
A-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 1J The British Empire, c1857-1967
Report on the Examination

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Question 1

It was pleasing to see that most students were able to identify the main interpretation in all three extracts. Some students did struggle with Extract B as they focused on the phrase “hastily divided” rather than the main argument of the extract. This led pupils to become bogged down in describing the partition of India and the religious conflict which occurred. Many pupils took a successful approach of identifying the main argument(s), supporting and challenging with contextual knowledge before making a judgement. Some pupils are, however, only supporting the extracts which results in their evaluation being imbalanced. A small minority of pupils also challenged the extracts by stating what is not contained in them and minimal reward is given to this approach.

Question 2

Question 2 was by far the most popular question in Section B and there were many good answers to this question. Good answers balanced the pursuit of wealth against other factors such as strategic considerations, international rivalries, moral reasons and the actions of individuals. There were some answers which lacked development and depth of supporting evidence and many conclusions failed to address the question of “how significant”. Some answers failed to cover the date range as they only covered the 1880s onwards following the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand. Equally some lower level answers only addressed the 1850s and 1860s.

Question 3

This question asked students to evaluate Joseph Chamberlain’s attempts to strengthen the British Empire in the period 1895 to 1914. This was not a popular question amongst students and many who did answer the question struggled to go beyond Chamberlain’s role in the Boer War. Answers which focused only on the Boer War tended to be descriptive or explained why Britain lost the war, which is clearly a misunderstanding of the question. Higher level answers were those which did contain some balance. Arguments which were made in favour of the statement included Chamberlain’s failed efforts to establish an imperial federation, introduce tariff reform and the criticisms of the Jameson Raid and Boer War. Evidence used to dispute the statement included demonstrating the Empire grew substantially under Chamberlain and that he promoted imperial infrastructure projects and an imperial identity. The date range of this question did prove difficult for students with many not going past 1902. Those who stopped in 1906 were not penalised.

Question 4

Question Four was a popular question and there was a huge diversity in approach to it, many of which were creditable. Many students examined the attitude of the British government to the Empire during this period using examples of decolonisation and a change in trading patterns to demonstrate that the statement was valid. Students taking this approach balanced it with the events of the Malaya Emergency, Mau Mau uprising and the Suez Crisis. Another approach involved assessing the attitudes of the British people towards the Empire drawing on examples such as the abandonment of Empire Day and the National Service as evidence to support the

statement. Unfortunately, many who took this approach then used the evidence of racial divisions in the 1950s and 1960 as evidence of a lack of interest in the Empire and this was rarely linked convincingly to the question. Another successful approach was one which examined both the government's and public's attitudes and reflected on how it had changed over the time period. Some pupils tried to explain why decolonisation occurred, which although there was some overlap in evidence, wasn't the question asked of them and they were given minimal reward.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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