



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2J: America: A Nation Divided, c1845-1877
Report on the Examination

7042
June 2019

Version: 1.0

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This is a depth unit and therefore an appropriate level of detail is required of students in order to achieve a high level of marks. This year, similar numbers of students answered each of the three essays, with Question 02 being the most popular. All three essays saw a full range of answers, with the most effective answers displaying excellent knowledge and understanding. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. The introduction in the specification indicates the key concepts of political authority, abolitionism and social justice. The introduction also draws attention to the need to consider social tension and harmony, nationhood and political compromise. It is important that students are well versed in these concepts and issues as they form the basis of the paper

Section A: Question 01

There were some excellent answers on Question 01, but many students struggled to consistently and effectively assess value of both provenance and content across all three sources. This year, the value of the content of the sources was assessed more effectively than the provenance.

Source A

The most effective answers to Question 01 assessed the impact of the provenance of the source on its content and on how the defeat of the Confederacy is represented. Students generally showed good knowledge on General Lee and his key role in the war. The most effective answers combined their understanding of the author, audience and date to analyse value. Students examined the value of Lee's insight and his audience, along with the context of the speech coming immediately after Lee's surrender. The most effective answers examined the fact that in these circumstances and to this audience, Lee would offer an explanation that made defeat something that neither he nor his men could be blamed for. In doing so, Lee would be able to hold his head high, and enable his men to do likewise in spite of defeat. The tone of the source was understood well. Some picked up on the bond between Lee and his men and the difficulty he had in addressing them in these circumstances. The content was generally well understood and assessed with some good contextual knowledge. An effective example of this was students using the Gettysburg Address to challenge Lee's claims over avoiding 'useless sacrifice'. Some students were not fully clear on when the war ended.

Source B

Harper's Weekly appeared to be well known with some good contextual knowledge. The provenance was generally understood but many students struggled to assess how it impacted on the value or limitations of the source. More effective answers picked up on the source being Union propaganda, while the most able students combined this with the content and assessed the source's aim to defend the reputation of Grant. Students' answers showed good knowledge on Grant's role in defeating the Confederacy. There were some issues with students mistaking the negative views on Grant that the author was attacking as being the views of the author.

Source C

Of the three sources, this one was the least well assessed and the least well understood. Students knew who Sherman was and what his role was in defeating the Confederacy and they picked up on the fact that the source was looking back with hindsight. Only the most effective answers offered any evaluation of how Sherman would have been looking to defend his own and other Union Generals' reputations by attacking the view that the Union simply won due to resources and man power. These answers saw how this could limit the source's value. The least effective

answers misread the final part of the source and mistakenly thought Sherman was arguing that victory was due to brute force. This highlights the importance of carefully reading the sources.

Formulaic answers, referring to provenance, tone and content, did occasionally lose focus on value. The most effective answers focused on evaluating value and brought in provenance, tone and content, supported with contextual knowledge to reach appropriate judgements.

Section B: Question 02

Question 02 was the most popular of the three essays and many students demonstrated good knowledge of key events in Westward Expansion. The most effective essays balanced times where Westward Expansion created tension, such as comparing the gaining of territory from Mexico with times when the slave and non-slave states agreed on Westward Expansion or reached compromises over it, for example in 1820 and 1850. The most successful answers focused on the term 'totally disastrous', reaching nuanced judgements and showing good conceptual awareness. Less convincing answers looked at sectional tension in general rather than the impact of Westward Expansion in particular.

Section B: Question 03

Question 03 produced answers across the mark range. The most effective answers showed an excellent understanding of the rise of the Republican Party. They explained the links to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, for example the Act leading to Lincoln's return to politics and the role of the Act in the creation of the Republican Party. Whilst some essays were well focused, less effective responses tended to be more narrative, or to focus on related issues rather than directly on the rise of the Republicans. For example, there were essays that described sectional tension and its causes during the period, or looked far more at the problems in the Democrat Party than the rise of the Republicans. Essays that did not have a significant amount addressing the impact of Kansas-Nebraska Act on the Republican Party were restricted to the lower levels due to poor focus. It is important that students do properly address the event or factor identified in the question.

Section B: Question 04

Question 04 was slightly less popular than the other two questions. The more effective answers had a clear understanding of who the Radical Republicans were and what it was they wanted to achieve during Reconstruction. The most effective answers set out the Radical Republican's aims in their introductions and continually returned to these aims to measure the impact of what they achieved. Good use was made of the 14th and 15th Amendments in particular and there was some strong knowledge on the compromise in 1877 and examples of violence during Reconstruction, such as the Colfax Massacre. Some students addressed the Republican Party as a whole rather than Radical Republicans, with some less effective answers focusing on Lincoln. There were some issues of focus with students assessing Reconstruction as a whole rather than in the light of Radical Republican's aims. At the lower end there were narrative descriptions of the events during Reconstruction.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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