



**GCSE**  
**History**  
8145/1A/X

## Report on the examination

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## 1A/A America, 1840-1895: Expansion and Democracy

### General Comments

Numerous students impressed examiners with the quality of their work and demonstrated a sound understanding of the key issues in this period study. Most were able to show a secure knowledge of the period along with an understanding of the main concepts through their performance against the assessment objectives. The strongest student responses indicated effective planning and there was considerable evidence to suggest careful consideration of the interpretations provided for use with Questions 1, 2 and 3.

### Question 1

In Question 1 most students understood and were able to explain differences about the conflict on the plains from the interpretations provided. Those responses which drew out and explained an important valid difference, often based on the apportionment of blame, were placed in Level 2. Weaker answers were characterised by an over-reliance on the interpretations with students copying indiscriminately. The overuse of quotations tended to hinder rather than support students' responses and the weakest responses consisted of largely quotations. There persisted a tendency on the part of some students to write unnecessarily long answers, losing sight of the marks available for this question.

Several Level 1 responses merely identified the features of each interpretation without making any direct comparison, thus failing to address the comparative nature of the question. A small number of responses were not credited because they considered the provenance of the interpretations. At Level 2 students were typically able to offer developed thoughts about the two interpretations indicating that in Interpretation A blame was ascribed to the white migrants or soldiers in the United States army whereas in Interpretation B, it was the white American government who bore responsibility for the conflict owing to their duplicitous dealing over land and treaties.

### Question 2

Weaker responses to this question were usually characterised by simple statements and undeveloped assertions. Ascriptions of bias were commonly attributed to one or the other author. Frequently, these comments were either undeveloped or unsubstantiated. Some students attempted to base their answers on the differences in the times of writing, without extending the answer to suggest why or how that might have had an impact on the nature of the interpretations.

Most students focused on the authorship of the two interpretations: Interpretation A was written by a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre while the author of Interpretation B was an American bishop. Most students recognised these differences but did not explain why these experiences or backgrounds might have influenced their viewpoints. As with Question 1, several responses were too long in proportion to the marks available for this question. Weaker responses fixated on describing differences between the interpretations rather than explaining why these differences existed.

### Question 3

Some impressive responses were seen in answer to this question. Some students, however, chose to dwell on the provenance of the two interpretations and, in the absence of anything more credit-worthy, were placed in Level 1. A limited number of responses addressed the wrong question focus and would have been more appropriate as answers to Question 2 or even Question 1. Answers of this type frequently relied less on any contextual knowledge about conflict on the plains but rather looked to the motives of the authors and asserted that the interpretation with the least 'bias was the more convincing.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. A significant number adopted a line-by-line approach which was unlikely to facilitate the demonstration of any overall understanding, and in fact, often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question. There were also numerous references to the provenance of the interpretations interwoven with some contextual knowledge used to test for accuracy.

On the other hand, a substantial number of responses displayed sound, relevant contextual knowledge and used this effectively to consider which of the interpretations might be the more convincing. Some students presented a strong case for just one Interpretation being the more convincing, often with excellent contextual knowledge in support but, as the mark scheme stated, there was a limit to the credit that could be earned by taking this approach. This was because it was necessary to provide a developed explanation, to some extent, in support of the validity of the arguments provided in both interpretations.

A small number of students attempted to make links between the two interpretations, and notably, some very good knowledge was often deployed in doing so. Higher-level responses were characterised by reference to such topics as the Permanent Indian Frontier, the Fort Laramie Treaties, Manifest Destiny, and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills region of South Dakota. Examiners were not looking for any one Interpretation to be favoured in students' answers, so long as a coherent and accurately supported argument was made.

### Question 4

This question clearly asked for two problems faced by the Native American Indians after the Battle of the Little Big Horn and most students responded very effectively, citing among other things, the Dawes Act, and the attempts by the white American government to assimilate culturally the Native Americans.

Most students were concise in their answers and related their descriptions to the demands of the question. There were numerous Level 2 responses to be seen. These were often exemplary as students clearly signposted the direction of their answers using such language as 'firstly' and 'secondly' and divided and organised their writing into two clear and distinct paragraphs.

## Question 5

A substantial number of students were well-versed in the new farming methods and technologies which affected the lives of the Homesteaders and a good number of successful responses were seen in answer to this question. A range of items were presented including the introduction of the 'Sodbuster' plough, the wind pump, dry farming, barbed wire, and Turkey Red wheat seeds.

In answering this question many students chose to write about the role of the railroads in bringing homesteaders and later the machinery, to the Plains. The most effective responses maintained their focus on how the new methods and technologies impacted on the lives of the Homesteaders. Weaker responses, by contrast, lost sight of this dimension of the question, had less depth and made simple, restricted points that were often accompanied by accurate, but undeveloped, knowledge.

## Question 6

To be successful in answering this Period Study question, students should have shown an understanding of second order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as demonstrated the ability to make substantiated judgements. Weaker responses to this question were superficial and assertive. Numerous Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses simply did not show sufficient knowledge of the economic and social or the political consequences of the American Civil War. Responses at this level were often characterised by brief description or cursory narrative. Such responses frequently lacked a clear line of argument.

Nevertheless, numerous students were able to exhibit some secure knowledge in formulating responses to this question. The most successful of these were able to develop a balanced and detailed assessment.

The strongest answers were able to secure Level 3 marks by discussing both economic and social, and political consequences in detail so that supporting knowledge was pertinent, accurate and clearly presented. Level 4 responses were typified by a focused and appropriate reference to both economic and social and political consequences throughout the answer and coherently argued a well-supported case. It was noticeable that the strongest answers were planned and carefully structured with clearly defined paragraphs containing an impressive knowledge of such topics as constitutional amendments, the 'Black Codes', Reconstruction and the emergence of white supremacist organisations.

## 1A/B Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and dictatorship

### Question 1

Most students demonstrated knowledge of the period and understanding of the main concepts through the key assessment objectives. There was evidence that students had taken time to consider and plan their responses, and there was careful reading of the interpretations in Questions 1, 2 and 3. Some students were more confident than others in assembling their answers to these questions, although confusion persisted over the different responses required for questions 1, 2 and 3.

Examiners noted that weaker answers typically showed students who neglected to develop their points and merely repeated what the interpretations stated. Some students made simple, abbreviated, and descriptive observations, while others wrote excessively lengthy answers. All students should remain mindful of the marks available for this question. Some answers failed to gain credit because they discussed the provenance of the interpretations, though this occurred less frequently than in previous years. Many students continued to copy large sections of the interpretations or paraphrased extensively.

However, in answering Question 1, the majority of students successfully comprehended and explained differences, though briefly, with reference to 'poverty' or 'anger' regarding reasons for support of the Nazi Party from these interpretations. Some students struggled to identify differences because the interpretations were not simply positive or negative about why people supported the Nazi Party. Many responses reached Level 2, demonstrating the ability to draw out and explain important valid differences about the reasons for support. Level 2 responses typically made comparisons between the interpretations, particularly noting that Interpretation B made inferences about the legacy of political motivations for support, whereas Interpretation A focused on economic reasons for support based on the impact of the Depression. There was sensible understanding of specific words and phrases.

## Question 2

This question continued to be answered well. Many students could identify reasons for the differences through several routes, but weaker responses tended to state rather than explain these reasons. Most students commented on the background of the two authors, with responses frequently focusing on aspects such as the author of interpretation B living in the Ruhr region. Student responses were stronger regarding interpretation A. Fewer students than previously wrote about the date of the interpretations, although some instances occurred when discussing interpretation A and the author's position after the war in establishing the SS Veterans' Association.

Examiners reported fewer answers showing that students had confused Questions 1 and 2. As in Question 1, responses were sometimes excessively lengthy considering the available marks. Stronger answers related contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations and used this to explain why they might have differed in their views about reasons for support. Some students developed arguments about how economic matters impacted the reasons for support, connecting Interpretation A to desperation and Interpretation B to anger because the author lived in the Ruhr. Stronger answers on provenance typically focused on the authors' roles within the Nazi Party or their social class. More successful answers relating to Interpretation A discussed how the author's opinion was influenced by financial benefits experienced after the Depression, given his position as a factory worker, although some students discussed his rise within the party to promote its appeal. Students were less successful in developing motives or purposes for Interpretation B, with some failing to progress beyond noting 'she was in the League of German Maidens.' Many students expanded upon the 'brainwashing' idea on her opinions or noted her different experiences compared to interpretation A because she lived in the Ruhr. Students who made simple assertions usually did not develop their answers to explain why the authors might possess different interpretations regarding the reasons why Germans supported the Nazi Party. Overall, most students who understood what was expected of them answered this question well and discussed the provenance of the sources in sufficient detail to be rewarded with Level 2 marks.

## Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses, although many students failed to progress beyond Level 1 due to responses providing brief comments about the interpretations' content. Other answers focused generally on provenance, which impaired their ability to gain credit beyond Level 1. Examiners noted that some responses were more appropriate as answers to Question 2 or Question 1. Answers at this level frequently relied upon contextual

knowledge but examined the authors' motives and stated that the interpretation with less 'bias' was more convincing.

The most obvious difference between student answers lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach, which was unlikely to allow students to demonstrate overall understanding and often diverted focus away from the question's demands. There were references to the interpretations' provenance intermingled with context used to test accuracy. A notable weakness was the inability to offer appropriate contextual knowledge to evaluate the interpretations, with some students using contextual knowledge that was not relevant to why Germans supported the Nazi Party. Most answers offering contextual knowledge to evaluate Interpretation A focused on growing support for the Nazi Party during the Depression, with some focusing on the appeal of the Communists.

There were, however, many answers with relevant contextual knowledge that debated and judged which interpretation was more convincing. Some students who presented strong cases for just one interpretation with good contextual knowledge were limited in the credit they could earn. This occurred because it was necessary to provide developed explanations supporting the validity of arguments in each interpretation.

Higher-level responses were often achieved by reference to the interpretations' specifics to discuss effectively the targeted methodology of propaganda and appeal to different groups of people in relation to interpretation A, although some incorrectly chose to include extensive knowledge about economic policies post-1934 or BDM activities in interpretation B, ignoring the issue stated in the question. Some students made substantiated judgements about the more convincing interpretation. Examiners did not seek a specific interpretation to be favoured in answers provided sensible and supported arguments were made.

## Question 4

This question was accessible across all ability ranges, but many students focused entirely on foreign policy alone, failing to link it to 'ruling Germany'. Many answers partly or wholly referred to the desire for Empire rather than linking this as a problem for the Kaiser in ruling Germany, meaning some responses lacked focus on the question. Regarding answers that addressed problems faced by the Kaiser in ruling Germany, a significant proportion demonstrated knowledge of specific problems, with most students referring to the rise of the Social Democrats and responses to increased taxation.

Most answers referring to industrialisation's impact had secure but limited contextual knowledge. Many achieved Level 2 responses. Answers often offered a simple understanding of taxation's impact in increasing discontent amongst the people. Nevertheless, many students who were concise in their answers and related their descriptions to the question's

demands achieved Level 2 marks. The structure of answers was exemplary in many cases, with clear signposting such as 'firstly' and 'secondly'.

## Question 5

In answering at Levels 1 and 2, a significant number of students attempted to consider the lives of German people with general reference to race rather than racial policies but were not always secure on detail, missing specific examples and sometimes failing to acknowledge the question's dates, including detail post-1939. Most students provided answers that simply identified and explained the effects of racial policies on German people and gained Level 2 marks. They commonly referred to education policies or providing simplified explanations of racial policies towards Jewish people.

Answers that successfully identified the impact of racial policies nearly always described the Nuremberg Laws, including their impact on marriages. Many responses followed detailed arguments based on groups impacted by racial policies, such as Jewish people and other non-Aryans. Many answers mentioned 'racial policies' but mostly described actions without linking them to policies, such as Kristallnacht. Unfortunately, some students were confused by the question's dates and consequently failed to gain marks for racial policies discussed during the Second World War.

There were excellent answers to this question with several developed aspects. Answers that secured Levels 3 and 4 made specific reference to identified groups or themes, explained how Nazi racial policies affected them, and provided specific details. Strong answers defined various effects, and some differentiated between the extent of racial policies' impact on German people, examining ideas of persecution, education, and citizenship.

## Question 6

Generally, students answered this question well. Weaker answers were generalised or descriptive, and often overly narrative. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the impact of economic and cultural policies. Some students attempted to use general statements about economic and cultural policies, although these were not made specifically relevant to the question. Answers at Levels 1 and 2 often made simple or generalised comments about unemployment reduction or women that lacked links to the question or specific examples. Weaker answers did not demonstrate a clear structure or clear lines of argument. It is important in this period study that students deploy second-order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements.

Generally, weaker students' answers lacked understanding of how economic policies or culture and censorship impacted Germany. Many answers proceeded in an unstructured way, writing extensively about the Depression or focusing heavily on propaganda. Some also wrote about economic policy in Weimar Germany or concentrated heavily on the fear aspect of life in Germany. Many answers offered description, narrative or combined description and narrative of life in Nazi Germany rather than focused responses to the question.

Many answers addressed the question and bullet points with arguments that economic policy had the largest impact on Germany. Such answers demonstrated an awareness of Strength through Joy, Schacht, and Goering. Most Level 2 answers could describe censorship policy; however, relevant specific knowledge about implementation was lacking in some responses, or there was insufficient focus on the idea of impact on Germany. There was confusion among students about the difference between culture and propaganda.

However, at Levels 3 and 4, most students demonstrated good knowledge in answering this question. They developed balanced assessments to show the greatest impact culturally or economically. Students' answers explained how different aspects of economic policy had the greatest impact and how culture and censorship affected the German people. Stronger answers secured Level 3 with both bullet points discussed in detail, although lower Level 3 responses were usually secured due to stronger economic policy knowledge. Level 4 responses often maintained relevant reference to both points throughout the answer and clearly made well-supported judgements, often based on how features of economic policy impacted positively on the German people, although some students assessed changes because of the war. It should be noted that some students considered that Nazi culture and censorship had more far-reaching impact than economic policy. These Level 4 responses were noticeable for being well-structured and focused on the question throughout the answer.

## 1A/C Russia, 1894–1945: Tsardom and communism

### General Comments

The overall standard of responses to Question 1 in this period study was encouraging. Most students demonstrated a secure understanding of the topic and engaged with the key assessment objectives effectively. Responses generally showed good knowledge of the historical period, and most students approached the interpretations with care and attention to detail. However, as in previous series, there was a noticeable tendency among some students to write at unnecessary length, particularly in response to Questions 1 and 2. This often resulted in a loss of focus and did not align with the number of marks available.

## Question 1

The majority of students were able to identify and explain a valid difference between the two interpretations of the Provisional Government. Most responses reached a high Level 1 or low Level 2, typically highlighting distinctions such as the impact of World War I versus the growing strength and communication strategy of the Bolsheviks.

At Level 2, students were more confident in making direct comparisons, recognising, for example, that Interpretation A attributed the failure of the Provisional Government to its continuation of the war, whereas Interpretation B placed emphasis on the Bolsheviks' ability to communicate effectively with soldiers and gain popular support. The strongest responses moved beyond description to consider the attribution of blame, acknowledging that Interpretation A placed responsibility on the Provisional Government itself, while Interpretation B suggested that the Bolsheviks exploited circumstances to their advantage.

There was evidence of good comprehension of specific language and terminology used in the interpretations. However, a significant number of responses remained at Level 1 due to overuse of direct quotations or the inclusion of irrelevant contextual knowledge, neither of which advanced the comparison. A small number of students also addressed the reasons for differences between the interpretations, thus mistakenly answering the focus of Question 2.

In summary, while students demonstrated a secure understanding of the interpretations and showed the ability to extract valid differences, there remained a need for more focused comparison and avoidance of unnecessary contextual or quoted material to progress to higher levels.

## Question 2

As with Question 1, responses to Question 2 were often disproportionately long given the marks available. A notable number of students remained within Level 1 as they offered only superficial acknowledgement of potential bias, typically stating that an interpretation was positive or negative because it was written by a supporter or opponent. These responses tended to assert bias without deeper exploration of purpose, context, or the author's background.

The provenance information provided for both interpretations offered significant opportunity for analysis, but students did not fully utilise it. Weaker responses often focused on how the interpretations were different rather than why, thereby misdirecting their analysis and limiting progression into the higher level.

Few students attempted to consider how the time period in which the interpretations were produced might have shaped the views expressed. This represented a missed

opportunity for more sophisticated responses. In Interpretation A, students frequently commented on Ransome's personal ties to key Bolsheviks, but stronger responses went further, referencing his extended residence in Russia, his first-hand experience of World War I and the Russian Civil War, and his exposure to revolutionary events over a decade. However, few students acknowledged his role as a journalist reporting to the British Government or considered how this may have influenced his perspective. While some did note that the source was from an autobiography published in 1976, this was often quoted directly from the provenance without any analytical commentary on how this might have shaped Ransome's retrospective account.

Interpretation B was generally better handled. Most students identified that it came from Buchanan's memoirs written in the 1920s and acknowledged his close relationship with the Provisional Government. However, only the strongest responses explored deeper motives, such as Buchanan's commitment to the promotion of democracy in Russia or his concerns about the country's future under Bolshevik rule. Some students did use phrases such as "concerned for the future of Russia" to develop this point, but only a small number effectively analysed Buchanan's position as a representative of the British Government and how that may have influenced his views.

A few responses mistakenly attempted to explain similarities between the interpretations since both authors lived in Russia during the same period, which was not the focus of the question.

In conclusion, while some students demonstrated a sound understanding of provenance and purpose, there was an over-reliance on surface-level assertions about bias. Greater focus on the author's motive, context, and the intended audience would allow more students to progress beyond Level 1 in future series.

### Question 3

Question 3 produced a wide range of responses, with a clear distinction in quality based on students' ability to engage critically with the interpretations and apply contextual knowledge effectively. As seen in previous series, weaker responses relied heavily, and sometimes exclusively, on the provenance of the interpretations. These responses often lacked sustained engagement with the content and arguments of the interpretations and were typically confined to Level 1. Some responses mistakenly addressed the focus of Question 2 or even Question 1, indicating a misreading of the question's specific demands.

A notable number of students used contextual knowledge to judge the motives of the authors and concluded that the interpretation perceived as having less bias was therefore more convincing. While such an approach attempted evaluation, it often

lacked depth and failed to consider fully the content and argument of the interpretations themselves.

The key differentiator between higher and lower-level responses was the ability to identify and engage with the overall argument of each interpretation. Stronger responses were characterised by a confident use of contextual knowledge to assess the accuracy and persuasiveness of both interpretations. These answers provided a structured comparison and attempted to weigh the interpretations against each other. However, students who argued convincingly in favour of only one interpretation, even when supported with strong contextual evidence, were sometimes limited in the credit they could be awarded due to a lack of developed evaluation of both interpretations. Balanced assessment remained a key requirement for the higher levels.

There was a noticeable improvement this year in the contextual understanding shown by students. Sound knowledge was used to debate the issues raised in the interpretations, such as the unpopularity of continuing the war, the June Offensive, the poor leadership of Kerensky, particularly his decision to arm the Bolsheviks during the Kornilov Affair, and Lenin's strong leadership and popular appeal through the April Theses and slogans like 'Peace, Bread, and Land.'

Effective references were also made to the influence of the Petrograd Soviet, including *Order Number One*, the temporary and unelected nature of the Provisional Government, and the bloodless Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917. Some responses developed further analysis and referenced the *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* and *the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly*, using this wider context to support or challenge specific claims made in the interpretations.

There were, inevitably, some inaccurate details included in a minority of responses. These were most often interspersed with references to the earlier period of World War I, particularly concerning Tsar Nicholas II's decision to take command at the Front in 1915, his German-born wife Alexandra, and the influence of Rasputin. While these references demonstrated some broader contextual awareness, they were less relevant to the focus of the question and did not contribute meaningfully to the evaluation of the interpretations concerning the Provisional Government in 1917.

A small number of the most successful responses compared the interpretations directly, making effective links and drawing reasoned conclusions based on the arguments presented in both sources. There were also some thoughtful and nuanced judgements, such as the acknowledgement that key Bolsheviks fled following the July Days, which challenged claims that they were the decisive cause of the Provisional Government's collapse.

Overall, contextual support was significantly stronger than in previous years. This suggested that students were becoming more confident in applying their knowledge to

support evaluative judgements, and had a better understanding of how to approach this question to maximise marks.

## Question 4

Question 4 was accessible across all ability ranges, and most students responded with clarity and conciseness, signposting their answers carefully using phrases such as firstly and secondly. Most answers were well-structured and directly addressed the demands of the question. A significant number of students achieved Level 2, with responses demonstrating good understanding and effective use of historical detail.

Students focused appropriately on the immediate problems Lenin faced after the October Revolution, particularly his promise of peace and the challenge of withdrawing from World War I as promised in his April Theses. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was frequently cited, with several students impressively detailing the scale of territorial losses and the controversial nature of the treaty. The closure of the Constituent Assembly was also well understood. Students accurately described how the Bolsheviks proceeded with elections but, upon failing to win a majority, forcibly dissolved the Assembly. This was correctly recognised as a significant political challenge that provoked opposition and undermined Lenin's claim to democratic legitimacy.

Some students took a broader approach, incorporating the economic difficulties caused by World War I and the Civil War, and explaining how these pressures led to the introduction of the New Economic Policy. Others focused on the outbreak of Civil War and the measures Lenin took to maintain control, such as the use of the Cheka and War Communism. Examiners noted that there were a small number that tried to state that assassination attempts were a problem but with no sensible reasoning to explain this.

A smaller number of responses lacked development and remained generalised. These answers often referred vaguely to poor living and working conditions without clearly linking them to Lenin's challenges. A few students confused the time period, mistakenly including details more appropriate to Stalin's 1930s problems, which limited the accuracy of their responses.

Overall, this question was answered well by most students, with responses showing strong factual knowledge and a clear understanding of the key political and social problems faced by Lenin in the early years of Bolshevik rule.

## Question 5

Question 5 was particularly well answered, with students demonstrating a clear understanding of the complex impact of modernisation on both peasants and workers. Most

students displayed a strong grasp of the economic and social consequences for these two distinct groups, with responses achieving higher levels.

A significant number of students were able to analyse the impact of collectivisation on peasants in a balanced manner, addressing both positive and negative outcomes. While the negative consequences dominated most responses, strong answers also acknowledged some of the positive effects, particularly for urban workers. The negative impact of collectivisation on peasants in rural areas was well understood. Students highlighted how the policy disrupted traditional farming practices, leading to significant food shortages and damaging the livelihoods of peasants. These answers often detailed the forced collectivisation of land, the destruction of private farming, and the loss of autonomy for individual farmers. Several students were able to contrast this with the situation in industrial centres, where collectivisation led to an increased food supply, benefiting urban workers. This distinction between rural and urban populations was well made in responses.

Strong responses made a clear distinction between ordinary peasants and Kulaks. Students detailed how the government targeted Kulaks for being perceived as 'class enemies' and their resistance to collectivisation. The use of terror tactics, such as the forcible confiscation of land, the destruction of crops by Kulaks, and the mass deportation of people to Gulag labour camps, was well-covered. This was often linked to the 1932-1933 famine, with students noting how the government's drive to modernise by consolidating farms led to severe food shortages and suffering for the rural population. Students acknowledged the economic and social impacts of collectivisation. While some recognised the mechanisation of agriculture as a positive, most noted that the overall economic impact of collectivisation was devastating. The forced collectivisation and the widespread violence and repression were central themes in most responses, with some students linking this to the broader authoritarian nature of Soviet rule under Stalin.

Responses were especially successful in highlighting the complex reality faced by workers, as they navigated the promises of modernisation alongside the harsh realities of Stalin's policies. Students noted the creation of new jobs in rapidly growing industrial cities, such as Magnitogorsk and Stalingrad, which were directly linked to Stalin's push for heavy industrialisation. The expansion of these cities provided employment opportunities, particularly for peasants who migrated from rural areas in search of work. Several students recognised that Stalin's industrialisation efforts were accompanied by an increase in educational initiatives where workers were offered opportunities to improve their skills, which was an essential part of the drive for modernisation. This enabled some workers to climb the social ladder, though such mobility remained limited.

Several responses highlighted the role of women as a distinctive group in the workforce during this period. Stalin's policies, it was recognised, opened up new job opportunities for women. The creation of creches was noted as a significant improvement, allowing women to balance family responsibilities with industrial work, which reflected a shift in social policies that encouraged women's participation in the workforce.

However, students accurately pointed out that, despite the increase in employment, workers faced difficult working conditions. Long working hours, low wages, and the absence of workers' rights were widespread. Added to this, workers had little power to protest or

improve their conditions. The rapid urbanisation and growth in cities such as Magnitogorsk led to overcrowding. Workers often lived in poor-quality housing, with cramped conditions and inadequate sanitation. These issues, while acknowledged, were often presented in a generalised manner, without a clear connection to how these conditions specifically reflected the time period of Stalin's modernisation and could have been applicable to other early 20th-century Russian contexts.

A few responses referred to the fear and political repression that accompanied Stalin's modernisation. Workers were often subjected to the same harsh realities of purges, false accusations of sabotage, and the Gulag system that affected other sectors of society. The threat of imprisonment or death for minor infractions added to the suffering of the workforce. Some focused only on the Purges and did not link this to modernisation.

The best responses effectively discussed the Stakhanovite movement, noting how it encouraged workers to increase their productivity in exchange for rewards. This movement was also tied to state propaganda, as Stalin's regime presented it as a symbol of Soviet workers' dedication and success.

However, there were some weaker responses that lacked depth, offering generalised statements about poor living and working conditions without clearly linking them to the specific impacts of modernisation. A small number of students also muddled references to the 1921 famine, which was associated with war communism, and the 1932 famine, caused by collectivisation.

Examiners were pleased to see students produce strong answers that defined the various groups affected by modernisation, discussed both the economic and social impacts, and made distinctions between the different groups of people. These students demonstrated a solid understanding of how modernisation under Stalin affected different segments of the population. Overall, this was a well-answered question, with a clear understanding of the complexities of modernisation in the Soviet Union and its profound effects on both peasants and workers.

## Question 6

Students approached Question 6 with a sound understanding of the factors that made Tsarist Russia difficult to govern prior to 1914. This question provided a valuable opportunity for students to demonstrate depth of understanding and the ability to construct a balanced argument. Those who engaged directly with the idea of why Russia was hard to rule, integrating both political and economic dimensions with specific and relevant detail, produced thoughtful, well-structured responses. There was encouraging evidence of pleasing historical knowledge, and the best responses demonstrated a clear, balanced assessment of both economic and political problems. Crucially, stronger answers maintained a clear focus on the demands of the question, particularly the reasons why Russia was difficult to rule rather than merely outlining problems.

Level 4 responses stood out for their depth of knowledge, balanced structure, and the ability to link political and economic factors. These answers often recognised the interdependence

between the two, for example, how economic hardship drove political radicalism, or how the Tsar's political rigidity exacerbated social and economic discontent.

Strong answers addressed both bullet points in a sustained and analytical way. Economic problems that were highlighted included the inefficiency of agriculture, and how this entrenched rural poverty and instability. In addition, the challenges of industrialisation, including poor urban conditions and the discontent of the working class featured heavily. Answers that referenced the work of Witte in driving economic reform usually framed this as a positive rather than a difficulty without linking it to the events of 1905 and growth of political opposition. The impact of Stolypin's reforms was better known, particularly his development of land banks and the promotion of a Kulak class, combined with references to his repressive methods, including 'Stolypin's necktie' to enforce conformity.

In terms of political issues, high-level responses made detailed reference to the 1905 Revolution, including Bloody Sunday, as evidence of growing opposition and revolutionary threat. The introduction of the Duma with its limited power, and how its repeated dissolution reflected the Tsar's resistance to real reform. Answers analysed the use of the Okhrana and surveillance as methods of control and questioned their effectiveness across such a vast empire. There were attempts to examine critically Nicholas II's belief in autocracy, often concluding that this was the most significant factor that hindered effective rule.

At the lower levels, answers were often generalised, lacking specific detail or relevant examples. Common issues included vague references to 'poor living and working conditions' without elaborating on how these directly challenged Tsarist control. In addition, there was a tendency to describe problems in isolation, rather than considering how they made Russia difficult to rule. Notably, some answers made inaccurate references to events beyond the 1914 timeframe, such as developments during World War I, which limited their relevance. Several students overlooked the key focus on difficulty in ruling, instead simply listing problems without linking them back to the Tsar's difficulty in governing effectively.

## 1A/D America, 1920–1973: Opportunity and inequality

### Question 1

At Level 1, responses were typically able to make comparisons between the interpretations, particularly recognising that Interpretation A suggested a positive view of the American economy in the 1920s whereas Interpretation B expressed a negative interpretation. With support from the interpretations, students were able to reach the top of the level.

Responses which made a valid inference about how the interpretations differed, extending beyond the basic statement of one being positive and the other negative, accessed Level 2. When supported by the content of the interpretations, students reached a high Level 2. For example, Interpretation A suggested the economy boomed throughout the 1920s whereas Interpretation B suggested the boom was short lived.

## Question 2

Many strong answers appeared for this question, but answers remained in Level 1 mainly because students took the provenance at face value instead of attempting to refer to how it might explain the authors' positions.

The stronger answers on provenance usually focused on the experiences of the authors and on motive. For example, the author of Interpretation A was surrounded by wealthy people, which influenced his approach, or the author of Interpretation B held a position as an advisor to the government, meaning that his report would be balanced and written to inform future governments of the pitfalls of the 1920s boom so that mistakes would not be repeated.

Similarly, stronger responses used contextual knowledge of the period and date of production to explain the authors' views. For example, Interpretation A was written by a wealthy man who would not have seen how farmers were struggling due to overproduction, so only wrote of what he saw on his travels, whereas the author of Interpretation B would have gathered a wider account as he wrote after the Wall Street Crash using hindsight.

## Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses. Examiners observed the tendency of some students to base their answers around the attributions rather than the content. These answers unfortunately remained in Level 1 unless students were able to support such arguments with knowledge, which then allowed progression to the bottom of Level 2, though this was rare. Students should not dismiss interpretations as unconvincing or limited in value simply because they omit certain things about which students know. Rather, they should focus on what was written in the interpretation and apply their contextual knowledge and understanding to it, thereby arguing why the interpretation was convincing to them. Answers at Level 2 were able to identify an argument and support it with some simple understanding using straightforward knowledge or explanations.

Where students were secure in their knowledge about the 1920s economy in America, they were able to produce some excellent responses. There were examples of sound knowledge used on this question which allowed students to access Level 3 and potentially Level 4. Higher-level responses were often achieved by reference to the specifics of the interpretations. For example, regarding buying shares, in relation to Interpretation A, students wrote about the fact that people often bought shares 'on the margin,' which was dangerous as it was based on credit. Similarly, contextual knowledge relating to consumer goods was often a route to a developed response. Popular responses included specific details of the 'Model T Ford' or 'Tin Lizzie' to provide support. Students were able to use these and other examples of similar nature to contextualise either interpretation. Examiners observed many examples of students achieving this effectively. Regarding Interpretation B, the inclusion of farmers who did not benefit in the source led more students to discuss groups such as farmers, immigrants, and African Americans. For example, Interpretation B was more convincing as it referenced groups that did not benefit: farmers faced challenges as 'rural communities often faced challenges due to overproduction, and the new possibilities open to women led to the emergence of flappers which caused the Anti-Flirt movement to protest at what they saw as a loosening of values in society.'

Some students therefore went on to include substantiated judgements about which they considered to be the more convincing interpretation. Assessment teams were not looking for a particular interpretation to be favoured in answers so long as a sensible and supported argument was made. Stronger arguments were seen where students effectively used their contextual knowledge to support the content within the interpretation regarding which was more convincing, rather than simply dismissing one as unconvincing. Often this was done through differentiating impact on groups or geographical impact, which examiners found impressive.

## Question 4

This was a well-answered question overall. The structure of responses continued the improvements observed in the previous year. Answers which remained at Level 1 did so because either a problem was not identified or, as was the case in a minority of answers, no reference was made as to how the New Deal was going to solve it. Most students were able to identify a specific problem such as unemployment and then showed how the New Deal attempted to solve it by referencing Alphabet agencies with some details about them. Specific agencies were not expected to be mentioned, but it was encouraging that students had substantial specific knowledge to add.

Encouragingly, many Level 2 marks were awarded for this question. This answer requires two problems to be discussed to reach Level 2. Examiners observed particularly good single problem and solution answers which could only be awarded Level 1.

## Question 5

This question appeared well received by students, with many considered and specifically supported answers seen. What was encouraging to see was the way in which an increasing number of students structured their responses into clear paragraphs or by signposting their different arguments. Answers at Level 2 showed sound knowledge of Prohibition in terms of what it was and what it led to, mentioning speakeasies, organised crime, and homemade alcohol.

Answers that reached Level 3 went beyond description of features and towards an evaluation of the impact of the changes on people's lives. For example, some answers showed how, because of Prohibition, the rise in organised crime grew into a massive problem in society with the bribing of police and illegal smuggling of alcohol, which impacted people through fear of violence.

Examiners observed that many able students were able to achieve Level 4 as they explained how American people were affected by Prohibition in terms of groupings within America, such as the different experiences of women and African Americans and the new experiences afforded to them which helped break down social and racial stereotypes. The family was another group students mentioned. Better responses here considered the positive impact Prohibition had on the family group as it led to a decrease in alcohol-related violence within the home, which was quite insightful.

## Question 6

Many students did show good knowledge in answering this question, and it was obvious that much work had been done to prepare students well. However, examiners observed that some students confused the campaigns of women post-World War Two with the rights of women in the 1920s, and examiners saw several answers mentioning the Suffragettes and the right to vote (1920), and Flappers, which sadly meant no credit could be awarded for these comments. Similarly, some students wrote in depth about how World War Two affected both African Americans and women, which was not the focus of the question and limited the value of the response. It was therefore important that students carefully deconstructed the requirements of the question so that they focused only on what was being asked of them, noting key words such as 'campaigns' and after 'the Second World War.' More students this year seemed to begin with the first bullet point regarding the campaigns of African Americans. This was always a good idea as it lent itself to a chronological approach which allowed students to develop the idea of change, especially short- and longer-term impacts, which was emphasised in the best answers.

Answers which deployed specific and relevant knowledge of the campaigns of both bullet points or one were able to access Level 2 comfortably, and many such responses were seen. There were some single bullet point responses, mainly on African Americans. Some were well expressed in terms of impact on the lives of African Americans but were capped at Level 2 as the other bullet point was not addressed. Examiners teams observed that students appeared to know more about African American campaigns post-World War Two than the campaigns for the rights of women. Those that did attempt both and were strong on one were able to access the bottom of Level 3 accordingly.

Stronger answers were able to secure a good Level 3 with both aspects of the question discussed in detail with a variety of ways that America was impacted. On the campaigns of African Americans, this was often achieved by reference to the campaigns of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and others with specific discussion of the impact they had, for example the changing attitudes of people in power towards the plight of African Americans or the passing of legislation which brought political equality and voting rights. There were excellent answers that achieved this. Similarly, strong knowledge was demonstrated of the campaigns promoting women's rights post-World War Two, such as the work of Phyllis Schlafly and the NOW movement, to give two examples of the many that examiners observed. Students that then demonstrated the impact these movements had on America, for example the Roe vs Wade case that gave women the rights to choose, produced strong responses.

Level 4 responses often maintained relevant references to both aspects throughout the answer, making clear and well-supported judgements. The better answers with complex thinking were ones which signposted throughout the response the importance of the bullet point in relation to the focus of the question. Many answers of this stature that were able to differentiate impact by grouping and the extent of change, especially regarding positive and negative impact.

Where students brought a judgement at the end, the better ones were able to substantiate their argument by weighing up the nature of the impact one or both campaigns had. The

most popular complex arguments were made for the campaigns for African Americans having the most impact in terms of being a catalyst for the campaigns for rights of women, and some students argued that the rights of women were less impactful as some women, such as the Stop ERA group, protested changes in the law.

It should be observed that a summary conclusion often did not result in a Level 4 result, and sometimes students would be best advised to avoid this type of concluding paragraph.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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