
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/1K
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/1K

The making of a Superpower: USA, 1865–1975 Component 1K: From Civil War to World War, 1865–1920

General Comments

Overall the paper worked well in eliciting a wide range of responses. Whilst there were few students at the highest level there were also few students whose work did not have some merit. It was encouraging to see so many students who had engaged with the course and were able to provide thoughtful and precise answers to the questions. The work of the best students included accurate and balanced arguments supported by well-chosen evidence. There were however some who made avoidable basic errors of fact and others who made relevant arguments but were weakened by loosely expressed assertions or description. The majority of students used the available time appropriately with only a very small number failing to complete the questions assigned.

Section A

Question 01

Most students understood that the focus of this question required a detailed interpretation of the extracts in combination with contextual knowledge to achieve a high mark. There were very few students who used the question simply to write about American foreign policy. There were, however, frequent references made to the notion of Social Darwinism but these were purely in a domestic context ignoring the need to establish links with imperialism. Weaker answers emphasised provenance, dates of publication etc. to establish credibility. Others wrote conclusions based on one extract, typically Extract B, citing that it ‘offers a wider range of explanations’. Furthermore, it was surprising how many students established far better detailed own knowledge for Extract A and yet still chose Extract B despite not providing anywhere near the same degree of substantiation.

In assessing Extract A, the influence of Mahan who believed in a ‘forward’ foreign policy underpinned by modern sea power, was identified by most students. Lots of examples were cited but not always developed as far as expected. For example, many linked the annexation of Hawaii and the acquisition of Pearl Harbour to validate the view expressed in the extract but did not go further to explain the economic significance or protection of trade markets with the Far East. Better answers identified preclusive and/or progressive imperialism and provided precise, well explained examples. There were also strong links made between the claim relating to the ambitions of Roosevelt and his actual achievements including the significance of the Spanish-American War. The need for trade/markets was usually only referenced using Panama Canal but only the best cross-referenced this element of A with B.

In assessing Extract B, many students tackled reasons including the end of isolationism, the need for new markets and Social Darwinism confidently though the latter did give rise to confusion and was repeatedly interpreted on an individual rather than a national basis. Additionally, interpretations of the desire for new markets were often little better than simply as the need to keep up with other nations, the closing of the frontier or the robber barons wanting to sell abroad without

explanation. Very few mentioned for example depressions such as the Panic of 1893 and/or improvements in production capacity and thus the need to sell surpluses abroad. Isolation frequently prompted superfluous detail and then going beyond 1914 to discuss USA's role in the First World War. Some students tried to disprove the idea of isolation breaking down by citing Anti Imperialist League etc.

Section B

Question 02

Question 02 was by far the least popular in this section. The majority of students who did tackle this question however, were evidently well informed on the divisions within the Democratic Party and 'other' factors that enabled the Republican Party to dominate. The detrimental impact of Bryan's leadership and his support for populist causes such as 'free silver' were often explained in depth in contrast to weaker responses that failed to develop the point into how and why this split the Democrats. In contrast to Bryan's role, fewer mentioned the negative impact of Cleveland for example his handling of the Pullman Strike which isolated the northern vote. Most if not all who answered 02 produced a range of carefully considered comments for Republican successes including the role of Mark Hanna, the popularity of Roosevelt and the influence of big business.

Question 03

A very popular question but one which was, in the main, little better than adequately written as invariably all but the best answers were unevenly balanced towards other factors. Analysis of railroad expansion frequently comprised of a few generalised assertions with limited supporting evidence and often contained no more than 20% of the overall response. Most students were evidently very keen to move on to 'other factors' where they felt informed and comfortable. However, other factors were also often descriptions of particular issues such as the numbers of immigrant workers after 1865 and/or the range of natural resources rather than explaining how they contributed to economic growth. Even when there were obvious links to be made with railroads they were usually thinly developed or overlooked. Better responses were able to provide targeted answers about some of the specific benefits to economic growth caused by them such as refrigerated transport, fresh food for eastern cities and growing populations and transport of raw materials.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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