



A-Level History

7042/2M Wars and Welfare: Britain in Transition, 1906 -1957

Report on the examination

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Question 01

This question required students to evaluate the value of the sources in explaining Winston Churchill's government in the years 1951 to 1955. Students tended to have a good range of general knowledge on this period which enabled them to engage with the sources and their content. However, many responses took an overly mechanistic approach to assessing the sources. This involved taking each component (provenance, tone and content) in turn and suggesting how each were valuable and not valuable. Whilst this meant that the main components were covered, it often produced evaluation which was simplistic and often prevented students from accessing marks in the top levels. The most successful responses led with assessment of value and then used the relevant parts of the sources to support this in a more holistic manner.

It is important to note that there is no requirement to offer an introduction or overall conclusion in response to this question, with several students still taking considerable time to suggest which source was the most valuable; this is not relevant at A Level. It was pleasing to see a significant improvement in terms of responses which neglected to evaluate the sources. Although now fewer in number, less successful responses still simply stated the provenance and content but did not use this to say how the source is, or is not, valuable in understanding Churchill's government.

The weakest component of the evaluation tended to be assessment of limitations, particularly in terms of content. Many students relied on what the source omitted, which tended to not actually be relevant, i.e. beyond the date of the source and therefore not something the source would have been able to comment on.

Source A

Most students successfully identified value in a centre-left newspaper offering the view of the opposition, with limitations in the fact that Massingham was likely to focus on the negatives of the right-wing government. The most insightful responses linked this to the date of the source, explaining how, so soon after the 1951 election in which Labour polled the most votes, there were likely to be many who were frustrated by this outcome and so this article reflected public opinion. Lower-level responses offered generic and bland commentary on the provenance, such as stating that articles offer opinions, so are therefore not trustworthy.

Most successfully evaluated Massingham's view that there was a lack of 'popular policies'. Students could both challenge and support this claim through the idea of the post-war consensus. Some argued that the Conservatives were hamstrung by this alignment with Labour, and others correctly stated that the post-war consensus proves Massingham wrong, as maintaining such policy, like the NHS, was incredibly popular. The most successful responses could also tie this to the provenance, stating how a centre-left commentator would of course criticise the Conservatives as 'unable to come up with...' such popular 'Labour' policies.

Most recognised the issue of conflicting personalities, with continuing disagreement between Churchill and Eden, and Butler and Macmillan. However, many students incorrectly believed that Massingham was stating that Eden would make for a better PM, missing the point being made that he was not viewed as a suitable alternative by many. Less successful responses tried to criticise the source by stating that it did not take into account of the many successes after 1952, like ending rationing. Given that these came after the article was written, it would have been impossible for Massingham to have reflected on these. Stronger responses could tie this to the provenance, and comment that as this article came so early in the government, there had not yet been time for the Conservatives to make an impact on the many issues of the time.

Source B

Most students identified Eden as a vital source of information on the 1951-55 government given his close work with Churchill, role as deputy PM and the fact that he essentially led on domestic affairs due to Churchill's absence. As such, many identified the value in Eden's opinion at this time, seeing his private diary as demonstrating his honest view of events. Students also recognised the limitations in such an emotive response, as reflected in the tone which appeared to attack Churchill personally. Again, the less successful responses offered generic, and often inaccurate, comments on provenance, such as stating that a diary contains the truth.

Most students recognised the frustrations in the source surrounding Churchill's determination to continue as Prime Minister despite his age and unwillingness to commit to domestic policy. However, there was often a lack of contextual knowledge for this source, with many simply paraphrasing the content to support the points being made. The more successful responses supported assessment with detail on Churchill's reluctance to take unpopular policy decisions that might disrupt the post-war consensus, particularly stalling over concerns about the 1951–52 balance of payments crisis. The more successful responses could also tie the views on offer to the provenance, commenting that of course Eden would take such a negative and emotive view on Churchill's role and refusal to step down, given that he was next in line to be Prime Minister.

Source C

Of the three sources, this was handled the least successfully. Students were often dismissive of the source given its provenance, stating that such a 'non-political' source was of little value. The better responses identified that someone who had close contact with Churchill and was passing comment in a peer-reviewed medical journal had much to offer. The most insightful responses commented that writing just after his death may require care to be taken as there would be a reluctance to pass any negative comment, instead focusing on a positive celebration of Churchill's life. Again, the lower-level responses offered generic comments on provenance i.e. being written in 1966 means that Brain has forgotten what happened.

Most students were aware of the relevance of Churchill's health during the 1951-55 government. His absence was not just about his desire to be an international statesman; he was also struggling to handle day-to day-affairs, particularly after his 1953 stroke. Stronger

responses could offer good contextual detail surrounding Churchill's health and role in international affairs, such as the Korean War. Some criticised Brain's view that Churchill still had 'his bite' given his lack of involvement in domestic affairs, and conflict with others. The strongest responses could tie this to the provenance, stating how Brain was trying to celebrate Churchill posthumously and likely harking back to his reputation as a War Hero. Some also had the insight to suggest that Churchill was perhaps trying to hide his weaknesses, even from his doctor, given the strength of his determination to see Britain through the Cold War.

Question 02

There was very good understanding of Liberal reform demonstrated here, with conceptual awareness of New Liberalism, and how this differed from more traditional views of Laissez-Faire. The most successful responses referred to key philosophers and their impact on New Liberal thinking, relating this to key reforms such as Old Age Pensions. This was successfully balanced with reference to National Efficiency, which drove reforms for children, and political motivations in terms of competing with a new left wing Labour party, leading to reforms like National Insurance and Trade Boards. The most insightful answers explained how such a small and insignificant Labour Party could not possibly be a true motive for such an extensive reform programme. Several responses tried to offer balance through the influence of social researchers; this worked where it was used to explain pressure on political change, but many neglected to acknowledge that Booth and Rowntree had a significant influence on the concept of New Liberalism itself.

In less successful responses, there was some misunderstanding about the aims of the Liberal reforms, with students stating that New Liberalism cannot have been the motive given the limited nature of the reforms, such as permissive legislation for Free School Meals. Such comments showed a lack of awareness of the fact that New Liberalism was a 'safety net' and did not aim to implement a full-scale welfare state. More successful responses were able to use this concept of preventative measures as evidence to support the statement. The lower-scoring responses struggled to identify that the question here was the motive for reforms, with a number of students simply describing the reforms and evaluating their success, which was not relevant here. Some also lost the focus of the question, New Liberalism, instead only discussing the other reasons for the reforms. This resulted in an unfocused response, often without balance.

Question 03

This was the least popular question of Section B, and the one which students struggled with the most, as responses often neglected to stick to the dates in the question. Almost all responses made some significant reference to either pre- or post-war economics, and whilst this could sometimes be made relevant in terms of comparison to pre-war, such as coal and steel production, this was often not relevant. Many answers extensively commented on the post-war effects of overproduction and unemployment which were not required: the focus of the question was the impact of the war on the war-time economy. Often, answers lacked relevant balance as counterarguments tended to look exclusively at events outside of the time frame. As such, answers which were able to offer significant focus on 1914 to 1918 were suitably rewarded.

For those responses which focused on the war years, there was good detail on the cost of the war, debt levels, loss of trade and inflation. For balance, there were some very good comments on the ability to shift from peace time to war time production, with discussion of the Ministry of Munitions and shell production as an example. Full employment was also identified as another strength, but there was often conflicting evidence offered here, with overemphasis on the struggles of losing men to conscription which was instantly balanced by the employment of women. The stronger responses here were able to comment on the loss of skilled workers, though a significant number incorrectly suggested that overall production was impacted by this.

Question 04

There was very good understanding of changing living standards demonstrated here, with conceptual awareness of regional and class divides that meant standards very much depended on where you lived. Housing and leisure were offered as improvements, with understanding of 'cheap money' and the impact of low interest rates on consumer spending and mortgages. Good detail was provided in terms of new luxuries and the electrification of homes. Entertainment was regularly commented on, with the growth in areas like Penguin Books, radio usage and cinema attendance. Balance was offered in several ways which usually tied into the overall concept of class variation, such as the fact that there were far less council houses built in this period than those for private use.

Some lower-level responses tended to stray into extensive comment on economic changes without relating this to living standards, such as the policies of the National Government surrounding trade boards and spending. The higher-level answers could link this to standards, such as the introduction of the Means Test and a reduction in benefits. Most responses commented on structural unemployment in the regions dominated by staple industries, particularly locations like Jarrow as exemplified in the Jarrow March. The more insightful responses tied the improvements to the idea of employment, and that almost everything on offer was for those who had the money to take part. This was also shown in the statistic often used for cinema attendance, where most commented that even the unemployed attended weekly; the strongest responses explained how this was only because it was so cheap and offered comfort and an escape from their harsh reality.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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