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AS

# History

7041/2J

Report on the Examination

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## General comments

With this being the second year of the new style of AS students demonstrated a better understanding of what was required especially in Q1 where there was improved focus on value and comparison. Students generally were able to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q03 proved by far to be the more popular choice. There was range of stronger and weaker answers to both and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. The introduction in the specification spells out the key concepts of political authority, abolitionism and social justice. The introduction also draws attention to the need to look at social tension and harmony, nationhood and political compromise it is important that students are well versed in these concepts and issues as they the basis of question setting.

## Section A

### Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

In terms of provenance there are still a number of students who are not going far beyond repeating the sources attribution. At the lower end students tend to view provenance to simply be about who the author is whilst at the higher end students also considered the date of publication, the audience and the nature of the source. It is important that students don't dismiss a source simply based on its type (as some did with B as it was by a journalist- a group which some students evidently don't trust) or based on the author being Northern or Southern. Some students are taking the misleading line that all Northerners thought one way and all Southerners think another. The best answers displayed an understanding of the idea of 'many Norths and many Souths' for example picking up on the fact that James Henry Hammond was a representatives of South Carolina which was not typical in terms of its view towards the North amongst the Southern States (students illustrated this with reference to Nullification and Secession) and therefore the view expressed may not be the view of all Southerners. With Source B some students did pick up on the research and traveling done by Olmsted and also the date of its publication to give some balanced assessments of the sources value.

Most students who referred to tone did so effectively picking up on the strength of feeling and threatening tone on A and the more measured tone in B. Whilst students accurately identify the tone of the sources only a smaller number effectively connected their understanding of tone to its impact on the value of the sources.

The content and argument of both sources was generally well understood. The first half of Source A in particular was well understood with good links to contextual knowledge on the value of the Cotton trade and relationship between Southern and Northern economies. Students struggled more with the last few lines which deal with the idea that only the South holds back the governments from embarking on economic policies and intervention that would be counter to the Constitution and America's best interests. With Source B, some good contextual knowledge was

applied regarding comparative developments in the North and South such as railways, canals and roads. The best answers also looked at differences in areas such as education and also ideas such as the limited numbers in the south who could seek self improvement given the system of slavery.

Comparison was much improved on last year with most students drawing some conclusion with a degree of support. The best answers gave full judgements based on provenance and content with strong contextual knowledge

## **Section B**

### **Question 02**

This question was only answered by a small number of students. The question was about political stability c1845 but many answers failed to focus on this. The first section of the specification is focused on c1845 and this is where the detail to answer the question should have come from. Many students failed to do this with several answers drawing on information from the 1850s and some going as far as the outbreak of the Civil war. Details on the Mexican war were accepted but not beyond this. It is important that students respond to questions as depth questions and do not respond as if the questions cover the entire specification.

Students in some cases struggled with the focus of 'politically stable' and instead simply looked at sectional tension or more general differences between North and South. Less able students tended to make generalisations about both North and South inaccurately portraying all Northerners as abolitionists and all Southerners as 'fire-eaters'. There were several answers that strongly exaggerated the level of support for abolitionism at this time in the Northern states of the USA. The most able students were aware of the variety of political opinions in both north and south. These students wrote about the continuing second party system and actions of the likes of Henry Clay in solving political clashes and finding compromise for example over Missouri and the tariffs that led to the Nullification Crisis. It is important that in this depth paper that students go beyond generalisations about the North and South and start to explain internal differences in the two sections e.g. between South Carolina and the other Southern States over Nullification or differing attitudes to slavery in New York compared to Boston.

### **Question 03**

There were many more students who did this question and it was substantially better answered than 02. Students generally had a good understanding of a range of reasons why the Republican Party rose. Many students, however, struggled with Chronology and either through ignoring the 'by 1858' in the question or errors in their chronological understanding wrote about events in 1858 or later. The focus of the question 'the 1856 election' was not as well known as other factors such as Kansas-Nebraska, Dred Scott case and the fall of the Whigs. Some students confused the 1856 and 1860 elections, some wrote about the 1858 Lincoln- Douglas debates. The 1856 election its results and Buchanan's presidency that followed were not well known by all students. The best students understood how the 1856 election was an important staging post in the rise of the Republicans and how the 'pro-southern' policies and attitude that Buchanan was perceived to have had were critical in building Republican support. Strong answers also brought in the decline of the Know-Nothings' and the 'Panic of 1857' to their answers. This question again stressed the need for students to have detailed knowledge of events and to be able to focus fully on a narrow question. These are crucial aspects to success in addressing a depth paper.

### **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.