



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In History (8HI0/1F)

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 a few 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, although there seemed to be fewer instances of this than has been seen in some previous years. The responses that managed time most effectively planned time accordingly in the first place and offered more direct responses. Where responses indulged in lengthier contextual descriptions of issues peripheral to the question (e.g. straying beyond the given time frame on Question 1), or descriptions of the extracts and the 1980s in general (for Question 5), they were both less likely to produce responses at the highest level, but also experience time pressure issues. Those who produced responses that focused sharply on arguing and analysing the given issue in the question, and on Question 5 the given views, rather offering extensive explanations and quotes, were more likely to produce an effective response.

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 offered substantial knowledge, but did not effectively direct this towards the conceptual demands of the question. In the main though, candidates 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 a broader timespan. One of the central features of responses attaining the highest marks was an ability to consider and evaluate in relation to the specific demands of a particular question. For example, some candidates offered detailed explanation of changes, but the strongest responses tended to offer more consideration of the extent of change.

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 also need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that responses sufficiently cover the given period, and do not spend time detailing issues that are outside the timeframe of that particular question.

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. A small minority did approach the question in a manner which would be more suited to an AO1 (i.e. Section A/B) response, engaging with the issue in the question and showing understanding, but tending to neglect the extracts, or treat them more as sources of information, rather than interpretations.

Question 1

Question 1 was the less popular choice with candidates in Section A of the paper. The vast majority of candidates who opted for this 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.

What distinguished within these tended to be down to their ability to focus and offer sufficient material on the stated factor in the question – government intervention – and/or their coverage of the chronological period. In general, candidates seemed more secure in their knowledge of other aspects of the development of civil rights in these years. Less successful responses tended to offer limited knowledge of federal intervention, or indeed relevant material in general relating to the given time period.

On the given issue, federal government intervention, candidates offered more on measures undertaken by Truman, and to a slightly lesser extent Roosevelt, as may be expected. Candidate knowledge of the civil rights movement and Supreme Court cases were a strong point, and whilst a significant minority did stray beyond 1955, a number did make use of the question's date range to argue that the full effects of cases and protests which took place in the latter part of the period was not felt in the given years. Candidates were on the most part able to offer argument as to which was the most significant factor, and most were able to offer some degree of support for their judgements, with some relating this to nuanced analysis of the extent to which the motives of and constraints upon federal intervention lent itself to being the most significant factor.

Question 2

Question 2 was the more popular of the two within Section A. The vast majority of candidates who did attempt this question did seemingly find it sufficiently accessible enough to achieve levels three or four.

What distinguished within responses tended to be down to the quality of knowledge, and the ability to relate this to the reasons for the changing political environment. Candidates were able to discuss the role played by a wide range of individual presidents across the time period, most notably FDR, as may be expected, but with good coverage of Wilson, Hoover, and to a lesser extent his Republican predecessors (although a number did offer reasoned argument regarding Coolidge's significance as the most prominent proponent of *laissez faire*), and discuss how they impacted upon the political environment in the USA. Successful answers were also able to shape material around other factors that may have had an impact, most typically the Great Depression and both wars.

Stronger responses tended to offer a more balanced coverage, both chronologically and across different factors, and were clearly relate material to both the reasons for change, but also a consideration of the term 'political environment'. Such responses offered a broad approach to this, e.g. in terms of dominant political ideology, relative success of the two main parties, or the extent and priorities of government influence; what distinguished them was going beyond descriptions of the reasons to a clear analysis of how, and how far, they influence the political environment.

Question 3

Question 3 was the less popular of the two within Section B, and produced a wide range of responses. The majority of candidates were able to produce responses in levels three and four, offering both sufficient material concerning developments in popular culture and a focus on the impact these had.

The vast majority of students were able to recall and develop a range of range of issues to explore the impact that popular culture had on the USA , and there was good knowledge of relevant issues across the period. Development in cinema in the earlier part of the period featured commonly, as did radio across the period, the significance of television in the post-war era, and changing tastes in popular music. Most candidates were able to offer a range of material within these and relate these to impact. Some candidates tended to detail and explain developments thoroughly, and to some extent relate these to positive impacts, but were less successful in offering counter arguments to explore the extent to which these were positive. Where candidates were more securely focused on addressing the second-order concept of significance

In general there was a good level of knowledge, although a minority did offer a range of detail, but were less precise in their deployment of this – the more successful tended to be more able to anchor developments, say, in radio or music, at particular points in the period, or their influence across particular sections of US society, and thus were better placed to explore and evaluate the extent to which the impact was positive. A minority did offer extensive material on relevant issues, but which lost focus, i.e. detailed material on the changing attitude of/towards women, which lost sight of the analytical demands of the question.

Question 4

This was the more popular choice of question in Section B, and produced a range of answers, the bulk of which were within levels three and four. Whilst one perennial discriminating factor in the success of responses was the quality and deployment of knowledge, the key factor in determining the quality of response was the degree to which responses were focused on the conceptual demands of the question. Those candidates marshalled the material they had to offer towards an analysis of change and continuity (the extent to which there was improvement) were most successful.

Candidates who responded to this question were able to offer a broad range of knowledge, and responses were typically organised around different issues, e.g. car and air travel. Common issues included the development of new technologies, cinema, radio, television, sports, aspects of consumerism, the impact of the mass production of affordable cars, with relevant contextual consideration given to issues such as the impact of the economic situation, socio-economic groupings, rural/urban divisions and the development of electricity. Most responses offered some analysis of a range of these issues in relation to the demands of the question. Less successful responses tended to explain changes, but with limited exploration of the extent of this, drift to focusing more on the reasons for changes, or offer knowledge of some relevance, but without the necessary precision to clearly explore change across the period of time.

Stronger responses demonstrated a wealth of knowledge, and clearly shaped this towards an exploration of change, with some exploring the relationship between different developments across the period. Whilst there is no ideal formula for such essays, stronger responses tended to ensure the essay is driven by argument over the extent of change, with detail selected to support an exploration of this, rather than the other way round, risking lapsing into description. Candidates should also be minded to address the full question, in terms of both the given date range, and the extent of change – in some otherwise well-argued responses, areas of continuity were at times given limited treatment, making it difficult to address the extent of change.

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. Extract 1's arguments concerning the benefits of lower inflation, reductions in the tax burden and deregulation, whereas Extract 2 argues Reagan's policies led to growing inequality, deficits and contributed to corruption and problems in financial markets.

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 and see them more as sources of information, rather than attempt to discuss and assess the arguments they offered. Thankfully very few responses became side-tracked in an attempted analysis of the provenance of the extracts.

Most candidates were able to use the extracts to discuss the extent to which Reagan improved the lives of Americans, and a range of factual knowledge was included and deployed with varying levels of success to support points and discuss the arguments offered in the extracts. However, a small number of candidates wrote responses which were too more akin to an AO1 essay. Candidates should ensure that they use the extracts in their answer, attempting to engage with these as interpretations, and not simply sources of information. Thankfully, most candidates were able to do so, and many reached a supported judgement which flowed from and clearly related to their previous discussion of the views. 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 questions 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