



# A-Level History

7042/2G The Birth of the USA, 1760 - 1801

## Report on the examination

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## General

Many of the students sitting this paper had revised and thoroughly prepared for the examination. The questions covered a good range of the course and allowed students across abilities to access the questions, with more able students showing their analytical abilities and knowledge. Marks were distributed across the full range with very few students unable to answer three questions. Time management was very good, although for some students it is worth reminding them that they do not need to waste time writing out the question or repeating what is written in the attribution for each source. Similarly, there is also no need to write a general introduction to Question 01. There was some excellent application of subject knowledge, with a generally good level of conceptual understanding shown. Answers displayed enthusiasm and knowledge was used effectively. A minority had ineffective written communication skills, including deficient organisation, grammar and legibility, which does make assessing extended answers more difficult. Out of the three essay questions, Question 02 was the least popular and Question 03 was the most popular.

## Question 01

For the compulsory question, students were required to assess three sources for their individual value in relation to studying the causes of the American revolution. The three sources ranged from 1773 to 1776 – with Source A being a warning to the British of colonial unhappiness towards the injustices they felt Britain had inflicted upon them and that, if such actions continued, the colonies would ‘seek to break free from British rule’. Source B was a response from January 1776, encouraging the colonies to break free from Britain now that the time was right to secure independence. Source C reflected upon the lack of respect towards Britain following the outbreak of hostilities. The best responses to this question evaluated each source separately, considering content, argument and provenance with relevant and focused contextual own knowledge that was directly relevant to the question.

Generally, there was good analysis from students regarding each source. There was a clear understanding that Source A was a warning to the British, although some students attributed the source to after the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, when Source A was from September 1773, weakening the evaluation. However, many students linked precise knowledge about British legislation, such as the Tea Act 1773, fuelling colonial dissent. The better answers also linked their knowledge about Britain’s justification for enacting legislation and colonial actions to challenge the value of the source – commenting that it was a justified for Britain, as the mother country, to expect the colonies to contribute towards their defence and security. Furthermore, many students were able to identify appropriate knowledge to assess the value of Source B, evaluating the punitive Coercive Acts 1774 and failure of the Olive branch petition as reasons to fight for independence. Many students were able to discuss the importance of this source for its straightforward clear message to the colonists, in a language that all could relate to, fuelling the fervour towards independence. Lastly, the stronger responses for Source C were able to assess the impact of the outbreak of hostilities such as events at Lexington and Concord as causes for the American revolution. Less successful responses tended to use general knowledge about legislation from 1764 to 1774

that wasn't directly relevant to each individual source. This meant they were sometimes unable to assess the value of each source in relation to their contextual knowledge. In terms of provenance, although many answers demonstrated some awareness for each attribution, there were some misunderstandings of the origin of Source C with some students commenting that the Source C was by John Adams, not Samuel Adams. There were also some issues with students making generalised comments about provenance which did not offer convincing evaluation of value. For example, asserting that Source A was limited because Franklin was in Britain not America, or Source B was from Paine who disliked the British so will be biased. Some responses did not assess the value of the sources in direct relation to the issue in the question – merely making comments on whether the information provided was accurate or not. It is crucial that students make clear judgements on the value of the sources rather than simply describing source content/provenance and using some own knowledge to 'fact-check' the sources.

## Question 02

Question 02 required students to assess whether Britain successfully overcame the challenges it faced in North America in the years 1760 to 1763. This was the least popular of the essay questions by far, with only a minority of students completing it. There were some strong responses to this question, where students were able to assess the position and actions of Britain in North America in the years 1760 to 1763. The better responses focused on the defeat and removal of the French threat from North America and how this affected the status of Britain – discussing issues such as increased prestige and wealth, alongside emerging colonial expectations and conflict with Native Americans. Crucially, better responses were able to provide a strong argument of the Seven Years War, the Proclamation Line and Pontiac's rebellion balanced against colonial unrest and discussed how these factors damaged Britain's position and curbed their ability to fully overcome the challenges faced in North America. However, the less successful responses focused on a narrative of westward expansion and Pontiac's rebellion 1763. Some responses simply described these events and included information from post 1763 that was not relevant. Some responses were unable to make a judgement regarding whether Britain overcame the challenges it faced; instead focusing on a summary of events between 1760 to 1763.

## Question 03

This question was by far the most popular essay and required students to comment on the reasons for American victory in the War of Independence and the extent to which this was due to the mistakes of the British in the years 1776 to 1783. The quality of these responses was generally very good and demonstrated in-depth knowledge of British mistakes, American actions and the role of international support. Answers demonstrated that students have an in-depth knowledge of British mistakes and the tactics of George Washington in this period, such as defensive positioning, strategic retreats and calculated offensive actions – however the main strength was being able to link these factors with the involvement of France and Spain, resulting in American victory. For example, students who tied the failure at Saratoga with the entry of the French and developed analysis that, although foreign intervention was a deciding factor, without British mistakes the French would not have entered the war at all. The less successful responses placed too much focus on describing British mistakes or Washington's actions and not linking their material clearly to the precise question.

Furthermore, some responses focused heavily on British mistakes at the start of the war but neglected to cover developments beyond 1776/77.

## Question 04

This question was relatively popular and required students to assess to what extent Alexander Hamilton strengthened the USA in the 1790s. Some students displayed an excellent range of knowledge and understanding of Hamilton's actions – dealing with the national debt, the bank, the Whiskey rebellion and the extent to which his actions caused political divisions. The stronger responses to this question were able to identify the extent to which his actions strengthened the USA versus the rifts created: North / South, and the elite and rich against farmers and workers of America, creating political divisions. Many essays were highly informed, passionate and competent. Such answers showed conceptual awareness and demonstrated clear understanding of Hamilton's actions in the 1790s. The less successful responses focused on a for and against argument of Hamilton's actions producing a repetitive narrative of events, or they wrote a paragraph on Hamilton, followed by paragraphs of wider factors such as Washington and John Adams to discuss who did the most to strengthen America, discussing issues out of direct focus of the question.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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