

AS

# HISTORY

7041/2J: America: A Nation Divided, c1845–1877  
Report on the Examination

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7041  
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## General

This was the fourth year of the new AS and students demonstrated a solid understanding of the course content and demands of the paper. There was a substantial drop in the entry (31 down to 15) making drawing overall conclusions on student performance more difficult. Students generally were able to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Question 01) and their choice of essay question (Question 02 or Question 03). Of the latter, Question 02 proved by far to be the more popular choice. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this paper. The introduction in the specification spells out the key concepts of political authority, abolitionism and social justice. The introduction also draws attention to the need to look at social tension and harmony, nationhood and political compromise; it is important that students are well versed in these concepts and issues as they the basis of question setting.

### Section A: Question 01

Question 01 proved to be generally accessible to the students. There was understanding of provenance, tone and content and the more effective responses made valid arguments about the comparative value of the sources. Less effective responses, whilst clearly taught what to comment on, struggled in assessing value making simple statements with little support. Source A was better assessed than source B by most students.

Source A's provenance offered students the opportunity to deploy knowledge and understanding of South Carolina. Students pointed to the 169-0 vote at the Convention and the fact that South Carolina was first state to secede and had been the most radical slave state on the issue of secession for a long period of time. Some made simple statements based on the source being from a slave state as opposed to a Northern free state which offered little, given the that question was about attitudes in the South. The nature and purpose of the source was assessed in the most effective answers, though understanding of who was making the declaration and to whom varied. A good number of students commented on the date but few seemed to know the chronology of states seceding and other key events such as Lincoln's election and inauguration.

The content of the source was generally understood but some students failed to pick up on references to the 1860 election result and instead wrote about the Missouri Compromise, which was not relevant. The most effective answers made much of the attempts to persuade and pointed out factual errors in the source regarding its portrayal of Lincoln's position whilst correctly reflected that this portrayal of Lincoln was widely held in the South.

Source B was less well understood by most students. The most effective responses demonstrated a good grasp of Lee's concerns over secession and could point to other significant Southern figures who warned against secession such as Sam Houston. Only the most successful answers had an accurate knowledge of the chronology and the number of states that had seceded by 23 January 1861. The most successful gave details on the voting in the different states. The nature of the source meant that some students made simple statements on the source being likely to be accurate or limited as it was the view of just one man. The most effective answers argued that concerns about secession in the South were often only expressed privately and why this might have been. The reference in the source to the Constitution was not well understood. The most effective answers did, however, display knowledge of the attempts to find compromise at this late stage. Lee's opposition to secession was picked up on by most students with the most able identifying the idea of having to choose state or nation that many southerners faced and assessing how typical that attitude was.

Students attempted comparison with varying degrees of success, with most deciding that A was more valuable as it represented the view of more people. The most effective answers supported this with evidence of the votes for secession and support for secession amongst Southern press and amongst politicians.

### **Section B: Question 02**

This question proved the more popular of the two essays. Students generally showed a good level of factual knowledge on economic differences, with many able to quote extensive statistics. Students were for the most part secure on the differences in particular regarding industry and agriculture. The most able students assessed how serious a division there was economically with some arguing that, though different, the economies of North and South complemented each other and others arguing that the economic structures being so different caused significant issues. There was some good knowledge on the legacy of the past, notably the Nullification Crisis. The more effective answers compared economic divisions to other divisions such as cultural or political. Some students treated slavery as a cornerstone of the South's economic system, whilst others viewed it as a moral issue and therefore used it as a counter argument. Both approaches were credited. It is important that students focus on the question, a number of students merely described the differences and were therefore only awarded in level 2.

### **Section B: Question 03**

This was the less popular of the two essay questions. At the lower end there was considerable confusion over the contents of the 1850 Compromise leading to inaccurate answers. Some students simply described the Compromise with very little comment on who it favoured. The most effective answers were nuanced looking at how some terms of the Compromise favoured the North and others the South with details on how the two sides reacted during the debates and after the Compromise was passed. The responses brought in details such as the reaction in the North to the Fugitive Slave Law and built judgements based on the need for both Northern and Southern support to pass the aspects of the Compromise but that consensus was not strong enough to pass the omnibus bill.

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

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

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question