



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 2041

Unit HIS3G

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS3G

Unit 3G: British State and People, 1865–1915

General Comments

This was the third examination of this unit of the History Specification, with the paper proving accessible to the vast majority of students. Marks awarded to scripts ranged from the maximum of 90 to marks in single figures for just a few which displayed little knowledge or understanding, or wrote almost totally irrelevantly. As in the previous examinations, answers which displayed qualities of sharp focus on the demands of a question, had secure knowledge, good (conceptual) understanding, provided analysis, made links between arguments and relevant evidence to provide a consistent overall thesis and judgement, were awarded marks in Level 5 or towards the top of Level 4. There was also at least reference to, and at Level 5 effective interpretation of, historical interpretations. Responses placed in Level 3 showed understanding and some analysis supported by evidence which did not necessarily contain great depth. In addition the whole of the period in the question was not always covered. Answers which received marks in Level 2 showed some understanding but were either largely descriptive, or had made some attempt at analysis but which appeared as assertion because adequate evidence was not given in support. Whilst responses in the top two Levels were able to achieve balance in argument, for example about 'extent' in Questions 01 and 03, or 'success' in Question 02, weaker answers displayed less of a mature historical understanding. For example in Question 01 a paragraph would begin with 'There was a Great Depression because...' followed by another which began 'There was not a Great Depression because...' and then the overall argument was inconclusive rather than having clarity in a balanced assessment.

The most popular question, perhaps surprisingly, was the 'breadth question, 03 and it was the best answered on the paper. Of the other two questions, both were responded to by roughly the same number of students, but Question 01 was better answered than Question 02. For the former almost half of the responses were awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5 taken together, but only just over one third in the latter. The main weakness for responses in both of these questions, that is those receiving marks in Level 2 and especially level, was failure to focus on the topic (the economy) in Question 01, or the period (1906–1914) in Question 02.

Quality of Written Communication was generally sound. As in previous examinations, a small minority who wrote in ungrammatical English, or made little use of appropriate punctuation, penalised themselves by their lack of clarity or by ambiguity. There were few spelling mistakes of proper nouns, although a few misspelt 'Disraeli'. The worrying trend of the inability of some students to spell 'Britain' and writing 'Britian' instead was evident. Otherwise the main spelling mistakes were of 'suffragettes' or 'suffrage'. It was pleasing to notice that use of phrases such as 'I feel', 'I believe' or 'I think', giving the impression of assertion rather than argument, had further declined.

Question 1

- 01** This question was answered overall quite successfully. The best responses focused on the issue of whether the state of the British economy from 1873 to 1896 could be described as being in Depression, although only some went on also to consider whether it was 'Great'. Evidence in three main areas was considered, staple and developing industries, foreign competition and agriculture. The historical debate was understood and balanced argument given. Most saw a definite depression in agriculture, or at least downturn, seriously affecting British arable and pastoral farming, despite some diversification in the face of foreign competition. The plight of redundant farm labourers was frequently emphasised. In terms of industry, competition from the USA and Germany, and the new innovations their economies enjoyed, were recognised as significant, but most responses concluded that any British industrial decline was relative and gave evidence, some of it statistical, to show that growth in production and exports increased generally though at slower rates than when Britain led the world in industrialisation. Attention was given to the protectionist policies of rivals while Britain remained committed to free trade and by some to the importance of trade with 'the largest colonial empire in the world'. Some answers were restricted to marks in Level 3 when reference to the significant area of agriculture was omitted, though such omission was much more marked in Level 2 answers. Further differentiating factors between better answers and weaker were that in the former reference was made to the end of the great railway building age and to the evidence that for many workers and their families, with a reduction in prices, their standard of living actually improved. There was a small number of responses, given marks in Level 1, or towards the bottom of Level 2, which did not understand what the economy was and wrote largely irrelevantly. This was particularly the case of answers in Level 1 which were almost entirely about the domestic (and occasionally foreign) policies of Gladstone and Disraeli. Just the odd reference to Ireland had some relevance, although the question actually referred to the 'British' economy.

Question 2

- 02** This was the least well-answered question, as was the question on how successfully the Liberal governments dealt with the constitutional crisis asked in 2011. Both questions asked about Liberal governments' degree of success handling issues in years just before the First World War. Whereas 90 per cent of responses to Question 03 gained marks in the top three levels and 80 per cent in Question 01, the figure was only 70 per cent for Question 02. There were of course sound answers placed in Level 5 or at the upper end of Level 4. They contrasted the relatively peaceful situation in terms of 'the problems of Ireland from 1906 to early in 1910, following implementation of the policies of Salisbury, Balfour and Wyndham, with the parliamentary situation arising from the Election results in 1910 with the Liberal governments' dependency on Redmond's Irish Nationalists to remain in power. Consideration in all relevant answers to this question did, rightly, focus on the consequences of the quid pro quo of Irish Nationalists' support for the Parliament Bill in exchange for a Home Rule Bill. Detail given on the subsequent developments and events involving the unionists in Ulster, as well as changes amongst nationalist supporters, varied from the quite comprehensive, which contained detailed evidence, for example on the Solemn League and Covenant and gun-running at Larne and Howth to the highly generalised. Most of the relevant answers mentioned the 'Curragh Mutiny' and the near civil war by the autumn of 1914, though weaker responses, essentially those in Level 2, did not clearly connect these with how successful or not British governments had been. Only stronger responses considered Asquith's attempt at compromise and its failure. Weaker answers concluded overall simply that the governments had failed, whereas stronger, balanced responses argued the case for success in at least getting

Home Rule on the statute book, but on the other hand the governments had been unable to find a peaceful solution or compromise between unionists, Home Rule nationalists and emerging republicans in Sinn Fein. Several students commented on the intractability of the problems. There was a minority of approximately seven per cent of responses which were placed in Level 1 because there was hardly any, or no, consideration of the 1906–1914 years. Instead they wrote about Gladstone’s Irish policies (and a few included references also to nineteenth century Conservative policies). Indeed there was a handful of students who wrote about policies of Gladstone and Disraeli in answer to both of their questions, quite regardless of what was asked in the paper.

Question 3

03 As stated above, this ‘breadth’ question was the most popular and the best-answered question. Well over half of the responses received marks in Levels 4 and 5. They well-understood the concepts and developments of ‘parliamentary and constitutional reforms’, and that of ‘democracy’. Although there were different implicit or explicit definitions or explanations given, most encapsulated ‘democracy’ as involving the extension of the vote for Parliament, associated reforms to eliminate corruption and supremacy of the elected House, the Commons. The best answers in Level 5 pointed out that although the 1867 Reform Act was seen at the time as ‘a leap in the dark’ historiography has seen it as an important step in the development of democratic parliamentary government. Most answers in the top three levels considered, after 1867, the Third Reform Act and Redistribution of seats in 1884–1885, the Ballot Act and Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, reform of the Lords in the constitutional crisis and the denial of the vote for parliament to women despite the best efforts of the suffragists and suffragettes. Many pointed out women had been granted the vote for local government and bodies. Some particularly discerning answers saw the abolition of the School Boards in 1902 as a blow for women as these bodies were no longer in existence to be voted for, or served upon. Most responses pointed out that a significant minority of men was still disenfranchised in 1911. Many sound answers also saw the payment of MPs as a further move towards democracy as it helped the representation of the working classes at a time of the increasing political importance of the Labour movement and Party. Indeed sound responses also noted the growing importance of all parties’ organisation and attention to the needs of the expanding electorate, including social reforms, from 1867. Most answers were balanced and in general argued and concluded that Britain moved towards becoming a democracy over the period, though this was not particularly an aim of all developments and those politicians responsible for them. However, Britain could not be described as fully democratic by 1911 as women and some men did not have the vote for Parliament and the Lords, despite reform, still retained some constitutional power. The main weakness in the relatively small number of answers in Level 2 was failure to acknowledge the main developments through lack of knowledge and/or misunderstanding. Hardly any responses were placed in Level 1 except for a handful which contained scant material or irrelevant information about Gladstone and/or Disraeli’s reforms generally.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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