



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2012**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1L**

***Report on the Examination***

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# Unit HIS1L

## Unit 1L: Britain, 1906–1951

### General Comments

Once again the paper was accessible to the vast majority of students, but also discriminated overall between those achieving maximum marks through to those with limited knowledge and understanding, and with marks in single figures. Question 1 was the most popular, answered by over two-thirds of students with Question 2 the least popular, responded to by about one third of students.

Of the 12 marks questions 01 was best answered. For all of these 12 marks questions, where explanation of three or more developed reasons was given, Level 3 marks were awarded and, if there was also linkage and/or argument for prioritisation, responses received marks in Level 4. Many of these students made good use of the concepts of 'links' and/or 'connections' to make clear the points they were making.

Of the 24 marks questions 04 proved to be the most difficult. Knowledge, understanding and analysis were better in general for Questions 02 and 06 although some in Question 02 focused on what the social reforms were rather than the reasons, including 'New Liberalism', for their introduction. Scripts achieving marks in Levels 4 and 5 maintained consistent focus on the question actually asked, responding with balanced argument supported by secure evidence, were well-organised and in the case of Level 5 demonstrated judgement.

Once again a minority of students chose to answer both of their 24 mark questions first. Such an approach is not recommended, although students should be careful not to spend more than about 12 minutes on their first answer (to a 12 mark question). With each 12 mark question always linked to the 24 mark question which follows, some of those who adopted the 'let's do the higher tariff questions first' approach then produced answers to the 12 mark questions which were too thin in either the number of reasons provided for an explanation and/or those reasons were not developed, or in a few cases were unfinished.

Quality of Written Communication was generally satisfactory, but did range from the outstanding command of English of some students to those who had little command and/or avoided using much punctuation. The main spelling mistakes of proper nouns were of 'Ramsay MacDonald', 'Snowden', 'Mosley', 'Keynes', 'Beveridge', and 'Attlee'. It was, however, pleasing to find the name 'Chamberlain' mainly spelt correctly in responses to Questions 01 and 06. There was still some misspelling of 'parliament' and 'Britain', 'tariffs' in Question 01 and 'laissez-faire' in both parts of Question 1.

### Question 1

**01** This was the best answered question on the paper. It was a familiar topic for most and explaining three or more reasons clearly was straightforward for many. Most sound responses identified tariff reform as the key issue accounting for Conservative unpopularity. The best answers in Level 4 emphasised divisions amongst the Unionists, though others in lower Levels believed it was a clear Conservative policy, or in a few cases that it had already been implemented by Chamberlain or Balfour. However, it was still possible to reach Level 3 if tariff reform was omitted from a response and instead

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there were at least three other developed reasons. There was a variety to choose from and these included the Conservative Education and Licensing Acts, failure to reverse the Taff Vale decision, 'Chinese Slavery', lack of social reform, Liberal unity and the Boer War. On the last issue weaker answers asserted that the War in itself had made the Conservatives unpopular rather than the consequent revelations about the lack of fitness of potential army recruits and treatment of Boer 'prisoners'. Some also confused 'Chinese slavery' with developments during the War itself. A substantial number believed that the Taff Vale decision was legislation rather than that of the House of Lords acting as the highest court in the land. Others, and this was not confined to weaker answers, asserted that the Liberals presented a firm package of reform proposals in 1906 and/or had been 'taken over' by 'New Liberals'.

- 02** This question differentiated well. Very sound answers focused on assessment of 'How far' 'New Liberalism' and other causal factors were responsible for social reform. They briefly explained 'New Liberalism' as action by the state to provide 'a lifebelt', rather than a welfare state, for some of the 'deserving poor' in British society, and explained the prominent roles taken by Lloyd George and Churchill after 1908. They then considered other causal reasons such as the drive for national efficiency, the influence of reports, notably by Booth and Rowntree, on social conditions, and the political threat from the new Labour Party. Reference to specific reforms was made to illustrate causal factors. Many answers which received marks in Level 3 provided some focus on the significance of 'New Liberalism' and in some cases other factors, but also included descriptive material of some of the reforms without clear linkage to motivating factors for introducing them. At this Level and below there was confusion over how 'New Liberal' Asquith was and some confused him with Campbell-Bannerman. Indeed the latter's role was largely neglected by all except the very best responses and in the lower Levels of responses a failure to distinguish between the reforms of 1906 to 1908 and those which followed. Answers receiving marks in Level 2 lacked definition or explanation of 'New Liberalism' and were almost entirely descriptive of some reforms with those for children, before 1908, being the most popular with some students, and pensions and/or National Insurance and/or Labour Exchanges (usually called 'Job Centres') with others. A few, sometimes at length, wrote about political reform covering descriptions of struggles over the 'People's Budget' and the Parliament Bill, but without connection to social reform. At Level 1 it was clear that there was no real understanding of 'New Liberalism'.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This question also differentiated successfully. However, many responses were largely descriptive explanations covering longer-term reasons and/or shorter-term causes of the miners' strike in 1926, often in considerable detail. They were familiar with the decline of the staple industries, the particular problems of the coal industry after 1918 and the intransigent views of both mine owners and the Miners' Federation over wages and hours of work. Also featured in some answers were the Triple Alliance (including reference to Black Friday in 1921) and the Gold Standard. Some students described the recommendations in the Sankey and Samuel Reports, though weaker answers were confused between them. However, too many answers confined themselves to the mining industry, including some which had recognised the importance of the Triple Alliance, but did not go on to examine the concept and explain reasons for the General Strike which is what the question asked. Whilst three or more developed reasons about the causes of the miner's strike with a little reference to the General Strike gained Level 3 marks for such answers, those which did put the main focus on the General Strike were awarded marks in Level 4. They recognised the importance of the government's preparations and determination to have a showdown with the miners and other unions, the fact that the

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Miners' Federation was the vanguard of the trade union movement and if it was defeated other workers believed they were likely to face a lowering of wages, and the role of the TUC for calling out nearly all of its member unions. In contrast there were some responses placed in Level 1, or at best towards the lower end of Level 2, which wrote copious descriptions of events during the General Strike without an attempt to link these with any explanation of causes.

- 04** This proved to be the most difficult question on the paper. It did, however, attract a full range of responses across the Levels and stretched stronger students, a few of whom produced quite excellent answers in Level 5. However, many answers were placed in Level 2 and Level 1. Many students limited their responses to seeing success in the Baldwin government's handling of the General Strike and accounting for the problems of the Labour government. If done well, with some explicit links to the issue of governments' success, marks were awarded in Level 3, but if largely descriptive, in Level 2. Those who also considered with some assessment the early actions, such as implementing expenditure cuts and coming off the Gold Standard, of the National government received marks in at least Level 4. However, many students neglected the period before 1929 completely, treating the Question as one asking for reasons as to why the Labour government experienced problems and fell from office in 1931. On the whole this aspect was done quite well in terms of both knowledge and evaluation with conclusion on the latter being that the government was spectacularly unsuccessful in dealing with economic problems. However, if such answers also failed to mention the National government, answers were placed in Level 2. There were also other answers which ignored the period of the question almost entirely and wrote about economic and/or social issues during the 1930s such as low interest rates, rearmament and the Jarrow March. Only responses in Level 5 or the upper end of Level 4 tended to consider the Trades Disputes Act, the Mond-Turner talks, establishment of the CEGB, continuing problems of the staple industries, or the high level of unemployment before 1930. Of crucial importance of course was that these were responses which not only considered the actions of all three governments, but also had balanced argument in coming to different conclusions about the relative degree of success of each one, considered the merits of the 'Keynesian approach' proposed by Mosley and the contrasting orthodox policies of Snowden and the National government.

### **Question 3**

- 05** Overall this was the least well-answered of the 12 mark questions. Level 2 answers were generalised about women having to work and increased social independence. In many cases there was little distinction between what was written and could as easily have been an explanation about the changed roles of women in the First World War. They emphasised work in munitions production and some the gaining of the vote after suffragette activity (even in cases where answers made it clear that they recognised the granting of the franchise in parliamentary elections back in 1928). Finding three or more distinct and clear reasons proved difficult for these students. However, there were sound responses from over a quarter of the students gaining marks in Level 4 or the top mark (9) of Level 3. They found the question straightforward and had no difficulty in providing details of the range of employment undertaken by women, both married and unmarried, and service in the auxiliary armed forces. There was more perceptive discussion of the economic and social independence of women especially in the role of main breadwinner. Whilst weaker answers emphasised women having to work because of the conscription of men, some of the sounder responses considered the conscription of women. Similarly there was a distinction between the ways in which the loosening of moral and sexual behaviour changed with weaker responses describing relationships between British

women and American GIs, whereas stronger answers recognised the changes in the context of greater social freedom and even a sexual revolution. Many responses in Level 4 emphasised that many of the changes brought about by the War lasted with women enjoying better access to education and a whole range of occupations and professions after 1945. There had been a significant shift to greater equality.

- 06** This was the best answered of the 24 marks questions. There were very few irrelevant answers. Most students provided sufficient valid assessment to reach Level 3, those with developed and balanced arguments in sufficient depth achieved Level 4, or combined this with close analytical judgement to be awarded marks in Level 5. Changes in social attitudes were considered from a number of standpoints including evacuation, the Beveridge Report and its acceptance, and experiences in the military and the workforce. Many used the current vogue for saying that ‘all were in it together’. These factors were balanced with other reasons for Labour’s victory in 1945 such as the work of Attlee, Bevin, Morrison (and even Dalton) on the home front giving them profiles as national leaders, acceptance of Labour policies through the successes of nationalisation of industries for war purposes, the adoption of national health care, Churchill’s shortcomings as a potential leader in peacetime, with much reference to his ‘Gestapo’ speech, and memories of the record of the Conservatives during the 1930s with MacMillan’s ‘ghost of Chamberlain comment much quoted. Some argued that the example of the Soviet Union as an ally helped to change political if not social attitudes. Other sound answers also stressed the 10 years gap since the 1935 Election during which time young voters of both sexes, as well as the forces, had a common shared experience of the War, leading them to support Labour as the progressive party in tune with their post-war aspirations. Where mention was made of post-war reforms such as the NHS, sound answers did link them to changing social attitudes brought about by the War. Responses placed in Level 1 did, however, write about Labour reforms from 1945–1951 rather than on the question. They and a few in Level 2, where there was mainly description, or lack of depth and/or breadth, in some cases confused Labour and Liberals and/or Churchill and Lloyd George.

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

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