
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1F Industrialisation and the people: Britain, c1783–1885
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

Responses to the questions on this year's paper ranged from the convincingly-argued and well-supported to the weak, generalised and irrelevant. Students did equally well on the extract question and the essays, apart from question 04 which was only attempted by 22% of the students. Despite this, the difference between question 04 and the other questions was no more than 1.6 marks and over 10% of those who answered the question achieved the highest level of attainment.

Students struggled with core economic and social elements of the course which was particularly reflected on question 01. Most students could not name a single invention of the period, whereas most students could explain complex fiscal and economic measures from Pitt (and this was equally the case with question 03 and Peel). Equally most students believed that canals were navigable rivers and some thought that looms produced cotton thread and steam power came from fast-flowing streams. The title of the unit is "Industrialisation and the people" and so knowledge of social and economic history is to be expected.

Question 01

The A-level extract question for Component 1 is, necessarily, a demanding one and students generally fared best when they took time to read and think about each extract carefully, in relation to the focus of the question, before beginning to write. Strong answers usually began with a direct reference to the key arguments contained in the extract; weaker ones summarised everything the extract said or adopted a line-by-line approach with no real feel for the overall view being expressed. However, most students demonstrated good exam technique, identifying, with greater or lesser precision, the key interpretation in each extract. The problem lay in the subsequent evaluation and the evidence brought to bear to support it. In the cases of A and B, too many students — who performed far better on C and the essay questions — were only able to give a very generalised evaluation with no contextual 'own knowledge'.

Most students recognised that Extract A was arguing for an Industrial Revolution based on inventions — the so-called "heroic" version. However, few students were able to confirm or develop this claim; stronger students were able to contrast the contribution of the power loom to balance that of the mule in power spinning. Others gained balance by reference to the slow adoption of the power loom and the lack of technological developments in the coal industry where output grew by the simple expedient of employing more men to hew the coal with pickaxes. Many students tried to gain balance by stressing that the extract failed to consider the social impact of industrialisation, often by reference to Luddites. This gained credit if it was used to illustrate the growth of the power looms, or if it was tied in to the comment about the rising wages which resulted from the technological changes. However, unless it was tied into the extract, this seemed to lack relevance, as the key focus of the interpretation and the question was on industrial growth. Students were more successful when they contended whether people were better off due to the changes as the extract claimed — they pointed to the disproportionate gains made by the middle class or the impact of rising prices.

Again, most students recognised that Extract B's key interpretation was that it was Britain's natural advantages which led to Britain being what has been called the "first industrial nation". Most students evaluated this by commenting on how canals were the lifeblood of this stage of industrialisation but had their limitations. Stronger responses recognised that navigable rivers provided the basis of a canal system, but the latter were not a natural advantage. Many students confirmed the presence of coal in Britain by reference to specific coalfields and the increased

output of coal. Some stronger students also added the advantage of Britain's location as an island which meant that international trade was easier than with a landlocked country. Stronger students obtained balance by pointing out that during the bad harvests and blockade of the Napoleonic Wars, and in parts of the United Kingdom like Ireland, the claim of agricultural sufficiency was questionable. Others gained their balance by comparing Britain's natural advantages to other countries like the future USA and Germany with equal advantages but later development. The weakest students either simply endorsed the content of the extract in a generalised way without evidence or further argument. In a disappointingly large number of cases, the balance was often obtained simply by using the arguments of the other extracts without development against Extract B, a trend repeated with the other extracts.

Evaluation of Extract C was much better, although its key argument was not always fully understood. This was because the emphasis on trade gave them a hook onto which to place their well-rehearsed knowledge of Pitt's commercial and economic measures and the relative importance of Europe and the "undeveloped world" by reference to the impact of the Napoleonic Wars. It is a little surprising given the clear remit of the unit specification to find students who can explain in detail the operation of the Orders in Council but not know of James Watt, the steam engine or have any inkling of how it might have worked.

Answers were judged both on the quality of the understanding and on the choice and use of contextual 'own knowledge' to support the comments made. Most students were keen to show what they knew, especially in C, but this could lead to long lists of only marginally relevant information about the ins and outs of commercial policy such as the Hovering Act.

Those who addressed arguments directly were more likely to support and criticise them with a range of well-chosen examples. The 'line-by-line' answers, on the other hand, too often contained one rather cursory piece of 'own knowledge' following each extract reference. Finding the right balance between identifying the arguments and evaluating them in the light of own knowledge is not an easy task. Some students managed it well, addressing arguments and integrating comment and context to offer supported judgements. Others floundered, though not only through lack of understanding or knowledge but also through lack of forethought and an apparent inability to organise an answer effectively. Such responses ranged from the indirect answers, where students largely wrote around the extract, to the over-formulaic, which doggedly listed 2 or 3 ways the extract was convincing followed by an equal number of ways it was not. The latter approach frequently led to contradictory statements which mitigated individual judgement. Such answers were also weakened by repeated criticism of each extract for what it omitted, which, of course, is usually worth less credit.

Question 02

Addressing the option's key question 'How important were ideas and ideology?' — and to a limited extent 'What pressures did governments face and how did they respond to them?' and 'How important was the role of individual and groups?' — this question required students to evaluate the relative importance of ideas and beliefs in pressure for change over this period. This gave students a broad range of ideas and beliefs to examine: religious beliefs like Methodism and Nonconformity generally, Evangelicalism and Catholicism, philosophies such as free trade capitalism and utilitarianism as well as political ideas like Owenite Socialism, Spencean Philanthropy, Liberal Toryism and radicalism connected to universal male suffrage. There was no shortage of potential subject matter to those who gave proper thought to the question; however, many students failed to do so or at least did not do so from the outset and then found themselves stumbling over creditable ideas and beliefs.

At some point or other, students who had thought the question through identified and explained some of these ideas and beliefs and the stronger ones discussed their role in the pressure for change. Many students struggled to identify ideas and beliefs clearly and talked more of the importance of pressures for change, lapsing into a simple essay about post war discontent and repression. Such students often used repression as a measure of how important the pressures were due to the severe reaction or suggested that the repression showed that pressures for change were relatively unimportant as they were easily dealt with. Some students simply assumed that talking about Catholic Emancipation was addressing a belief but then talked about O'Connell and the Clare election and focussed on leadership and strategy without identifying them as separate to beliefs. Greater credit was given to students who tried to express and explain ideas and beliefs. Thus, those who argued that Luddites believed that machines were taking their jobs were credited as they were trying to address a "belief". However, this cut away from their potential for an alternative answer that there were economic drivers of pressures for change — indeed, the economic alternative to ideas and beliefs was the way in which most of the more successful students were able to establish a debate over importance. In a similar way, some also found balance in saying that working class beliefs — as exemplified by Swing Rioters and Luddites — were less important than middle class beliefs in a broader franchise due to their relative success, because one was met by repression and the other eventually by a Reform Act.

Weaker students found it hard to keep within the time frame. More familiar with the period 1832-46, many cited Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League as examples of pressures for change driven by ideas of universal male suffrage.

Ideas and beliefs forms one of the six key questions students are invited to consider in this unit and it was a little disappointing how students struggled to address this broad key question.

Question 03

This question explored issues raised by the key question, 'How and with what results did society and social policy develop?' and to a certain extent by part of another key question 'What pressures did governments face and how did they respond to these?' By focussing on the two main political parties, this gave students the opportunity to compare the success of Whig and Tory social and economic reforms. This was certainly the most popular question and students had clearly been well prepared in the social reforms of the Whigs and Peel's economic reforms and their impact. In terms of content knowledge, some students appeared to know very little, even about the Poor Law Amendment Act. Otherwise, only those students who confused the two actions of the two parties — Peel being a Whig or the Public Health Act as being a Tory piece of legislation — or who went out of period with Peel's reforms in the 1820s and the work of Disraeli and Gladstone, lacked the wherewithal to answer the question. However, few students used their knowledge effectively.

Students tended to answer the question by listing Whig social reforms and their positive/negative impacts and then Tory social reforms. Then they either glossed over the Whigs economic policies or just said they left a deficit and listed, in great detail, Peel's economic reforms and their largely positive impact. Then the only comparison arrived in the final judgement saying that, effectively, the Whig were more successful in social reforms because they did more reforms and the Tories were most successful in economic reforms for much the same reason. In other words, there was very good knowledge of the content, but the question was only addressed at the end with quite a weak judgement.

Successful responses avoided becoming overly descriptive by comparing the policies by theme. There were a variety of ways in which students achieved this. One was to realise that Peel's economic policies were part of a social policy — to improve the lives of the poor by improving the economy with lower prices and more jobs. This gave a viable debate on success with social policies and the capacity to argue that the Tories were more successful than the Whigs. Others argued that the Whigs were more successful as they were setting precedents for government action on areas like education, municipal corporations and public health, which the Tories failed to address (the latter being a very good example of this as the Tories never acted on the Health of Towns report) or as they remained united as a party and able to make achievements after 1846 as Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws broke up the Conservatives as an effective party of government.

Question 04

This final question was concerned with the second part of the key question: "How important was the role of key groups?". Most students recognised that the Fenians were a part of the Irish nationalist movement but did not identify them precisely as a group which aimed for a completely independent Ireland and were prepared to use violent means to achieve this goal. Most students pointed to the fact that over the period, the Fenians main goal was not achieved as Ireland did not achieve independent status. Most pointed to the failure of the 1868 uprising and were able to illustrate that this, and connected events in Canada and mainland Britain, achieved little tangible progress. Some also added that the movement achieved little because it only brought repression and Coercion Acts to Ireland and hardened British opinion against their cause.

Students tried a variety of ways to contest the proposition in the question with various levels of success. Several quoted Gladstone and his "mission to pacify Ireland" as being brought about due to Fenianism although stronger students exercised caution in recognising that Gladstone may have come to this view for other reasons and that some of the reforms, such as church reform, were not a core element of Fenian demands. Another line that was taken was that the movement gained mass support (80,000 members) and the rising did not end republicanism as a movement and indeed inspired future generations to success. Stronger students developed this and argued that Fenianism spawned and subsequently worked with other movements, looking at how the Amnesty movement of Isaac Butt led to the more moderate Home Rule movement and how a leading Fenian, Michael Davitt, adopted Fenian methods in the aggressive campaign of the Land League. Some even mentioned the "New Departure" adopted by the IRB, the key movement of the Fenians, which led to the broad alliance with Parnell and contributed to some successes — even the commitment of one British party to the halfway house of Home Rule. Other students reinterpreted the question to be a comparative one and looked at why other movements achieved more than the Fenians, but such an approach gained less credit through the lack of focus on the core topic of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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