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# A-level History

7042/1G Challenge and transformation: Britain, c1851–1964  
Report on the Examination

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### Question 01

This proved to be a challenging question for a significant number of students. More students than expected struggled to identify the main argument contained within one or more of the extracts. In addition many students tended to focus on one or two sentences, or even phrases, rather than assessing the overall argument of the extracts. Examples of this are explained in more detail with regard to the individual extracts below. A number of weaker answers merely paraphrased the extracts without adding any specific contextual knowledge in support.

#### Extract A -

This extract was the one that most students found the easiest to assess. In Level 3, students were able to provide examples of clashes between Liberal ideology and the conduct of war, most commonly the passing of DORA and the introduction of conscription. This was sometimes linked to the differences in approach between Lloyd George and Asquith resulting in the split of 1916.

Weaker answers tended not to go much further than the first sentence. Having spotted that the extract began with a sentence identifying the First World War as a factor in the Liberals' decline many students launched into a description of Liberal failings during the war (most commonly Asquith's weak leadership) which were not specifically related to the argument in the extract about Liberal ideology. Likewise, many students provided an account of the circumstances of the split between Lloyd George and Asquith, which again lacked specific links to the argument in the extract.

At the top end, students often began by identifying the main argument concerning the incompatibility of Liberal ideology and the conduct of war (as above) but then broadened out their analysis. This included picking up on the word 'initiated' in the first sentence, which led several able students to argue that the Liberals were already in decline by 1914, for example due to the 1910 election results, the challenge of the Suffragettes and industrial unrest. Furthermore, able students also picked up on the final sentence and linked the Liberals' difficulty in 'securing the allegiance of new entrants to politics' with the Representation of the People Act (1918) and the fact that Labour overtook the Liberals as the official opposition. A further point in balance, arguing against the view in the extract, suggested that the Liberal party was not in 'ruins' in 1918 as Lloyd George was celebrated as the 'man who won the war'.

#### Extract B -

Somewhat surprisingly, this extract was the one that the majority of students found the hardest to assess. A significant number of students struggled to identify the main argument of the extract and resorted to arguing that the extract was unconvincing because of what it did not include. This assessment 'by omission' did not gain much credit. Weaker responses also had a tendency to include irrelevant supporting information, such as successes of Gladstone; or argue in opposition to the extract that the Liberals were a party of radical change because they introduced pensions and national insurance, which rather missed the main argument of the extract.

Answers which were more typical of Level 3 did identify pre-war reforms as Liberal 'successes' - the most common ones mentioned were the Parliament Act, pensions, national insurance and reforms affecting children. However, these students did not develop their assessment much further on this point, for example comparing this period to the post-war government. Students at this level also often linked the sentence regarding Liberalism 'outliving its usefulness' with the rise

of Labour in the post-war period. However, this was not frequently developed in the context of Labour policies in the 1920s taking up the baton of reform from the Liberals.

More able students covered the points identified above but were then able to extend their analysis through much more specific use of contextual knowledge. Most commonly, this was in identifying policies in the 1920s which either agreed or disagreed with the argument in the extract. For example, some argued that the Conservative and Labour welfare reforms, covering housing and unemployment benefit in the 1920s, show that the argument in the extract is convincing that these two parties did indeed draw heavily 'upon the Liberal tradition'. Alternatively, others argued that Labour had a distinctively socialist programme which was different in nature from Liberalism, and that the Conservatives remained a party of retrenchment (Geddes Axe), protection (1923 election) and reaction (General Strike). A different argument was that the Liberals remained a party of radical reform as shown by Lloyd George's post-war policies for housing, national insurance, the 'dole' and even the 1929 election campaign 'We Can Conquer Unemployment'.

Extract C -

Less able students relied far too heavily on the content of this extract as it provides more specific evidence than Extracts A or B. Therefore, some students put forward the evidence that Lloyd George kept hold of his money after 1923, or that Asquith sat in the Lords preventing Lloyd George from reuniting the party. However, since these points are mentioned in the extract they did not gain much credit. When offering some contextual evidence of their own, weaker students seemed determined to get in as much as possible about the downfall of Lloyd George in 1922, a lot of which lacked precise links to the argument in the extract.

The most common point offered by students who achieved Level 3 focused on the argument that the years 1918-24 were more important than 1914-18. Most students chose to disagree with this, arguing that the split between Lloyd George and Asquith started in 1916 during the war and therefore this must be the most important period, which was a valid analysis. A further point that many picked up on was the loss of 'many radicals' to Labour, and this was linked with the growth of Labour after 1918.

This was the extract on which the more able students found hardest to develop their analysis beyond the points mentioned above. Some focused on Lloyd George deciding to continue the coalition with the Conservatives in 1918 and linked this to him being regarded as a 'traitor'. Others mentioned the Maurice Debate as evidence of the increasing factionalism of the Liberal Party from 1918. Some better responses identified that the extract focuses much more on Asquith being to blame for the post-war decline and, in opposition, argued that Lloyd George was equally if not more to blame. Use of evidence about Lloyd George's downfall in 1922 was relevant and more precisely focused if used in this manner.

Many students provided a comparative judgement in conclusion, in which they argued which extract was the most/least convincing. This was unnecessary and did not gain additional credit, unless in providing this judgement they added some further evaluation of the extracts individually.

## Question 02

This proved an effective question at differentiating between students of varying abilities. The depth and precision of contextual knowledge varied widely between the stronger and weaker answers.

Weaker answers tended to show some awareness of Charles Parnell as a politician but were often limited to stating that he was the leader of the Irish Nationalist Party and of the Land League. In offering 'other factors', these weaker responses tended to argue that support for Home Rule was the logical conclusion of Gladstone's policies towards Ireland from 1868 onwards, without acknowledging the limitations of his acts designed to 'pacify Ireland'. Those answers in Level 2 that did consider the wider social and economic context of Ireland did so in a very generalised manner, which lacked specific reference to the period identified in the question.

Level 3 answers began to show a more developed knowledge of Parnell's career, for example often including reference to the Kilmainham Treaty and Parnell's influence within Parliament. Several students argued that the revelation of Parnell's affair and his subsequent downfall in 1890 shows that he was not that important in the growth of support for Home Rule. However, the impact of this was felt after 1890 which is not relevant to the question. The more effective point, which some more able students included, would have been to argue that the INP began to fall apart after Parnell's downfall which demonstrates how important he must have been in the preceding years. There was more precise comment on the limitations of Gladstone's early Irish legislation in this level and more accurate content on the developments of 1885/86. The wider social and economic context of Ireland was also explained in a more developed way in Level 3 responses, although there was sometimes a lack of precision, e.g. quite a few references to Sinn Fein.

The strongest responses had greater range and depth of content. These often included not only evaluation of the roles of Parnell and Gladstone but also Isaac Butt and/or Michael Davitt. There was greater precision in terms of the changing nature of Gladstone's Irish legislation/policy between 1868 and 1886. Wider contextual factors were also covered in a more precise manner, for example the resurgence of Gaelic culture and nationalism along with the Land Wars of the late 1870s.

Judgements in conclusion were fairly evenly split across several factors in identifying which was the most significant in the growth of support for Home Rule. The depth of explanation of these judgements was another clear differentiating factor between responses in the different levels.

### **Question 03**

This proved to be the hardest of the three essay questions as many students struggled to achieve coverage of the whole period identified in the question, and to focus precisely on the 'condition of the working classes'.

A significant number of students were restricted to Level 2 because their answers only included content from the 1870s. These answers did not cover enough of the time period. Other answers in L2 did cover the full timeframe but the level of supporting evidence was so thin and generalised that they could not access Level 3.

Responses in Level 3 tended to adopt a chronological approach but were able to get through the majority of the time period. A number of these responses were 'saved' by reference to the 1902 Education Act, thereby extending the essay towards the end of the period. However, evaluation of the 1902 act was often in a generalised context of pros and cons, rather than focusing precisely on the condition of the working classes. This was a general feature of assessment at this level across the timeframe of the question. Many students were clearly more comfortable with/prepared for an evaluation of the general successes and limitations of the acts, including the motivation behind them, rather than focusing specifically on the condition of the working classes.

The better answers to this question tended to adopt a more analytical approach by focusing on themes running through the whole period. Therefore, there were often paragraphs on education from 1874 to 1902; and on housing, public health and working conditions across the period. Valid analysis was also made of union legislation, which was then linked to the ability of workers to fight for better pay and conditions. These better answers frequently made use of the reports of Booth and Rowntree as evidence of a lack of progress in the condition of the working classes. Further evidence, which supported similar evaluations, included the condition of volunteers for the Boer War and the need for the wave of Liberal social reforms after 1906. In this way, these responses met the full demands of the question by providing evidence to support a conclusion about the effectiveness of social reform up to 1905.

#### **Question 04**

There was a full range of responses, in all levels, to this question. A lot depended on the students' understanding of the question as several less able students did not really understand the word 'consensus' and, although they provided some appropriate information, this was not effectively focused on the question. These less able students often appeared to think that 'consensus' meant 'success' and their essays were therefore an assessment of how successful economic policies were in this period.

Level 3 answers provided relevant information which lacked depth. There were frequent valid references to nationalisation continuing after 1951, as well as to 'Butskellism' and the quest to achieve full employment. The NHS and welfare state were included in many answers, and a good number of students were able to make these relevant to the question by explaining the financial implications of these reforms, and how the Conservatives remained committed to social welfare spending after 1951. However, some students did stray too widely into social policy, such as education and housing, which was not linked as effectively to the question. In arguing against the statement in the question, the most common points made were the differences over rationing in the early part of the period, and the fact that the Conservatives de-nationalised iron, steel and road transport after coming to power in 1951.

Stronger responses to the question covered the main points referenced in the paragraph above, but were also able to broaden out their analysis. For example, several students argued that, whilst there was a general consensus between the leaders of the two main parties from the late 1940s onwards, there was a lack of consensus within the parties. The most common examples provided to support this line of argument were divisions within the Labour Party over prescription charges, and within the Conservative Party in 1958 between Macmillan and Thorneycroft resulting in the resignation of the latter. Stronger responses also tended to show a better understanding of the changing nature of the context of the period; demonstrating an awareness of the lack of consensus in the 1945 election and immediately afterwards, and contrasting this with the Conservatives' 'Industrial Charter' and the post-1951 years.

### **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.

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

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