
A-LEVEL

HISTORY

7042/2G: The Birth of the USA, 1760-1801

Report on the Examination

7042
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General Comments

Most of the students were able to access all of the questions on the paper and use enough contextual knowledge and understanding to evaluate the sources, with a varying degree of depth of analysis.

Question 01

Largely, most students were able to understand Source A and select relevant parts of the content of the source and use valid contextual knowledge and understanding of Washington's presidency to evaluate the content, tone and purpose of the source to support their answer to the question. However, less able students tended to use stock comments on provenance, such as 'it is by Washington, so it is valuable', 'it is biased' or 'it is limited because it is not about Adams', which added little to their evaluation. Higher ability students used precise contextual knowledge and understanding to question the source beyond a summary of Washington's presidency to show conceptual awareness of the purpose of the source following the failure of the Articles of Confederation and selected contextual understanding to evaluate the content/argument and tone of the source to assess its value. In contrast, less able students were inclined to dismiss the source due to its date, surmising it was of limited or no value. More effective answers were well organised with supported evaluation but less effective answers were often assertive rather than evaluative.

Source B was handled better than source A and most students were able to deploy relevant contextual knowledge to support their evaluation of the source. Many students were able to evaluate the provenance and limitations with greater depth and accuracy than for sources A and C. Higher ability students were able to use relevant conceptual and contextual understanding of the Alien and Sedition Acts and the Constitution to evaluate the implementation of the Constitution by Adams in order to assess the value and limitation of the source for the question. Whereas lower ability students showed better contextual support and understanding of source B (in comparison with A and C), they lacked precise selection and appropriate development.

The majority of students showed a good understanding of source C lower ability students were able to use source C for both Presidents, which limited the number of stock comments that were shown to A and B, such as 'the sources are limited as they don't show Adams or Washington'. Many also found the provenance as 'a private letter' more accessible and were able to make a valid comment on value of the attribution. More able students could deploy contextual understanding of the personalities in order to make substantiated judgements on value based on the provenance. Many students were able to show conceptual and contextual understanding to evaluate the content, tone, purpose and argument of the source for the question in relation to the timing of the source and the election. Only a minority of students were able to identify the 'deadly weapons' as an attack on Adams' character; many interpreted this as an attack on his implementation of the Constitution. Students should be reminded to avoid stock phrases and that credit is not given for simply regurgitating attributions in the hope that this will pick up marks for provenance. Also, students should be reminded when evaluating tone, that they support their evaluation with appropriate material from the sources. Students should also aim to address all sources equally.

Question 02

This question was the most popular essay question. However, there were problems for some students in understanding the focus on ‘severely weakened the authority’ with many students examining the relationship rather than ‘authority’ of the British in the colonies. Many students were able to use valid contextual knowledge to both agree and disagree with the statement. However, a minority of students lacked conceptual awareness and did not demonstrate understanding of the change in authority following the French Indian war, instead generalising that the British had never had authority in the colonies. Students should be reminded to develop an analytical style not a narrative style, as low to mid ability students tended to write a detailed 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. Higher ability students showed good conceptual awareness and were able to define their arguments to show wider contextual knowledge to analyse the extent to which authority was affected during this period. Whereas, less able students tried to suggest that Britain either never had authority, or they generalised and surmised that the actions between 1763 and 1765 showed that the colonies wanted independence, thus failing to show awareness of when independence became prevalent in the colonies.

Question 03

This was the least popular question. Many answers lacked sufficient contextual knowledge and understanding of the actions of Jefferson and others to show how they developed the ideology for revolution. Many answers were imbalanced with a cursory narrative of actions by Jefferson, against, for example, a more detailed analysis of Paine. Furthermore, there were some problems with chronological and conceptual awareness, whereby many lower ability students used information on events long before 1776 (from as early as 1760s), thus supporting large parts of their answer with poorly selected evidence creating tenuous arguments which reduced the scope and balance of their answers. Some higher ability students were able to use good contextual knowledge to demonstrate conceptual depth on the actions of key individuals and precisely show how this impacted on a development of ideology for revolution. 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 Jefferson and Paine showing good awareness of the period. In a depth study, it is assumed that all key individuals will be closely studied.

Question 04

For the most part, this question was answered more effectively than questions two and three. It was the second most popular essay question, and many answers showed effective organisation and communication skills to produce a balanced argument for the full period in the question. Many students were able to clearly show a range of problems for the period and demonstrate how far the problems were resolved by the early republic. However, in less effective answers, there was a propensity to focus on 1787 onwards with an examination of the Constitution, which limited the range and scope of the answer. Less successful answers lacked some range with a narrow focus on the Articles of Confederation or the Constitution. Students need to be reminded to read the question carefully and plan their answer to ensure that they cover the full focus of the question. It

is also important that comments on sensitive issues, such as slavery or the role of women, demonstrate awareness of the context and paradigm of the period.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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