
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2G
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2G

The Birth of the USA, 1760–1801

Component 2G: The origins of the American Revolution, 1760–1776

General Comments

Many students took the new AS format in their stride and used their time to the full to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q03 proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very good and weaker answers to both and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further guidance as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question. It is worth noting that this unit is notably different from the unit on American Colonies from the legacy specification, both in terms of focus (this new unit is not a British unit) and in terms of method of assessment. The introduction in the specification spells out the key concepts of imperialism, mercantilism and legitimate government along with the importance of ideology and economy in the development of challenges to an established authority.

Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

In terms of provenance there were some very good answers but also some issues that came to light. Whilst students did pick up that one source was from New York and the other Rhode Island, and brought in contextual own knowledge to support their discussions, there were some limiting factors; in particular little was written about Boston and New York being rival ports and the benefits New York may have seen if Boston was shut down. There was some weakness in the geographical knowledge of some students who were unclear about where the different states were in relation to each other. The issue of Source A having been written by a group of merchants, and therefore likely to be cautious, was well covered. The interesting issue of Source B being anonymous was dealt with very well by a minority of students who explored why that might be. Other students either ignored the origin of the source or simply guessed who might have written it. The nature and audience of the sources were identified and commented on effectively by many students. The best students drew on knowledge to assess provenance looking at the nature, origin, purpose and audience of the sources. The weaker students simply repeated the attributions and made simple statements about bias, which should be discouraged especially as the question addresses value not reliability.

There was some good comment on the tone of the sources with Source A having been carefully written as to not offend Boston nor commit New York's merchants to full blown support of them. The best students fully explored the nuances of this tone whilst weaker students identified elements of supportive language. Source B proved much more straightforward with a strongly anti-British tone that the majority of students picked up on. Of all elements, tone was the most commonly ignored by students and it was notable that a number of students failed to address provenance or tone or in some cases either of them.

Content and argument was generally dealt with more effectively than provenance and tone. The best students showed clear understanding of the sources' content and argument as a whole and placed them in their historical context, then supported their points with extracts from the sources. Those who simply addressed the sources line by line, often commenting on the accuracy of detail rather than value to a historian were more limited. There was some very good knowledge on the response to the 'Intolerable Acts' and increasing Colonial unity, and at the top end the level of detail was very impressive. At the lower end, some students' answers were chronologically confused and very little detail was offered beyond what was in the sources.

Comparison was probably the most variable element in students' answers. This element is unique to AS: some students failed to address it, others made fairly simplistic statements in their conclusions and others still carried out highly impressive comparisons, going through all the other elements of the answer (provenance, tone, content and argument). The key to the best comparisons was a focus on the question and in particular on value. Whilst many decided this on the basis of which best represented the views of the Colonists as a whole (and views on which source this was varied), the very best explored what the sources offered to an historical investigation whilst also reflecting on their comparative limitations. Simple statements that either fully accept the value of a source or completely dismiss its value should be avoided.

Section B

Question 02

This essay was considerably less popular than the other optional question. There was a good range of marks in the responses but many students seemed to struggle with some elements. The essay was aiming to address one of the new A01 concepts of change and continuity, this style of question appeared unfamiliar to many students, for some reason. Rather than address whether British attitudes changed or remained constant, some students instead compared them to Colonial attitudes or examined the causes of change. A small number of students misread the question and answered on Colonial attitudes, not British ones. The other issue with the question for some students was chronological knowledge, whilst many were strong from 1765–1776, knowledge on the early aspects of the specification appeared in many cases to be considerably thinner. Many students showed a good understanding of the economic reasons for British attitudes changing, especially the large national debt incurred by the war. On other aspects, such as the relationship between British and Colonial troops during the war and attitudes to Westward expansion, students had less knowledge. Some students, whilst dealing with change, did not examine continuity and therefore their answers lacked depth.

Question 03

This essay was the more popular of the two and was on the whole better answered. Knowledge about the period 1765 to 1770 was in the most part impressive, though some students went well beyond 1770, and such material was not credited. The majority of students presented an effective

balance between Colonial responsibility and British responsibility. The best answers sub-divided these broad categories, for example looking at elites and ordinary colonists, regional variations and the role of radicals. When considering the counter-argument, some students looked at the roles of different British groups such as government, military and public opinion. The key concept of this question was cause, for which students appeared to be well-prepared, and answers were often well-supported with strong relevant comment.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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