

HISTORY

Paper 9279/51

Paper 51

Key messages

- In order to prepare for the examination, it is helpful for candidates to practise writing answers against the clock and to rely on their memory rather than notes.
- A considerable proportion of candidates used formulaic approaches to source analysis and evaluation. While developing a standardised approach can be helpful it can also limit some responses, particularly when the approach taken is over-complex.

General comments

For the source-based question in **Section A**, there is no need to paraphrase the content of a written source or to describe the content of a visual source. Instead, candidates need to *analyse* the sources in order to show how far they support the given hypothesis. For higher marks, responses should *evaluate* the sources beyond face value, using the source, its provenance and other sources or their own knowledge to do so.

For the essay questions in **Section B**, responses should develop a balanced argument which answers the question set. The argument should be structured into a series of key points with a paragraph per point. Each point should be (a) explained, (b) illustrated with relevant and detailed historical evidence and (c) directly related to the question. A conclusion is essential to achieve the higher mark bands. It should reach a judgement in response to the question and be consistent with the argument advanced in the essay.

For both types of question, responses can be improved by the inclusion of some precise, detailed examples to support their arguments. A number of scripts contained essays which involved no more than general historical explanation, often without any reference to specific dates. History is about change and continuity over time. The more specific the evidence and the more secure the chronology, the higher the marks which can be awarded. The best answers are full of such details.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Source A was a cartoon contemporary with and commenting on events in Kansas in the mid-1850s. Almost all candidates analysed the cartoon, which clearly supports the assertion, and made appropriate comments about its meaning. In doing this, some took too long to describe what was happening in the cartoon, for which they could only receive limited credit. Fewer responses evaluated the source effectively. The most commonly seen approach was to make general statements along the following lines: '*Source A is a cartoon. Cartoons are subjective and one-sided. Therefore Source A is biased and not to be trusted*'. This is too general to be considered as historical evaluation which must be more soundly based and more detailed. There were several ways in which the best responses addressed this. A small proportion of candidates considered the fact that the source was drawn in 1856 which was presidential election year. The cartoon portrays 'the Democratic platform' in a very critical way, presumably in an attempt to influence voters. Thus it is definitely one-sided and unreliable. A greater number of responses used cross-reference to evaluate Source A. It was recognised that Sources D and E blame the Democrats, although neither mentions the four leaders in the cartoon by name. Even Senator Sumner, the most radical of abolitionists speaking in 1856, does not do so. Thus the cartoon's anti-Democratic stance is not specifically supported by other sources. Some used contextual knowledge of Stephen Douglas and James Buchanan to assess the source. It was known that Senator Douglas supported the concept of popular sovereignty, which meant that voters in the Territories would decide whether to accept slavery or not, rather than have it imposed on them. This

undermines the cartoon's view of Douglas. In 1858 President Buchanan supported the Lecompton constitution for Kansas. This supports the cartoon's view of Buchanan.

Candidates often found Sources B and C easier to evaluate, usually by reference to their authors, De Witt and Davis. Source D proved somewhat harder as, at first glance, it seemed to be a Northern abolitionist advocating violence. However, he did so only in response to violence by border ruffians from the South. Most responses seemed to find Source E the most challenging. Many seized on the line '*slavery might be introduced quietly and surely, without arousing a conflict*' and used it to argue that the Democrats of the South did not cause trouble in Kansas. A more careful reading of the source shows that the statement was Sumner's summary of Southern hopes, not its actions. Those hopes were dashed by the 'populous North', which 'poured into the land'. This then caused the South to use force to get its way. This was the crime against Kansas which Sumner was referring to. This shows just how important it is to read the source very carefully in order to ensure its proper meaning is understood.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that some candidates have become over-elaborate in their attempts at evaluation. They distinguish between relevance, reliability and validity of sources. They do not need to and some wasted valuable time in doing so. Reliability is the key. The less reliable a source, the less value it has in relation to the particular hypothesis.

Section B

Question 2

This was a popular question and reasonably well answered, with the majority of candidates displaying relevant knowledge. Many, however, interpreted the question too generally. They took it to read '*Describe the factors which caused the destruction of the way of life of Indians in the nineteenth century*'. Thus they ignored three key limitations of the question. They tended to describe rather than assess and considered all Indians, not just the Plains Indians. A number attempted to cover the whole of the nineteenth century rather than the second half. By doing so, they limited the marks they could achieve. The best responses paid closer attention to the wording of the question, were focused throughout and were rewarded for relevance.

Question 3

Responses to this question were characterised by good knowledge of Reconstruction and the extent to which it helped ex-slaves. Most candidates provided arguments and evidence on both sides of the argument and achieved a degree of balance. The better answers knew something about the changing nature of Reconstruction within the 10 to 15 years before its abandonment in 1877. Some went beyond the Reconstruction era to describe the Jim Crow policies of the late nineteenth century, which was acceptable so long as comments made clear links with Reconstruction. Discussion of the *Plessy vs Ferguson* judgement in 1896 was to go too far beyond the parameters of the question. It was notable that a number of responses confused the black codes and Jim Crow laws, the former coming in the 1860s and the latter from the 1880s.

Question 4

A minority of those who attempted this question misinterpreted 'trade unions' to be trade associations rather than labour unions. As there were few formal trade associations at the time, this group found it difficult to write relevantly, even in terms of their redefinition of trade unions. The majority who defined their terms correctly understood that the question allowed the inclusion of other factors which contributed to US economic growth, such as the contribution of the big names of US industry such as Rockefeller and Carnegie. The question required some details of the work of various labour unions, especially in the Progressive era of the early twentieth century, but those efforts were not the exclusive focus of the question.

Question 5

The majority of responses demonstrated some knowledge on the topic of race relations. Most interpreted this question as focusing on military events during the two wars, about which they knew only a little. A considerable proportion of responses neglected to discuss the home front and overlooked the post-war impact in each case. The best responses made comparisons between the two wars and their impact. Weaker answers tended to describe the impacts of the two wars rather than establishing a comparison. 'Compare and contrast' requires candidates to consider the similarities and differences. The most effective responses took this approach although, in some instances, better use of detailed examples would have strengthened arguments and led to the award of higher marks.

Question 6

A significant proportion of candidates turned this into a question on the New Deal. The domestic policies of the FDR presidency were certainly part of the answer. However, they were not the whole answer. The Great Depression was essentially economic and thus assessment of the development of the US economy was needed before the New Deal was explained. The same applied to American society. Did the Great Depression divide or unite the American people? The majority of responses consisted of a general discussion about both economy and society. The best responses recognised that they should evaluate, rather than simply describe, the effects of the Great Depression. This involved making an attempt to form an historical judgement about the relative importance of the various developments. A minority of candidates achieved the higher levels by taking this approach.

Question 7

There were some knowledgeable responses to this question although a number were weakened by two limitations. Firstly, they covered the few years leading to American intervention in the Second World War, from 1937 to 1941, rather than the entire time period in the question. A few responses mentioned the American decision not to join the League of Nations in 1919. The period from the early 1920s to the late 1930s usually received little coverage. Secondly, most answers focused on US relations with Europe. Relations with China and Japan were infrequently mentioned, those with Central and South America hardly at all. A minority of responses attempted to turn the question into an essay on domestic affairs, writing about the inward-looking 'roaring' twenties and the depressed 1930s rather than foreign policy. There were some perceptive responses which made a useful distinction between economic and diplomatic isolationism, but these were unusual in their approach.

Question 8

Almost everyone who answered this question disagreed strongly with the assertion. They argued that American life was revolutionised in the 1960s. They usually quoted the experiences of college students, women and African Americans in support of their argument. Some knowledge of historical dates is vital and some responses used examples which came from the 1950s rather than the 1960s. For instance, Elvis Presley rose to notoriety in 1956. The so-called 'British invasion' of groups such as the Beatles did not occur until the mid-1960s. Likewise, the position of women only really started to change in the mid to late 1960s. The National Organisation for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966. With regard to African-Americans, many candidates concentrated on the methods used by the civil rights movement, often from the 1950s, when they might have focused more effectively on the outcomes of the movement for the lives of African Americans. The most effective responses also considered the counter argument – that changes in lifestyles in the 1960s were not revolutionary. By the late 1960s, political leaders were using the phrase 'the silent majority' to make a clear contrast with the noisy minorities of college students and African Americans. Even President Nixon gave the term his seal of approval in 1969. A number of responses concluded that the vast majority of white, middle-aged, working and middle class Americans experienced no great change in their lifestyles in the 1960s – except possibly when affected by the behaviour and beliefs of their children.