficient degree of focus, knowledge, judgement and organisation. However, as does seem to be the case more with consequence questions than with any other second order concepts, some candidates do struggle to direct material towards the demands of the question. This meant a minority of candidates produced mixed responses, offering one or more valid points, but with other sections that had some relevant material, but were geared towards ends that were not what the question asked, e.g. analyses of other causes of post-war affluence. Thankfully, most responses did manage to shape material towards the analytical demands of the question. As well as good knowledge on the relationship between the war and post-war affluence, candidates explored a range of other consequences, such as the social aspects such as the impact on civil rights, the impact of the war on the scope of government, the political ramifications of greater involvement in world affairs, including anti-communism, and the changing patterns of US social development. On the given issue, stronger responses offered a depth of detail on wartime production and how this translated into post-war affluence, in terms of industrial output, savings, employment and wages, and related issues, such as the GI Bill. Some also made good use of knowledge of the USA's dominant position in world trade as a result of the war. Where candidates offered a range of different consequences – typically three – the discriminating factors separating responses within the higher levels tended to be the quality of support, the clarity by which they explored how particular points resulted from the Second World War, and the attention given to an evaluation of their relative importance.

### Question 3

This was the more popular of the two questions available to candidates in Section B, and produced a range of responses. The majority were able to reach the higher levels with a predominant focus on the second-order concept of change, and sufficient relevant material. Many students offered impressive knowledge of the ideas influencing the American political landscape in the years 1917-80. Most candidates were generally able to identify how the American political landscape changed to some degree, for example arguing that laissez faire attitudes prevailed at the start of the period under Republican government, followed by the acceptance of greater government involvement with the policies of Roosevelt. Many took the approach to compare presidencies or particular periods within the wider period, and made a real attempt to engage with the extent to which ideas influencing the USA changed. Some saw broad continuity from FDR through to Johnson's 'Great Society', although there was varied discussion over the ideas shaping the post-war period. Many also argued end of the period saw a return to ideas broadly resembling those at the start, with Reagan's election being based on a promise to lessen state intervention. Other issues commonly considered were the changing influence of isolationist and anti-communist ideas, and the rise of counter-culture politics.

Whilst there was no formula for successful essays, stronger responses tended to focus carefully on the issue of change and continuity, exploring the extent of changing influences over the period. The strongest responses were not necessarily the most detailed, but had sufficient factual material to substantiate claims about changing ideas. Such responses were often able to critically explore the extent of the influence in terms of how direct it was, e.g. through considering Republican acceptance of state intervention in the post-war period, or the extent to which influence ebbed and flowed across the period. Factors limiting responses to some degree or other were (i) a failure to address the full chronological range, (ii) discussion of material of limited relevance, e.g. drifting to a consideration of causation, and (iii) limited understanding of political concepts central to the question.

#### Question 4

This was the less popular question in Section B of the exam. The majority of candidates were able to engage with the conceptual demands of the question sufficiently, and apply appropriate knowledge in order to allow them to access the higher levels. What distinguished within these tended to be down to two issues. Firstly, the degree of focus on the second-order concept. Whilst most addressed improvement to some degree, the consistency of focus varied, whilst at the higher levels, there was more likely to be a real sharp focus and consideration of the extent to which this there was improvement. Some drifted to points more suited to a causation question. The second issue was the quality of supporting knowledge. A number of candidates seemed to have a good understanding of relevant developments and aspects of black American life in this period, although in general responses tended to offer more on earlier events, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the impact of Supreme Court decisions and Eisenhower's enforcement of desegregation at Little Rock, various campaigns in the early 1960s, and the work of leaders, predominantly Martin Luther King. However, whilst many were able to reference achievements such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, fewer really explored the extent to which this and other milestones brought tangible improvements. The strongest offered convincing attempts to ascertain the way in which the degree of change could be measured, e.g. through comparative assessments of improvements in economic conditions, or consideration of how many black Americans experienced such changes.

### Question 5

Most candidates were able to access the higher two levels, generally by recognising and explaining the arguments in the two extracts, and building on this with own knowledge. The strongest responses tended to offer a comparative analysis of the views, discussing and evaluating these in the light of contextual knowledge. Most candidates were able to identify the differences between Extract 1 and Extract 2, e.g. how Farmer and Saunders offers an account of the benefits with regards to the economic recovery, tax cuts and the impact of reduced federal intervention, whereas Brogan emphasises the inherent contradictions in Reagan's budgetary approach, and argues that Reagan's policies disproportionately hit poorer Americans.

Where candidates were less successful, this tended to be (i) limited use of contextual knowledge, or offering valid contextual knowledge, but with limited linkage to the discussion of the views, or (ii) a tendency to describe and explain the extracts, rather than attempt to discuss and assess the arguments they offered.

Candidates' knowledge and understanding of issues was varied, with knowledge of specific events and measures such as the OBRA and ERTA budget and tax reforms, problems with the deregulation of Savings and Loans, Iran-Contra featuring in many, and a number making good use on figures on a range of measures of economic success, such as inflation, unemployment figures, GDP growth rates and budget deficit levels. A discriminating factor in success, beyond the depth and precision of such knowledge, was often the deployment and development of the knowledge offered, i.e. the difference between referencing an issue with contextual knowledge linked to the extract, and, at the higher levels, using this to explore the arguments and issues arising from the extracts in order to assess the validity of their arguments. With regards to judgement, it was pleasing to see a substantial number of candidates offer reasoned and considered assessments of the merits of both arguments, regardless of their ultimate decision. Overall, Question 5 produced a strong response from a good number of candidates.



## Paper Summary

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

### Section A/B responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question
- Sufficient consideration given to the issue in the question (e.g. main factor), as well as some other factors
- Explain their judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate their reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic they are writing about in order to justify their judgements
- Focus carefully on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Give consideration to timing, to enable themselves to complete all three question with approximately the same time given over to each one
- An appropriate level, in terms of depth of detail and analysis, as required by the question – e.g. a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions

Common issues which hindered performance where when responses:

- Answers which pay little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. write about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempt to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked – most frequently, this meant treating questions which targeted other second-order concepts as causation questions
- Where a response does not give sufficient consideration to the given issue/proposition in the question (e.g. looking at other causes, consequences, etc, with only limited reference to that given in the question)
- Answers which only gave a partial response, e.g. a very limited span of the date range, or covered the stated cause/consequence, with no real consideration of other issues
- Assertion of change, causation, sometimes with formulaic repetition of the words of the question, with limited explanation or analysis of how exactly this was a change, cause, of the issue within the question.
- Judgement is not reached, or not explained
- A lack of detail

### Section C responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question, as opposed to seemingly pre-prepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification
- Thorough use of the extracts; this need not mean using every point they raise, but a strong focus on these as views on the question
- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits
- Careful use of own knowledge, e.g. clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources, confidently using this to examine the arguments made, and reason through these in

relation to the given question; at times, this meant selection over sheer amount of knowledge

- Careful reading of the extracts, to ensure the meaning of individual statements and evidence within these were used in the context of the broader arguments made by the authors
- Attempts to see beyond the stark differences between sources, e.g. consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or attempts to reconcile their arguments

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Limited use of the extracts, or an imbalance in this, e.g. extensive use of one, with limited consideration of the other
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations
- Using the extracts merely as sources of support
- Arguing one extract is superior to the other on the basis that it offers more factual evidence to back up the claims made, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered
- Heavy use of own knowledge, or even seemingly pre-prepared arguments, without real consideration of these related to the arguments in the sources
- Statements or evidence from the source being used in a manner contrary to that given in the sources, e.g. through misinterpretation of the meaning of the arguments, or lifting of detail without thought to the context of how it was applied within the extract
- A tendency to see the extracts as being polar opposites, again seemingly through expectation of this, without thought to where there may be degrees of difference, or even common ground