
AS

HISTORY

The Birth of the USA, 1760–1801

7041/2G The origins of the American Revolution, 1760–1776

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Many students seemed to lack the concise knowledge and understanding for a depth paper, and this meant that frequently answers were less well developed and lacked adequate support and evidence to substantiate their answers, meaning that a lot of answers ranged in at Level 3. Question 2 was less popular than question 3 which was answered by more than three quarters of the students. For the most part, students did display some organisation and balance for the essay questions, but many answers lacked the precision, analysis and depth therefore the judgements lacked development. Most students did structure their source answers to evaluate both sources for value commenting on provenance, tone, content and argument although the depth and breadth of evaluation did vary and at the lower end a tendency to produce stock phrases and a summary of the content of the source to answer the question. It may be worth reminding students that lengthy conclusions which simply repeat arguments and content which have already been covered in an essay will not gain extra credit.

Question 01

Most students were familiar with Thomas Paine's 'Common Sense' and were therefore able to make relevant comments on the provenance. Most students were able to deploy contextual awareness of Paine's pamphlet and the relevance to independence becoming more prevalent in the colonies. However, lower end students were less able to select parts of the source to evaluate in relation to the question of divisions over independence, and there was a tendency to write about contextual knowledge on Paine and 'Common Sense' and/or a summary of rewriting the content of A with no support or evaluation. In contrast, source B was less well understood by less able students and there was a tendency to deploy knowledge of the topic around independence rather than evaluation of B in relation to the question. Higher end students were able to evaluate and deploy good conceptual awareness and contextual knowledge to support B in relation to the provenance of Dickinson who had voiced objections to the British in his 'letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer'. In addition, higher end students evaluated the value of B for showing divisions over independence and the riskiness of such a decision in jeopardising the benefits they had under British rule. Students overall showed understanding of the period, in relation to independence being declared in July 1776, however the question was not fully understood by some students in relation to 'divisions over independence'.

Most students were familiar with source A and demonstrated this in their contextual knowledge. Many understood the argument in A in relation to 'we can neither be received nor heard abroad' and used their contextual knowledge to show their understanding of colonial grievances and the 'no taxation without representation'. However, many students did not fully grasp the argument 'putting off some unpleasant business' and either failed to evaluate this part of A or their evaluation was descriptive of the source content and were less able to understand or convey the apprehension felt by many loyalists towards independence. Better responses fully evaluated A, questioning the attribution of Paine as a failed British subject and his influence in the colonies as a catalyst to the issue of independence and discerning from source A the 'unpleasant business' as a valid reason for divisions over independence in the colonies.

Many students failed to understand the attribution for source B which explained the context of loyalist views to avoid rash decisions and highlighted the advantages colonists had gained from British rule. Many were less able to grasp Dickinson's argument that the soldiers were for the protection of the colonies. Many students failed to grasp source B's emphasis of warning against leaving the benefits of British control. In contrast students understood source A better although

there was a tendency at lower levels to convey knowledge of Paine more than an evaluation of source A. At the higher end students understood the message of source B and deployed good contextual understanding for the argument and value of B in relation to the debate in the divisions over independence, and likewise they evaluated the provenance of both A and B effectively to assess value with close inspection of the writers and timing of both sources.

Students would do well to follow the structures suggested in the AQA online model answers and mark schemes, and this would avoid the problems of provenance being omitted. Students writing ‘this source shows...’ is always an ominous sign and something to avoid. ‘Own evidence’ must always be used to support anything stated in a source to validate its value. With the sources question there was some inconsistency for the two sources and some failed to reach any overarching conclusion. Credit is not given for simply repeating attributions, provenance must always be dealt with in relation to the value of the source.

Question 02

Some students found this question harder to answer and there were clearly problems with students not understanding that ‘in 1760’ meant ‘in 1760’, and this sometimes meant that answers focused on the period in general, using material after 1760, which often caused imbalance, and affected the overall level awarded. The term ‘British attitudes’ also caused problems for some students and meant they did not stay focused on the question. Instead they used contextual knowledge about British attitudes towards the colonists in general, with some reference to mercantilism, whilst some used British treatment of the colonists after 1763 which was not relevant to the question. It was surprising how many students did not refer to the Seven Years War given that ‘1760’ was the year mentioned in the question. In contrast higher end answers were focused and demonstrated good understanding of the question and the role of George III in changing attitudes towards colonial affairs, using a range of well-selected precise evidence to reach substantiated judgements. It was apparent at the lower end that students lacked conceptual depth but had a generalised understanding of the topic in relation to British action in the colonies rather than attitudes towards the colonies. It is worth reminding students that using the similar evidence as a counter argument or in their conclusion holds little value and is not credited.

Question 03

This question was broadly understood and the wider focus of the question in relation to dates made it more accessible to most students. There were some problems with chronological awareness for lower end students thereby some using a range of events after the Stamp Act thus limiting the range and balance of their answers. Most students were able to show understanding of the colonial reaction to the Stamp Act and demonstrate the mob action as ‘movement from below’ but lower end students were less able to support and convey their understanding of the reaction of the ‘colonial elites’. There was also a general tendency to produce Boston-centred answers of the colonial reaction which largely ignored colonies other than Massachusetts during the period. Comments such as ‘Patrick Henry was an elite’ suggest a poor command/understanding of vocabulary which can detract from an answer.

Repetition was seen in this question with some students using the Sons of Liberty as evidence to both agree for colonial elite reaction and disagree as mob action. This may have been an indication that students lacked conceptual understanding of the different reactions and connections between the colonial reaction infusing a reaction from the movement from below, and largely seeing the colonial reaction as a reaction overall rather than by different sections in colonial society. Stronger answers put forward clear analytical arguments, demonstrated very good chronological and conceptual awareness to show the momentum in reaction to the Stamp Act.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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