AQA

AS
HISTORY

7041/2G The Birth of the USA, 1760-1801
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Many students seemed to lack concise knowledge and understanding, and this meant that answers were less well developed and lacked adequate support and evidence to substantiate their answers. Most of the students did structure their source answers to evaluate both sources for value commenting on provenance, tone, content and argument although the depth and breadth of evaluation did vary and at the lower end there was a tendency to produce stock phrases and/or a summary of the content of the source to answer the question. Overall, question 1 was more successfully answered than either of the essay questions.

Q1

Most students were able to show an understanding of both sources and make relevant comments on the value of both. Most students were able to deploy contextual awareness to support the evaluation of the content and argument of both sources. For Source A, most students showed awareness of who Otis was and his relevance for spreading views on the power of British parliament and showing a basis for colonial opposition. However, lower end students were less able to select parts of the source to evaluate in relation to the power of the British government, with many using similar contextual knowledge to support both value and limitations for example, arguing that parliament was powerful because it passed the Sugar Act, but parliament did not have power because the colonists reacted to the Act. Also, there was a tendency for lower end students to write contextual knowledge on the variety of Acts as a narrative of the topic and/or write a summary of the source content but did not directly use detail from the source or directly assess the value of the source for the question. More successful answers demonstrated an ability to select and deploy appropriate conceptual and contextual understanding to support a thorough evaluation of the content, argument, tone and provenance of A for the question.

Source B's attribution and content was less well understood by lower end students and there was a tendency to deploy knowledge of the topic on the Stamp Act, with little direct comments on the source or the question. Whereas, more successful answers were able to evaluate and deploy good conceptual awareness and contextual knowledge in relation to the provenance, tone, argument and context to reach a substantiated judgement on value of B for the power of the British government over the colonies. Students overall showed understanding of the period, in relation to the Acts that were passed in the years 1763-1765, however less successful answers to demonstrate conceptual awareness of the reasons for the change in attitude of the British government over the colonies and how this resulted in a change in the power the British had over the colonies. Lower end students were less able to select parts of the source to evaluate in relation to the question of divisions over the power of parliament, and there was a greater tendency in B to write about contextual knowledge on the variety of Acts as a narrative of the topic and/or a summary of rewriting the content of B with no support or evaluation. Lastly, students need to be reminded to select directly from the source and support their evaluation with precise detail to validate its value.

Q2

This question was the more popular of the two essay questions with two thirds of students answering this question. However, many students were unable to maintain focus on the question with a tendency to write a narrative on the actions and reactions of the British and colonies following the French Indian wars, thus affecting the level and mark awarded. Also, some students did not developments over time, therefore jumping from the French Indian Wars to Independence demonstrating limited grasp of chronology of the period and this affected the overall level awarded. In contrast higher end answers were more focused and demonstrated good understanding of the question and selected appropriate information to show the changing Anglo-colonial relationship, using a range of well-selected precise evidence to reach substantiated judgements. It was apparent at the lower end that students lacked conceptual depth and there was a propensity for generalisation of the topic. It is worth reminding students that using the similar evidence as a counter argument or in their conclusion holds little value and is not credited.

Q3

This question was less popular and the narrower focus of the question caused a problem for some students. There were some issues of students not reading the question fully, and therefore basing their answer on the ‘declaration of independence’ and the answer then being a narrative on the chronology of the period leading to independence. Also, some students struggled with the focus on ‘uniting the colonies’ demonstrating a lack of depth of understanding on this period of the topic, in that they generalised the demand for independence for the colonies as a whole, but did not show l awareness of the differences across the colonies and between the different sections of society. As a result, many answers were limited in depth and scope, which led to many answers being in Level 3 band of the mark scheme. Students should be reminded to identify all the demands of the question. Additionally students need to avoid overly narrative or descriptive responses. Stronger responses displayed arguments and relevance with a clear analytical style which showed good contextual and conceptual depth to communicate a full understanding of the demand for independence and how far colonies were united as a whole. Although this was the less popular essay question, it was answered in greater depth and accuracy with more answers being awarded the top band of the mark scheme.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.