
AS

History

1F Industrialisation and the people: Britain, c1783-1832
Report on the Examination

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General

There was the usual wide range of responses to the questions on this year's paper from the well-argued and cogent to the weak, generalised and tangential. On the whole students coped marginally better with the extract question and the second essay than the first essay which concerned a comparison of the most important social changes between 1784 and 1812.

Both Sections A and B were marked according to the respective generic levels mark schemes which offer a range of 5 levels of attainment, carefully graded to assess a combination of understanding and knowledge. Adjustments to the marks within these levels were made according to how well the student's work matched the level requirements. There was little difference seen in the quality of the responses to the different areas of the specification content, and, to this extent, the questions proved effective at differentiating between students, with a roughly equal number of strong and weak answers being found in response to every question.

More generally, there was still a sense that students were far more knowledgeable about political than social and economic issues. The course's title is "Industrialisation and the people" and schools must expect questions which do expect some understanding of the impact of the industrial revolution on Britain and its people; the responses to question 2 especially were disappointing on this score and few students proved able to create a robust argument on either essay.

Question 1

The AS level extract question for Component 1 is a demanding one and students generally fared best when they read and thought about each extract carefully - in relation to the focus of the question – and forming the basis of their comparison before beginning to write. Strong answers usually began with a direct reference to the key arguments contained in the extract; more mediocre ones summarised everything the extract said, whilst weaker responses often adopted a line-by-line approach with no real feel for the overall view being expressed.

Those who assimilated the extracts as whole, found two key arguments in relation to the influence of the French Revolution on political reform in Britain between 1789 and 1800. Extract A acknowledged that the French Revolution was a critical factor in the period whereas B argued that it had no real impact. However, few students read carefully enough to go beyond this rather basic comparison. Only better students read carefully and referenced that in A the impact of the French Revolution was critical in slowing down the pace of political reform along with the obstinacy of the political elite of the weaknesses of political opposition. Equally in B, few students read to the end before they committed pen to paper and noted that the extract did acknowledge that the revolution provided some impetus and energy but "little else" – in other words in ideological change.

This meant that some of the answers were slightly off beam – the review of A tended to say that the French Revolution was the – not a – critical factor and while they focussed on the question they tended to say it was the dominant factor. On B students tended to be too absolute in their view that the French Revolution had no effect and tended to draw the comparison that the interpretation in A was more convincing simply because it was not credible that the French Revolution had no impact.

Students did find useful things to comment upon and to apply their own knowledge to. Some in A focussed on the opposition to the power of George III's "excessive power" and commented on how successfully Pitt dealt with it. More focussed on how the French Revolution united most

conservatives and liberals and cited Burke effectively and the measures of Pitt's Terror. Some tended to give too many examples without showing how each was a response to growing fear of the people due to the French Revolution. Here those who chose the Alien Act tended to be most effective. In B, students challenged the lack of impact by focussing on the more aggressive outbursts of radicalism, such as the mutinies and most effectively, Wolfe Tone's rising in Ireland.

Some students when they drew their comparisons pointed to whether the 1789 revolution did change the nature of radicalism as suggested in A or not as suggested in B. This was a thoughtful approach and was a valid point of comparison, albeit a subordinate part of the key interpretations of the sources. Very few pointed out that the Liberals referred to in A were implied to be members of the elite whereas the radicals in B were not necessarily the same sort of person.

Answers were judged both on the quality of the understanding and on the choice and use of contextual 'own knowledge' to support the comments and comparison made. Most students were keen to show what they knew but this could lead to long 'lists' of only marginally relevant information. Students' ability to discriminate between appropriate and irrelevant supporting detail was therefore an important element in assessment decisions.

Finding the right balance between identifying the arguments and evaluating them in the light of own knowledge is not easy. 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, and rather disappointingly, 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 listed two or three 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 against individual judgement. Such answers were also weakened by repeated criticism of each extract for what it didn't say.

Question 2

This question addressed one of the option's key questions, 'How did society develop?' and required students to compare the growth of the "industrial workforce" (the term used in the specification) with other social changes to assess whether it constituted the most important social change of the period.

Students were expected to look at the growth of the industrial workforce over the period, particularly in relation to towns and factories and to explore whether this was an important social change or not. Then in their evaluation of its importance, they were expected to compare with other social changes of the time, the more obvious being the rise of the middle class and the decline of the peasant and farm labourer.

Many students reinterpreted the question slightly to explore what the most important engine of social change was, not what was the most important social change. This led some of them into considering issues like the war and government policy. More students looked at urbanisation, population growth or the rise of the factory system as alternatives, but these tended to overlap closely with the rise of the industrial workforce. Those who did follow this route but were able to show that one was a consequence of the other and so should be accorded greater importance, were able to achieve better results.

The most successful approach was to contrast the rise of the industrial workforce with other social groups – the most common being the rise of the middle class and the decline of the agricultural labourer. These gave greater scope for an argument – for example, that the rise of the middle class largely depended upon the rise of the industrial workforce or – without the enterprise of the rising middle classes, there would have been no industrial workforce. Equally, the decline of the agricultural labourer was providing the momentum for the migration which allowed towns and the industrial workforce to grow.

The answers to this question often suffered from the lack of argumentation which is required for high marks. Many students could reel off details of bad conditions in towns and associate this with the growth of the industrial workforce without applying them to the argument. An approach which contrasted directly the growth of the industrial workforce with other social changes was rare.

Question 3

This question explored issues raised by the key question, 'How and with what results did the economy develop and change?'. The question itself focussed on a basic theme – why did economic growth occur – and offered one reason for this – the spread of new technology. Better students were able to cite two new pieces of technology – the Davy Safety Lamp and Neilson's hot air blast iron smelter – but also noted carefully the precise phrase in the question "the spread of new technology" and discussed the widespread adoption of machines like the power loom and its greater robustness from being constructed of cast iron. Others remarked on the development of the steam locomotive, but the best students noted that its influence was only just beginning with the Liverpool to Manchester Railway in 1830. Some students went further and questioned the role of new technology as Britain was characterised by the persistence of old technology; for example, huge amounts of cloth were being woven by power looms, but it required traditional hand skills to turn this into wearable items. Equally coal which was previously dangerous to mine could now be more safely accessed, but the actual increase of production was mainly achieved by employing more men to hew the coal from the rock underground still using pickaxes.

Students showed their preference for political history by their choice of alternative explanations and leading the way was government policy. Many students noted that government policy in the immediate post war era was not really encouraging to economic growth, but more thoughtful students noted that the exigencies of war and the dominance of the aristocratic oligarchy left the government with little room for manoeuvre. Indeed, the ending of the war was itself seen as playing a major role in the economy with the end of the trade embargoes but also the fall in demand for munitions and uniforms. However, many students noted that the reforms of trade brought about particularly by Huskisson encouraged economic growth although there was some lack of exemplification of what was involved. The best students added that this was a major inducement to economic growth citing trade with the newly independent states of South America.

Other students also mentioned the increasing demand and source of labour provided by the inexorable rise in population. The disappointing element of the answers was again the lack of argumentation of one factor against the other in the body of the answer – there was usually only some comment in the judgement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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