

Paper 3, Option 39.1: Civil rights and race relations in the USA, 1850–2009

Overview

This option comprises two parts: the *Aspects in breadth* focus on long-term changes and contextualise the *Aspects in depth*, which focus in detail on key episodes.

Together, the breadth and depth topics explore developments that have shaped contemporary America and remain a fundamental issue in US society: the changing pattern of race relations between black and white Americans, both in terms of civil rights and also broader social and cultural changes over a period that began with millions of black Americans in slavery and ended with Barack Obama as President.

Aspects in breadth: changing perceptions of race relations, 1850–2009	
Themes	Content
1 The changing geography of civil rights issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing geographical distribution of black Americans, 1850–2009 (key developments: freedom in 1865, the slow drift north, the slump in cotton prices in the 1920s, migration north and west 1941–45, the migration back to the old south in the late twentieth century). The changing pattern of settlement and segregation 1850–2009 (key developments: mass migration into Harlem from 1905; riots in Chicago 1919, Tulsa 1921, Watts 1966 and Newark 1967; developments in <i>de-facto</i> segregation in Levitt estates, white exodus to the suburbs post-1945 in the north; increasing de-segregation in the old south post-1970).
2 Changing portrayal of civil rights issues in fiction and film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of literature in shaping and reflecting changing perceptions of race relations, 1850–2009 (key developments: the publication of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> 1852; <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> 1885, <i>Gone with the Wind</i> 1934, <i>To Kill a Mocking Bird</i> 1960, <i>Beloved</i> 1987, <i>The Help</i> 2009). The role of portrayals in film and television in influencing and reflecting changing perceptions of race, 1850–2009 (key developments: images of black Americans in paintings, photographs and lithographs 1850–80, <i>Birth of a Nation</i> 1915, <i>In the Heat of the Night</i> 1967, <i>Roots</i> 1977, <i>Mississippi Burning</i> 1988, <i>Malcolm X</i> 1992, <i>The Wire</i> 2002–08).

Aspects in depth: emancipation and moves towards greater equality	
Key topics	Content
1 'Free at last', 1865–77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for, and importance of, the Thirteenth Amendment 1865: economic position of ex-slaves and the development of sharecropping; social tensions; the need for a political settlement; President Andrew Johnson's response. Radical Reconstruction, 1867–77: the impact of military rule in the south; the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments; the Civil Rights Act 1875; significance of the presence of black representatives in federal and state legislatures. The backlash: the Ku Klux Klan and White League, including the incidence of lynching; the restoration of Democrat control in the south and the end of Reconstruction 1877.
2 The triumph of 'Jim Crow', 1883–c1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of the Civil Rights Cases 1883 in the Supreme Court. The spread of Jim Crow Laws: changes to rail travel in Florida 1887; extension of segregation to other social areas and other states. Excluding black voters: discrimination in Mississippi from 1890; Louisiana's Grandfather clause 1898; impact on voter numbers in the south in the 1890s. The impact of Plessy v. Ferguson 1896; Mississippi v. Wilkinson 1898; Cumming v. Board of Education 1899.
3 The New Deal and race relations, 1933–41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The influence of southern whites in the Democrat Party. The failure to address black grievances: continuation of Jim Crow Laws, exclusion of black voters and the defeat of federal attempts at anti-lynching legislation. Impact of the New Deal: effects of the AAA on black farmers; segregation in the CCC and differential wages in the NRA; benefits of welfare to black workers and their families; the work of Eleanor Roosevelt; impact on the voting patterns.
4 'I have a dream', 1954–68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil rights activities, 1954–63: the role of Earl Warren and the Supreme Court; the impact of victory in Montgomery; the work and impact of Martin Luther King, SCLC, SNCC and CORE, 1957–63. The importance of the Civil Rights Acts 1964 and 1968, the Voting Rights Act 1965 and the role of Lyndon Johnson. Increasing divisions: the expulsion of whites from SNCC and CORE; the growth of the Black Panthers; the role of Malcolm X; King's stance on the Vietnam War, assassination and its immediate effects.
5 Obama's campaign for the presidency, 2004–09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of the political career of Barack Obama to 2006, including his election as senator for Illinois in 2004. The reasons for his success in gaining the Democratic nomination for the presidency: personality and rhetorical abilities; the opposition; new election strategies; policies. The reasons for victory in November 2008; the significance of his victory and the response to it of black Americans.