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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1J: The British Empire, c1857-1967  
Report on the Examination

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**Question 01**

This question required students to identify the main arguments in three extracts from books by historians and assess how convincing each was in relation to British attitudes to decolonisation in the years 1945 to 1967. Students were generally able to identify the key arguments and it was pleasing to find that most students supported and challenged the arguments expressed rather than focusing on what was not in the extracts. A minority of students also attempted to analyse the provenance, which is a Paper 2 (source evaluation) skill and was therefore not credited.

In general terms, Extract A put forward the view that Britain succeeded in decolonising its empire with dignity and that Britain recognised that this process would have to occur. The extract argued that the only dispute between Britain and nationalist leaders was regarding the speed at which this process would occur. Many students were able to support this argument with knowledge of the decolonisation process in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, and they successfully challenged it with information on India, Kenya or Malaya.

Extract B argued that decolonisation ceased in the 1950s, not due to American pressure, but because Britain could not afford to maintain the empire and British people were unwilling to meet the costs required. Some pupils misread the extract and thought that it argued that decolonisation occurred due to pressure from America. Many, however, supported the extract with knowledge of the economic pressures Britain was under in the 1950s and information on the costs of the campaigns in Kenya and Malaya. Many students successfully challenged the argument that American didn't play a role by examining the Suez Crisis of 1956.

Extract C caused some problems when students failed to recognise that the extract began with the author stating what he did not agree with. The phrase 'historical myth' was either not understood or not read properly and this meant that less able students failed to evaluate the interpretation correctly. The vast majority, however, recognised that the extract put forward the argument that Britain was slow to recognise its reduced status in the world and that it only decolonised in areas of the empire which were no longer cost-effective to keep. Successful evaluation of the interpretation included supporting information on the fight to keep Malaya and Kenya and the decolonisation of India. Many students challenged the argument that Britain didn't recognise its reduced role, through an examination of the attitudes of administrators.

**Question 02**

This was the least popular question of the three essay questions and very effective answers were comparatively rare. Many students struggled to relate their knowledge of southern Africa to the idea of consistency and inconsistency and the responses were often descriptive as a result. Some students included information from outside the time period of the question, for example the Second Boer War and this was not credited. The most effective answers were those in which students had taken time to plan their response, so as to organise their information into an analytical, rather than descriptive, format. Successful responses examined issues such as the wars which occurred during this period, the expansion of British territory, treaties signed by the British and the actions of the British government and men on the spot.

**Question 03**

This was the most popular of the three essay questions and was generally well-answered by students. Most students were able to explain and analyse a range of material from across the timeframe and in different areas of the empire. Some answers were unbalanced because they

failed to discuss the impact of the administrators on Britain. Some responses also failed to link material to specific colonial administrators and instead examined the impact of the empire on British policy more generally; such did not fully address the question. The actions of Joseph Chamberlain were credited as many students were able to explain his impact on both Britain and the governed people.

#### **Question 04**

A good number of students struggled with this question, perhaps because trade in this period had appeared in an exam series previously. Students should be discouraged from rote-learning pre-prepared essays that have already appeared in previous examinations, as they then find it difficult to adapt material to a different question. Many students failed to recognise that this was a change and continuity question and did not address continuities, resulting in an unbalanced answer. Some answers also focused on whether the empire was strengthened or weakened during this period, which missed the focus of the question; as both elements are examples of change. This also meant that the answers were unbalanced. The more effective answers were those which not only explained the various changes which occurred during this period, but also identified and explained the continuities.

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

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