



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel in GCE History (8HI0/2H)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2H.1: The USA, c1920–55: boom,
bust and recovery

Option 2H.2: The USA, 1955–92: conformity
and challenge

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Examiner Report 8H10 2H

Introduction

It is clear that centres are continuing to concentrate AS entry on students who may not be moving on to A Level. However, following the pandemic, there was evidence this year that more potential A Level candidates were present in the AS entry than in previous sessions. The percentage of candidates scoring at higher levels was broadly similar to previous sessions. Nevertheless, Section A source analysis, with its emphasis on value and weight, is not fully appreciated by weaker candidates.

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range with the AS Level paper 2H, which deals with 2H.1: The USA, c1920–55: boom, bust and recovery and 2H.2: The USA, 1955–92: conformity and challenge. The paper was divided into two sections: Section A was aimed at the in-depth evaluation and analysis of source material and Section B focused on the evaluation of key features in depth, exploring cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance. It was clear that standards in Section B continue to be higher than those in Section A and that many candidates at this level find the concept of making an inference from the material within the source too difficult. Teachers and candidates need to follow the requirements of the Section A mark scheme carefully in order to be clear about what is meant by 'value' and 'weight'. As in previous years, some candidates continue to write too much generalised comment without regard to the source material, or to paraphrase the source without considering its value or (Part b) reliability. The major weakness was often in considering the provenance and comments were too often stereotypical, or too often missing entirely. We remind centres that candidates should assess 'weight' by using contextual knowledge to challenge or confirm what is in the source, or to discuss the values of its audience, rather than just claiming that the source discusses an aspect of the topic, so it must have weight. It is also necessary to analyse the nature, origin and purpose of the source through its provenance in order to assess weight. As before, many responses were largely made up of comments about what is missing from the source, suggesting that this made it less valuable, or gave it less weight. Credit is given to comments about what is not in the source only if it is possible to show that this material is missing for a reason, for example because the source is a deliberate piece of propaganda, or, for example, the author is not in a position to comment about key issues and that for this reason the source is unrepresentative. The trend to score higher in the (a) question than the (b) question remained true this year, perhaps because 'weight' is still not fully understood. The detailed knowledge base required to add contextual material was often good, but candidates need to understand that contextual knowledge must be linked to what is in the source and used to confirm or challenge inferences from the source itself, as well as to assess value or weight in the ways described above. Too many candidates are ignoring the substance of the source material and writing detailed material about the theme in general. A reminder: AO1 is not assessed in Section A. There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer both questions. The ability range was very diverse, but the design of the paper allowed all abilities to be catered for. Essay writing in Section B continues to improve, but it was noticeable this year that weaker candidates did not read the question carefully enough and simply rehearsed what they had learnt. Lack of knowledge was clear on individual questions and we strongly advise teachers and candidates to pay careful attention to the wording of the specification, as the full range of topics is open for assessment. Candidates continue to identify key themes in an introduction and to make a judgement in a conclusion. The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

8H10_2H.1_Q01a

Strong responses had a clear focus on the value of the source in terms of the responses to economic problems faced by the USA in 1929. At the highest level, candidates selected key points from the source and made valid inferences about them, supporting each one with their own knowledge of the historical context, for example, that business organisations had a great role to play in repairing economic damage. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that Hoover may be reporting on the conferences as an opportunity to cement the principle of laissez faire government, as the key responses to federal government action reported are shown to be from business. Weaker responses simply wrote generally about the idea that this was by the President of the time.

8H10_2H.1_Q01b

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not understand the need to make inferences from the source, for example that It implies that Communist influence within the WPA was over-stated, as recipients of relief had to join the Workers Alliance in order to retain their jobs, probably irrespective of their political beliefs. Many candidates failed to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about the WPA. Weaker candidates gave weight to the source only because the writer was a member of HUAC. Others missed out any comment about the provenance. However, stronger candidates linked the direction the source was taking with Dies as Chairman of HUAC, being in a good position to seek out 'un-American' disloyalty within the WPA.

Examiner Tip

Try to integrate contextual knowledge with a supported inference. In this way a valid inference is explained by confirming matters of detail in the source or expanding them. This will enable you to reach Level 3 in both bullet points 1 and 2 of the mark scheme.

8H10_2H.2_Q02a

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not understand the need to make inferences from the source, for example It suggests that the methods of the movement included showing up their enemies by contrasting peaceful protest with violence. Many candidates failed to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about the work of Martin Luther King, often out of the context of the mid-1950s. Weaker candidates gave value to the source only because it was a speech by King. Others missed out any comment about the provenance. However, stronger candidates noted that one of the aims was to highlight a new departure in methods: the purpose of the speech was to rally a large number of Southern black Americans to a new mass protest against segregation and humiliation. They also supported their responses with stronger contextual material, e.g. that awareness of the continuing oppression and violence by the Ku Klux Klan, as well as miscarriages of justice that had recently been highlighted through the wide publicity given throughout the country to the case of Emmett Till.

Examiner Tip

Turn supported inferences into reasoned inferences by using contextual knowledge to confirm or reject the points inferred in the source.

8H10_2H.2_Q02b

Strong responses had a clear focus on the weight of the source in relation to an enquiry into the influence of MTV on Americans in the years 1981-92. At the highest level, candidates selected key points from the source and made valid inferences about them, supporting each one with their own knowledge of the historical context, for example, it suggests that MTV's music output was a means to reach a previously ambivalent generation and engage them in politics. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that the presentation is a news item from one cable network about another, so it may be promotional and exaggerated in its estimation of the importance of the influence of new, independent broadcasting channels on Americans. Weaker responses simply wrote generally about a few bands and their influence on the pop scene in general.

8H10_2H.1_Q03

Weaker responses indicated two main problems in this question. First, there was often a tendency to write about the Red Scare as the (almost) sole feature of cultural change. Secondly, some candidates thought that Jazz never existed outside Harlem, so there was insufficient balance. However, this question was mostly well answered. The most successful candidates understood the need to identify Jazz as at the forefront of the 1920s revolution in female culture. Bessie Smith became a household name for a generation of newly-independent women, many of them flapper girls. Indeed, this proved to be a popular mainstream question and there were some excellent responses balancing Jazz at the forefront of cultural change with radio, cinema, sport and literature, often making links between Jazz and these other media.

Examiner Tip

Be sure that you are able to choose suitable analysis both for and against the proposition when making a judgement about the relative success of the individual named in the question. It is not possible to make this judgement when set against other stated criteria of dubious validity. Try to offer detailed evidence for each issue, too. Remember that this is a depth study.

8H10_2H.1_Q04

There were a number of very well supported responses and candidates had an excellent knowledge of the New Deal benefitting black Americans more than other ethnic minorities. For example, many candidates noted that there was positive discrimination for black Americans in the NYA (National Youth Administration), with black officials appointed in areas where black Americans dominated. Most were able to demonstrate that there was considerable discrimination against black Americans, especially with the introduction of segregated camps in 1935. This kind of balance was often repeated for other ethnic minorities, noting that Native Americans benefited more in that they were allowed to have their own police and legal systems, control land sales and manage tribal resources within reservations under the Indian Reorganisation Act (1934), but that they remained on the margins of US society. Not many candidates were aware that Hispanics benefited more in some regions. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) hired

unemployed Mexican Americans on relief jobs throughout the Southwest, both rural and urban, but almost all concentrated on deportations to support their argument that black Americans fared better.

Examiner Tip

In this type of question, it is very important to note both strengths and weaknesses in evidence for each of black Americans, Native Americans and other ethnic minorities.

8H10_2H.1_Q05

A number of responses to this question were very generalised and usually wrote vaguely about the motivations of teenagers based on their own experience. There did need to be some specific evidence, which was often lacking. There were a very few strong responses that made detailed points about young people dressing and acting differently from their parents, encouraged by new markets in clothing and entertainment that developed as a result of growing affluence in middle America. Few candidates were able to mount a convincing counter argument, e.g. that most young people remained as conservative as their parents, with most young women aspiring to marriage, home and a family.

Examiner Tip

Balanced arguments should try to find about three points on each side, each backed by detailed support. In making a judgement, try to find a clear reason why one side is more convincing, perhaps by illustrating the paramount importance of one point, either in support or against the target focus of the question.

8H10_2H.2_Q06

Many candidates fell into the trap of rehearsing what they had revised rather than paying close attention to the target focus, which was that President Kennedy **achieved** the objectives outlined in his New Frontier programme. However, many candidates were able to analyse the challenges presented by space exploration, or the diverse effects of rural poverty on the Rust Belt. Most candidates who did read the question carefully provided some very detailed knowledge about (e.g.) the fact that Kennedy's New Frontier objectives included improved civil rights for black Americans, which he fulfilled by successfully challenging Southern state obstructionism in higher education and interstate transportation. Others noted that federal obstructionism was a powerful feature hindering Kennedy's success.

Examiner Tip

A clear sense of organisation often sets up the target focus first, before producing the counter argument, rather than sandwiching the latter in the middle of the response.

8H10_2H.2_Q07

This was a popular question and there were some very thoughtful attempts to demonstrate that women in the USA improved their personal freedom in the years 1963–80. Stronger candidates went beyond 1968 (many did not), often using Betty Friedan as the basis for consideration. Most were able

to balance the argument by indicating that legislative and judicial changes did not necessarily bring improvements in reality and that Phyllis Schlafly led a conservative campaign against opportunities sought by NOW in the 1960s, restricting further personal freedoms.

Examiner Tip

Allow enough time and space in the essay to write a substantial and well-considered conclusion that judges the extent to which the argument suggested by the question is confirmed or challenged. The basis of the judgement is that one aspect is more important, influential or significant, or, as in this case, the extent of change. The best candidates will be able to compare the relative importance / significance / degree of similarity / extent of change (e.g.) of all the key features they have outlined.

8H10_2H.2_Q08

There were very few responses to this mainstream question, perhaps demonstrating that centres struggled to complete the Specification. The few responses encountered were almost always very strong, considering Reaganomics - supply-side economics - encouraging the reduction of obstacles, such as taxes, to allow consumers to spend and stimulate the economy - and balancing such features against the failure to balance the budget in the context of the Cold War.

Examiner Tip

Take a highlighter pen to the question as printed and mark out key words and phrases that show the concept, the focus and the chronology to be considered.

Paper Summary

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

Section A

Value of Source Question (Qa)

- Be prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Explore beyond stereotypical reactions to particular types of provenance. Not all old people are blighted by poor memories; look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid discussions about what is missing from the source when assessing its value to the enquiry unless there is a clear reason for the author missing such points

Weight of Source Question (Qb)

In addition to the advice on Qa:

- Be prepared to assess the strength of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- In coming to a judgement about the provenance take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source.

Section B Essay questions

- You must provide factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Plan your answer effectively before you begin
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically.

