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# HISTORY

2S The Making of Modern Britain, 1951-1979  
Report on the Examination

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## **General**

The paper proved accessible, though question 2 was more popular than question 3. There were very few spoilt or incomplete papers.

### **Question 1**

The question targeted a fundamental aspect of 60s society: the extent to which moral attitudes changed in the so-called 'swinging sixties'.

The sources were chosen to represent two quite different perspectives. The best answers recognised this explicitly and were able to develop a well-supported comparison of both provenance and content in relation to the issue. Weaker answers tended to get stuck in a revolving door of generalist stock words and phrases related to provenance - such as 'bias', 'reliability' and 'with hindsight' – or offered basic description on issues only loosely related to changing moral attitudes.

### **Source A**

Strong answers to Source A offered a nuanced analysis of the value of a newspaper from a 'quality' centre-right broadsheet newspaper. The date of the report was also recognised as significant, being written prior to the bulk of the liberalising legislation spearheaded by Roy Jenkins in the second half of the decade. Students used this information to suggest that 'permissiveness' was already apparent and challenging moral norms in the early 1960s.

Weaker answers merely offered simplistic, generalist comments about 'newspaper' reports, resorting to stock evaluation linked to 'bias' or 'sales' or 'entertainment'. Less-focused students wrongly made the assumption that the report was written by Mary Whitehouse herself.

Students need to be wary of making judgements based on one or two words or phrases rather than the message of the source overall. Many thought that the report was entirely critical of the campaign or was mocking its participants because of the description of the organisation as 'flimsy'. A closer reading, particularly of the final sentence, suggests that the report was broadly supportive of and sympathetic to the concerns of the campaigners.

It was disappointing that quite a few students seemed never to have heard of Mary Whitehouse. However, many recognised her significance as one of the leading voices challenging the 'permissive society'. Good answers were well informed about the role of the BBC under Hugh Greene and its promotion of hard-hitting, 'gritty' plays and its taboo-challenging programming. Many students did, however, confuse BBC programmes with films, books and theatre. Weaker answers drifted from this focus, writing in very general terms about youth culture or emerging feminism.

The best answers reached well-substantiated and well-supported judgements discussing the extent to which the source represented prevailing moral attitudes in the mid-60s, particularly amongst the demographic largely represented at the meeting.

## Source B

Source B provided a significant contrast to source A. Good answers took the opportunity to compare the value of a reminiscence compared to that of a contemporary newspaper account. Again, the best were well nuanced, contrasting the strengths of reflection and personal experience against the limitations of romanticised, selective memory. Similarly, there was much scope for students to discuss the different demographic evidenced in the attribution.

Interestingly, few students focused on the title of the book and what this might suggest about the 60s. Perhaps less surprisingly, Roger McGough was not well known. Moreover, fewer students than expected were aware of the place of Liverpool in the history of popular culture in the 60s.

The best answers were not only able to support the reference to greater 'equality of rights', but were also able to challenge the generalisation that there was 'tolerance for new ideas'. Some students presented powerful arguments and examples to suggest that sexual and racial prejudices remained widespread and ingrained in 60s society and that the new tolerance was 'skin-deep'.

Overall, it was interesting that most students felt that 'B' was most valuable, arguing that it best represented the prevailing social and moral mood of the 60s. Others argued that 'A' was most valuable because it evidenced the persistence of 'traditional' mores and values amongst a broad sweep of the population, particularly the adult female demographic.

## Question 2

This essay focused on cause and consequence: was the British economy weak as a consequence of Conservative 'stop-go' policies?

The premise of the question was challenged in a number of ways. Some students recognised the strengths of 'stop-go', particularly its flexibility, and also argued that elements of the economy remained in relatively good health by the early 60s, evidenced by continuing affluence, rising wages and relatively full employment. Other students acknowledged the limitations, short- and long-term, of 'stop-go', but also provided counter-arguments to explain the causes of economic weakness. Both routes were able to lead to a top-level mark.

Credit was given to later chronological references, particularly Wilson's devaluation in 1967, if they were clearly linked to the question. This usually took the form of students arguing that Wilson inherited a difficult economic legacy caused by stop-go policies.

A few weaker students offered very generalist answers and showed a very limited chronological grasp, often by arguing that the economy was weak because 'the unions', especially the miners, were always striking. Unfortunately, the 'Winter of Discontent' received quite a few mentions.

Another limitation often seen was the over-focus, in the form of generally narrative tracts, on 'affluence'. The point was valid – growing consumer demand and aspirations were an indicator of positive economic trends – but students regularly became side-tracked by quoting innumerable statistics related to cars, fridges, washing machines and foreign holidays.

The best answers combined a good understanding of stop-go as an economic cycle, and its political manipulation as a vote winner at elections, balanced against a range of wider causes of economic malaise.

### Question 3

This question focused on change and continuity. Good answers had a clear grasp of developments over the period of the 1970s; weaker answers tended to stop at 1973 and Britain's entry into the EEC. Students needed to offer some information and analysis linked to the Labour governments from 1974 in order to reach the higher levels.

Credit was given for references to Suez (1956) and Vietnam (1968) if effectively linked to change and continuity within the 'special relationship' in the 70s. However, long descriptive passages related to these two features were not rewarded.

The best answers tended to argue that the relationship was put under considerable strain in the early 70s, particularly as a consequence of Heath's strongly pro-European agenda, but that it certainly did not collapse. Indeed, very good answers focused on key continuities in shared political and ideological aims and military collaboration, and Wilson's and Callaghan's more committed support for maintaining the 'Atlantic alliance' than that shown by Heath.

Generally, the depth of information and the quality of learning was less extensive than shown in question 2 and perhaps reflects the fact that question 3 focused on a less mainstream aspect of the specification. Perhaps it also reflects the fact that students tend to feel less confident in their understanding of foreign and international affairs.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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