
A-level History

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

June 2017

Version: 1.0

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Section A

Question 01

This question required students to read three extracts from academic historical texts about the influence of missionaries and religion on attitudes to empire in Britain in the years 1857 to 1890, identify their main interpretations and offer supported judgements on their degree of convincingness. The extracts were taken from works from mainstream historians with which students might be expected to be familiar. Most students were able to identify the main interpretation in Extracts B and C but Extract A proved to be more challenging, probably because the main interpretation – that ‘The British saw the profit and power of Empire only as additions to this high moral purpose’ – was the final sentence in the extract. Many students adopted a line by line, deconstructive approach to analysing the extracts which was worthy of credit if the analysis had a balance of support and challenge and was supported by well selected own knowledge. To reach the higher levels in the mark scheme, however, students needed to identify and evaluate the main interpretations in each of the three extracts.

Section B

Question 02

This question asked students to assess the extent to which British rule was challenged by indigenous peoples in India and North East Africa in the years 1890 to 1914. There were many good answers to this question, displaying extensive knowledge and balanced assessments. Some knowledge of the geography of Africa was required to identify which countries were situated in North East Africa. The mark scheme anticipated that candidates would focus on Egypt, the Sudan and British Somaliland, which the majority of students were able to do. Answers which included Uganda, Zanzibar and (less commonly) Kenya were given credit but there was no case for flexibility if students included (as some did) West African colonies or South Africa. Some students considered a range of challenges to British rule, e.g. French competition for control over the Sudan and this was considered to be a legitimate alternative interpretation of the question. In relation to India there was plenty of scope for students to talk about the first stirrings of Indian nationalism and the resistance to the partition of Bengal, but those answers which included material from beyond 1914 .e.g. Gandhi and the Salt March, were not worthy of credit.

Question 03

This question asked students to assess the significance of the two world wars in strengthening trade and commerce between Britain and the empire in the years 1914 to 1947. This proved to be a challenging question for many students but, as long as answers retained a clear focus on trade and commerce there were a number of legitimate approaches to the question. Balance was achieved by some students who argued that the two world wars were significant but that other factors, such as the depression of 1929 to 1933 was also significant. An alternative approach was to argue that whilst the two world wars strengthened trade and commerce in some ways, they also resulted in a weakening of some trading relationships e.g. Lancashire cotton losing its Indian market during World War 1. Another possible approach was to differentiate between the impacts of the two world wars. All of these approaches could enable students to achieve marks in the higher levels as long as they were well supported and had balance.

Question 04

This question asked students to assess the importance of two main factors in the decolonisation of British territories in Asia in the years 1945 to 1965 – Britain's changed international position and pressure from nationalist groups. This question offered plenty of scope for students to give balanced answers with a good range of supporting evidence and many did so. Although the mark scheme anticipated that answers would focus on India, Burma, Malaya and Singapore, some students included Palestine/Israel in their answers and this was perfectly legitimate but not required. It was surprising, given the geographical and date parameters of the question, that many students did not include India in their answers. Nevertheless there were many well argued and well supported answers which achieved marks in the higher levels.

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.