



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

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. Clearly, however, the number of potential A Level candidates in the AS entry continues to grow. 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 A 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. There is a strong tendency by many candidates to select quotes and just add more material from their own knowledge, often not closely linked to the quote. 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 repeated the information given, 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.

8HIO_2H.1_Q01a

Strong responses had a clear focus on the value of the source in terms of Roosevelt's introduction of the New Deal in 1933. 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, Roosevelt's impetuosity led him to impose sweeping solutions without regard to the consequences, which led to imperfections in the workings of the CCC. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that is reporting on the introduction of the New Deal with personal insights still fresh in the mind, but with enough hindsight to judge how difficulties had occurred. Weaker responses simply wrote generally about the idea that this was by the President's adviser.

8HIO_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 HUAC used moral blackmail. Many candidates failed to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about the Red Scare. Weaker candidates gave weight to the source only because the writer was a member of the Hollywood Ten. Others missed out any comment about the provenance. However, stronger candidates noted that Maltz's evidence refers to two other members of the Hollywood Ten; the treatment of seven others is not documented. Quite a few responses noted that Maltz's personal experiences at the hands of HUAC may have led him to be over-zealous in seeking out inconsistencies in the way colleagues were treated. In general, contextual knowledge was weak, perhaps reflecting that this topic is towards the end of the chronology in the specification.

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.

8HIO_2H.2_Q02a

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not understand the need to make inferences from the source, for example it suggests that Carter faced problems beyond his control as President, obstacles from other oil-producing countries. Many candidates failed to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about the work of President Carter. Weaker candidates gave value to the source only because it was a response by the President and his opponent, missing the impartiality suggested by the delivery of the same question to both presidential candidates by the debate moderator. Others missed out any comment at all about the provenance. However, stronger candidates noted great value in the fact that the debate is taking place at a time when Carter's problems and the difficulties he faced are especially open to scrutiny, during an election campaign. They also supported their responses with stronger contextual material, e.g. that when Carter took office in 1977, he faced huge difficulties: the USA was suffering from crises in energy, welfare, healthcare and inner-city deprivation, as well as a lack of trust in presidents.

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 aims and methods of student protest in the USA in the 1960s. 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 that moderate aims were in retreat, to be replaced by more radical objectives. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that as a professor of sociology in 1987, Gitlin's purpose in writing the book would have been to provide an academic's scholarly insight into the aims and methods of student protesters. A surprisingly high number of weaker responses simply paraphrased the whole source to indicated students' methods.

8H10_2H.1_Q03

Weaker responses indicated two main problems in this question. First, there was often a tendency to write almost solely about the counter features, with no clear knowledge of the role of federal government. Secondly, some candidates imported their sense of what is wrong with current UK government policies to indicate that all US government intervention (or lack of it) was unhelpful to growth in the 1920s! The most successful candidates understood the need to identify specific government policies, e.g. revenue acts or the tariff. This proved to be a popular mainstream question and there were some excellent responses balancing government controls, or the lack of them, with Ford's revolution, advertising, easy credit and the legacy of the First World War, often making links between these features.

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 feature 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 few very well supported responses where candidates had an excellent knowledge of the New Deal and War benefitting black Americans more than other ethnic minorities, or the other way round. 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. These strong candidates also noted breakthroughs or

barriers to progress during the War. Weaker candidates concentrated almost solely on Black Americans during wartime and forgot that the period named in the question stretched from 1933 to the end of the War.

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 in both wartime and in the previous decade.

8H10_2H.1_Q05

A number of responses to this question were very generalised and usually wrote vaguely about the number of people gathered around a TV set. There did need to be some specific evidence, which was often lacking. There were a very few strong responses that made detailed points about television tending to reinforce stereotypes rather than change popular culture, that there was an abundance of programming, such as sitcoms, that reinforced existing cultural attitudes (with named examples). Few candidates were able to mount a convincing counter argument (the pro argument to the question), e.g. that television made much difference. However, the fact that genres other than television were significant were well supported by a very few strong candidates, e.g. film, music and literature. Most candidates mentioned the consumer society.

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 assuming that 'beatniks' were the hippies of the 1960s, so their supporting evidence was beyond the chronological reach of the question. Very few candidates seemed to appreciate who the 'beatniks' were, many claiming that they were closely related to Elvis Presley. There were also organisational weaknesses, with lists of cultural changes rehearsed, with 'beatniks occurring at random.

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 Black Power's poor organisation and leadership, its rejection of white membership of its organisations and its failure to develop effective plans for change were reasons for weaknesses in the radical wing of the movement. Most were able to balance the argument by indicating that a

weakness was caused by the failure of King's campaigns in the north, especially in Chicago in 1966, which caused damage to the campaign for an end to de facto segregation. The biggest weakness was to focus very large parts of the response on King's assassination, which was outside the chronological remit of the question.

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 fairly weak because they knew about the Religious Right's influence but forgot that counter points might include many other features that caused political division, e.g. most obviously, Reaganomics.

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.

