



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1F: Industrialisation and the people: Britain, c1783–1885
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

The standard of entry for the exam this year was very wide. There were some excellent responses, but there seemed to be a longer than usual tail of less able students with limited knowledge to apply to the extracts and questions. It was noticeable that students possessed far more political than social and, in particular, economic knowledge. This option is entitled 'Industrialisation and the People', and so some emphasis on both can be expected in order to meet all aspects of the specification.

Question 01

There was a wide variation of student performance here. There was some very impressive knowledge of social reforms. However, there was a substantial minority who knew little about social reforms in this period. These students tended to give a paraphrase of the extracts with a little context, offering only agreement. Such responses failed to gain many marks. Many students started their answers effectively by giving an overview of the extract arguments, but those who were able to address the key arguments sequentially were not penalised. A minority of students suggested political reforms were social reforms, but these were only credited when the social benefits of these reforms were established.

The key argument in Extract A was that the reforms were largely 'negative and unconstructive' due to the 'dominance of laissez-faire'. Many students saw some strength in this view, pointing to examples of permissive legislation. However, only a few supported it by citing the obvious but important point that nothing was done to change the Poor Law, the bedrock of social policy. Most students proved able to challenge the view in Extract A. Many pointed out that there were other reforms in factories and education in addition to the two acts mentioned in the passage.

Extract B argued that 'continuing need' led to reform becoming commonplace. Less able students focused too much on that need, writing in a generalised way, rather than looking at the social reforms which addressed that need. Some students exaggerated the claims in the extract on Disraeli and Gladstone. It was written that Disraeli was 'more distinguished than others', not that he was the only one to pass any meaningful reforms at all. Some offered balanced evaluation by pointing to the political problems of the early 1860s, as an alternative to the mid-Victorian boom, in explaining legislative inactivity. Others showed that Disraeli's Artisans Dwellings Act of 1875 was of limited value, as it was permissive and rarely adopted.

Extract C argued that Disraeli was vote-catching, whereas Gladstone was morally driven, in carrying through reforms. Better students were able to show that there are other explanations for Disraeli's legislation, for example a genuine belief in 'One Nation Conservatism'. Others argued that Gladstone did improve the material condition of the labouring classes by giving trade unions a legal status and that he enhanced female rights to property and to an education.

Question 02

Perhaps because this is usually the first topic that students study for this option, this question was generally well answered, It was answered by the vast majority of students and produced the highest average mark. Most students knew a lot about Pitt's successes before 1793 and many could produce failings after 1793. Less able students tended to enumerate some of Pitt's successes and failures but were unable to link to the chronology in the question. In this sense, the question discriminated effectively, according to the ability of the students to recall accurately and organise their response logically.

Most students agreed with the quotation, but some found ways of challenging it by examining Pitt's 'Reign of Terror' after 1793. They debated whether that period was a success because it averted revolution or that it was a failure because it simply drove discontent underground and was not required in any case. Better students challenged Pitt's performance before 1793. They recognised that although he addressed some of the 'Old Corruption' of sinecures, he was unable to change the electoral system. Some good students were able to break away from a 'for' and 'against' format and debated and evaluated Pitt's successes and failures. This distinguished them from the more rehearsed and mechanical answers on Pitt the Younger.

Question 03

This was the least popular of the questions and gained the lowest average marks. However, this seems to be in part because it was largely taken by less able students. Nevertheless, it also produced some excellent answers from students who knew the economic policies of the period. The weakest students simply addressed economic change, considering new methods of manufacturing and agricultural production including enclosure, but they did not address the key term 'policy'. Other students were able to point to the Corn Laws and the sliding scale and explain them, but they failed to address the extent to which they represented change. However, a good number of students understood the context of the period and identified aspects of change or continuity, either from previous policies, or from the 'Ultra' to 'Liberal' Tories within the period. Some students made the valid point that governments were too otherwise occupied after 1828 to be concerned with economic policies.

Question 04

This was again well answered, with a large number of students addressing the question. Those who achieved higher marks, focused effectively on the term 'popular discontent', while less able students were not always clear as to what this term actually meant. These students tended to paint a fuzzy picture of economic misery and said little more than that this made people discontented. Others tended to rely on information about the Luddites, which was out of the period, and surprisingly few commented on the Swing Rioters, which would have been within the timeframe.

Most students were able to establish alternative explanations for popular discontent, but many saw movements as monocausal. This limited the scope for debate and discussion and produced overly list-like responses. Some developed their answers by grouping movements into types. However, only the best students really tried to address the key word, 'dependent' and recognised that movements often had multiple drivers. These students tried to compare the importance of differing factors, with many agreeing that, whatever the key driver, the scale of popular discontent did often depend on economic conditions. However, few students recognised the inter-relationship of the different factors they identified. Some, for example, saw the Anti-Poor Law League as simply about the social issue of the poor, not economic of deprivation. Equally, several proposed that the Anti-Corn Law League was a political movement pure and simple. They claimed it was political because it was led by middle class businessmen who wanted a change in the law. However, they failed to consider that the Corn Law was the bedrock of protectionism, and that businessmen might have economic interests in developing a free market, or depressing the demand for higher wages to pay artificially inflated prices for bread.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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