

# A-level **History**

2G The Birth of the USA, 1760-1801  
Report on the Examination

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## General

The majority of students were able to access all questions on the paper, and were able to use sufficient contextual knowledge and understanding to evaluate the sources, with a varying degree of depth of analysis. The majority of students found source B the most accessible to evaluate for content, purpose, tone and argument with greater accuracy and depth. Students showed contextual understanding for all three essay questions, however the narrower question 3 caused some students to lose focus on the question. In answering question 2 some students resorted to a narrative of whole topic in an attempt to answer the question. Largely, question 4 posed fewer problems for students.

## Question 1

Largely all students were able to understand the provenance of source A and select relevant parts to show the purpose of the Townshend Act 'to defend the colonies' and apply relevant contextual knowledge and understanding to support their answer. However, less able students had a tendency to use stock comments for provenance, e.g. 'it is bias' or 'it is limited because it does not show the reaction' to the Acts, which added little value to their evaluation. Higher ability students used precise contextual knowledge and understanding to question the source beyond 'raising revenue for the protection of the colonies' to show conceptual awareness from the Declaratory Act of Britain manifesting its sovereignty over the colonies. The majority of students organised their answers to enable them to evaluate for content, provenance, tone and argument, however less able students need to ensure that they support their evaluation by selecting relevant parts from the sources, and not just re-write the source in their own words.

Source B was handled better than source A and most students were able to deploy relevant contextual knowledge of the colonial reaction and evaluate the provenance and its limitations with greater depth and accuracy than for sources A and C. Higher ability students were able to use relevant conceptual and contextual understanding to evaluate the sources. More able students were able to deploy contextual knowledge to show an understanding of the reaction by the colonists. Whereas, lower ability students showed contextual knowledge but failed to use adequate support from B, resulting in a narrative of contextual events and an undeveloped evaluation of the source. It would be useful to remind students they need to evaluate for value, and student answers that focused on usefulness, reliability etc. were credited accordingly, thereby affecting their overall level and mark.

Some students found source C the most difficult source. Many discounted the source for its provenance – 'three years after the Townshend Act', or 'it is by one person Lille therefore it is not valuable'. Students should be reminded to avoid stock phrases and that credit is not given for simply reproducing attributions in the hope that this will pick up marks for dealing with provenance. Students should be reminded to evaluate all three sources consistently and use 'evidence' from the sources to support their source evaluation to validate its value. For instance some students were able to identify the hypocrisy in source C but failed to support from the source or develop their answer, which affected the level and mark awarded. Students should aim to give as much effort to source C as to the other sources to ensure a consistent answer overall. Students would do well to follow the structures suggested in the AQA online model answers and mark schemes, and this would avoid the problems of provenance being omitted.

**Question 2**

There were evident problems for some students understanding the ‘rights of Englishmen’ with some students using similar contextual knowledge to both agree and disagree with the statement. Very few students showed contextual knowledge of the Declaration of Independence itself to support their answer. Students should be reminded to develop an analytical style not a narrative style, as low to mid ability students had a tendency to write an in depth narrative of the full range of actions by the British and colonial grievances from 1760 to answer the question. Although contextual breadth was relevant, writing in depth on each of the problems detracted from the focus of the question and made the answer less convincing, affecting the level and mark awarded.

Higher ability students showed good conceptual understanding and were able to hone in their arguments to show wider contextual knowledge without generalisation as a basis of their argument for independence. Less able students tried to suggest that independence was integral to the grievances from 1760 and failed to show conceptual awareness of when independence became prevalent in the colonies. In addition, some students used mercantilism as a factor for independence, but failed to show sufficient conceptual awareness and depth of analysis to make a convincing argument.

**Question 3**

This posed many problems of producing evidence for a number of students (across all abilities), as many failed to focus on ‘in 1776’. There were problems with chronology where students brought in events which took place before or after 1776, thus supporting large parts of their answer with irrelevant evidence and thereby reducing the scope and balance of their answers. Lower ability students should be reminded that producing similar information as a counter argument, or lengthy conclusions which simply repeat arguments and content which have already been covered in their answer will not gain extra credit. Higher ability students were able to effectively select and deploy good contextual knowledge to offer a range of factors beyond military strengths and weaknesses showing good conceptual awareness of the period. In preparation for the exams it would be useful if students were reminded that chronological awareness is crucial, especially when answering a tight focal question such as this.

**Question 4**

For the most part, this question was understood and communicated with greater accuracy than questions 2 and 3. Most students showed effective organisation and communication skills to produce a balanced answer with a range of factors. For some students there was a tendency to misread the question and concentrate on ‘formation of political parties’ which, although for many showed valid contextual awareness for the emergence of political parties, failed to answer the whole question and the ‘role of the federal government’ was not addressed.

Some answers unfortunately got into problems by writing in depth on the Articles of Confederation and the ratification of the Constitution, which, although relevant as a reference for wider contextual awareness, detracted from the focus of the question and affected the range and scope of the answer overall and level awarded. It would be useful to remind students to read the whole question and ensure that all aspects of the question are addressed in their answers, with clear starting points and links to the question sustained throughout their answer.

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

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