

# A-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 1G Challenge and transformation: Britain, c1851–1964  
Report on the Examination

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**Question 01**

Most students found the extracts and the question accessible. A small number of students, however, were unsure about what was meant by the 'interwar' years. They often provided evidence that was during the First or Second World War for example, which was not relevant to the question. Students are strongly encouraged to avoid writing unnecessary introductions or conclusions in their answers. There is no requirement to compare extracts to assess which is the more convincing interpretation. Equally, it is not helpful to have lots of contextual scene-setting before the extract is interrogated in their answers. The students' time is limited, so they would be best advised to go straight to the main, and then subsidiary, arguments of the extracts. 'Own knowledge' should be used selectively to corroborate or to challenge the interpretations made in the extract in relation to the question set. Some answers attempted the evaluation of extracts but were convinced by everything or failed to link their evaluation to the question posed. Best answers offered balance on each of the extracts. Students are also strongly encouraged to link all of their material to the question set. A handful of answers drifted into an evaluation of the provenance or the 'value' of the extracts which is not a requirement of this component. Some weak responses also slipped into an evaluation of the extracts by omission. Long lists of what the extract fails to mention should be discouraged as they drift away from the content of the extract themselves. Certainly, there are occasions when an extract's emphasis on a particular issue might detract from how convincing an argument is, but few students addressed this well. Some students also spend a lot of time trying to 'prove' statements to be true or not, which is not quite the purpose of the question. The focus of a student's answer should be upon whether the arguments are convincing or not. It was pleasing to see that nearly all of the students had planned their time well and covered all of the extracts in their answer.

Most students were able to identify the main argument in A that suggested Baldwin's qualities were essential to understanding the interwar dominance of the Conservative Party. Good answers offered some specific support in their evaluation of the claims made. For example, some students supported his management of crises with evidence such as his handling of the Abdication Crisis or the General Strike of 1926. Some students also debated how 'moderate' Baldwin was, using examples of his social reforms, his involvement in the National Government or his record on trade union legislation. Good responses were able to balance their evaluation of the extract's arguments with examples of his misjudgement, for example protectionism in the 1923 election. Stronger responses considered what was convincing and then not convincing in the extract and reached an overall judgment before moving on. The weaker responses did not have much 'own knowledge' to evaluate Baldwin's qualities or record. Consequently, those answers typically described the extract and then asserted the student's evaluation.

Some students found extract B a little more challenging, especially the focus upon the shifting class allegiances in the interwar period. Consequently, markers were looking for some understanding of the fact that many Liberals switched to the Conservative Party to resist the rise of socialism and the Labour Party. Those more radical elements of the Liberal Party often migrated to Labour which was not yet a significant challenge to the Conservative Party. Many responses did identify the argument in relation to the decline of the Liberal Party, but they did not explain how or why this was beneficial to the Conservative Party and its dominance in the interwar years. Weaker responses identified the arguments largely through quotation from extract but then struggled to provide relevant context. Some answers got tied up in 'proving' whether Labour had become redundant or whether the National Government itself was a 'triumph' and lost sight of the question. Stronger answers used a range of specific evidence to support or challenge the claims in relation to the question, such as election results, membership numbers, fears over Labour or the number of

Conservatives in the National Government. Again, these answers offered an overall judgment on how convincing the extract was before moving on.

Most students were able to identify the main argument in C that focused upon the weaknesses of the Labour Party. Many answers were able to offer some contextual understanding of the Zinoviev Letter and the alleged links to communism. Many were able to debate the failings of the Labour Party in dealing with the immediate impact of the Great Depression. Good answers went beyond the extract with other specific examples of Labour's misjudgement and failings such as Labour's recognition of the Soviet Union, MacDonald's handling of the 1924 J. R. Campbell case and MacDonald's political ambition. Good responses were also able to provide a defence of Labour and MacDonald and thus challenged the idea that this was key in understanding the Conservative dominance. Some of the weaker answers did not have much contextual knowledge and some evaluated the record of Labour in isolation to the question.

### **Question 02**

This was a popular question from Section B and many students responded well to it. The strongest responses were able to offer some specific examples of technology, eg trains, steam ships, steam plough etc, and explained how these contributed to the economic growth of the period. Some weaker responses were far too general and could offer little more than a vague reference to 'machines'. Such answers often skirted the issue and then rushed into alternative factors. On the other hand, there were some responses that went into much depth about the technology in the period and whilst this was impressive, this was not expected in a breadth answer either. Good answers balanced the discussion about technology against factors such as fair trade and government policy, the Empire, lack of foreign competition, high farming etc with some overall judgment. Many weaker responses, however, drifted outside of the period in the question; students either offered very early examples of technology, but failed to link it to the period in the question, or they wanted to explore why the economy declined in the period after 1873 to give a prepared response. Other weaker answers simply described economic growth throughout the period. Given the nature of the question, good responses were able to offer some comparison of the factors and evaluate which played a greater role in the economic growth with some justification.

### **Question 03**

There were fewer responses to this than the other questions in Section B. It was felt that to fully address the demands of the question, there really needed to be a thorough consideration given to the actions and the role played by trade unions. A broad interpretation of the 'interests of the working class' was adopted. Better responses spoke about strike victories, increasing membership and the establishment of the LRC, for example, and how this promoted the interests of the working classes. This was balanced against setbacks such as Taff Vale and the Osbourne judgment as well as the militancy. Weaker responses really did not have much knowledge or understanding of the trade union movement and its history throughout the period. Some responses resorted to describing the actions of political parties, such as the Liberals, and asserted that the Trade Unions brought this about without really evidencing it. Some students again referred to evidence outside the time frame of the question and wrote about Gladstone and Disraeli's trade union legislation of the 1870s. Good answers offered a range of factual support, analysis and judgement.

### **Question 04**

Many students responded well to this question and it produced some of the best answers from Section B. A broad definition of 'leader' was adopted and students were credited for discussing

Prime Ministers, party leaders as well as leading members of various cabinets. Better answers considered a range of Labour and Conservative leaders throughout the entire period and used carefully selected specific evidence to assess them. Given the range of leaders and the nature of the paper, there was no expectation for long detailed discussions of each of them. Most answers offered some consideration of Attlee and Churchill, although some weaker responses tailed off after this and were not able to offer much thereafter. It is important that students address the full scope of the period in the question. Unfortunately, the spelling of 'Attlee' still appears to be a challenge for some students. Some responses were also quite muddled in their chronology and attributed some policies and achievements to the wrong Prime Ministers, for example. Some answers did not link well to the question and ended up assessing the parties rather than their leaders. There were some very good answers that considered a range of themes, such as economic management, management of their party, election campaigns, social policies and foreign affairs, and made comparisons between the leaders. Such answers gave a long view about why the strength and effectiveness of the Labour leaders seemed to decline in the 1950s compared to the Conservative leaders. Good answers offered a more nuanced answer to the question with analysis and sustained judgment.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.