



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2012**

**History 2041**

**Unit HIS3J**

***Report on the Examination***

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## *Unit HIS3J*

### **Unit 3J: The State and People: Britain, 1918–1964**

#### **General Comments**

This was an effective paper, producing a range of responses across the three questions and showing that students, (mostly) had knowledge across the time period. The only period that was not covered by the examination was the Conservative governments, 1951–1964, although students were required to have knowledge of the reasons for Conservative victory in 1951. It was evident that many students related current events to the history of this period and there are many parallels; the best students used this to produce answers which reflected on the issues with great sophistication, although less impressive answers seemed unable to distinguish between the past and the present. Overall it was really gratifying to see some students writing essays that showed good understanding of the issues examined and the ability to show this across a period of time.

#### **Question 1**

**01** This was the breadth question and required an understanding of the economic problems facing British governments and an assessment of the policies used to tackle these issues. Students really did need to understand what these problems, were both throughout the period and in specific times. The issue in the 1920s was largely that of structural unemployment and the plight of the staple industries. Good answers were able to link this to government policies such as the return to the Gold Standard in 1925, at too high a level. The best answers referred briefly to the General Strike as illustrative of this issue, whereas weaker responses were primarily descriptive of the Strike as a problem on its' own without linkage to wider issues. Some students had the problem mapped out as the issue of 'greedy and selfish miners, who needed to accept wage cuts', possibly a reflection of current issues. Better answers were aware that the problem of unemployment was there throughout the 1920s and that little was done to tackle this issue; weaker responses had little or no coverage of this time period. The impact of the depression and the 1931 crisis was well known and effective answers were able to assess government policies, although it was difficult to find positives; evaluative answers commented that most governments would have found the situation impossible to deal with and also pointed out the difficulty of accepting alternative views put forward by Mosley, for example. On the 1930s, students had to deal with the worst of the unemployment in the early years and recovery in some areas after 1933, together with continuing structural unemployment. Good answers had a wide knowledge of government policies and were able to assess effectiveness. The impact of cuts to public wages and to benefits was discussed as were other policies such as protective tariffs and low interest rates. Quite a few students commented that recovery had little to do with government policy, leaving the Gold Standard was not deliberate, the world economy recovered, prompting a revival, and there was a consumer boom. Good responses provided an assessment of the impact of policies such as The Special Areas Act. Some students again were preoccupied by current events and commented that the government was successful in reducing the deficit; however, the main focus had to be the tackling of unemployment. Weaker responses had little detail or were obviously wishing for a question on the extent or impact of depression.

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Some students attempted to assess wartime economic policy; however this was mostly not appropriate as the focus was winning the war and economic issues took a backseat, tackling unemployment in wartime was not too great a challenge. What was significant was the recognition of the extent to which the war created problems post-1945. Good answers here recognised the post war issues of great debt and the need for reconstruction. There was some understanding of the debate around the cost of welfare etc; however, too much coverage of these issues was not needed. The Labour governments did face some financial crises; good students were aware of these but also commented on the recovery of the economy and the strength of exports. Other students were unable to cover this era without, often irrelevant, coverage of the welfare reforms. Overall, although students do find economy-based questions difficult and this was more so than others because of the time period covered there were a range of very good answers.

### **Question 2**

- 02** This was a popular question and was reasonably well answered; students knew a great deal about the political parties in the interwar period. The best answers provided an assessment of the strengths of Baldwin as Conservative leader but were also aware of his failures; the loss of the 1923 election, the prominence of hard line conservatism and the alienation of the working class as a result of the General Strike, the failure of 'Safety First', and the problems faced around 1930/1931 because of the Empire First movement. Weaker answers mainly focused on the strengths of Baldwin's image, and many gave a very descriptive account of his actions around the strike. Some very good responses also discussed the impact of a range of other factors leading to Conservative dominance, finance, the press, organisation and the weaknesses of the other parties. Many students mentioned that the Conservatives and Baldwin were lucky in the crises that hit other parties. From weaker students there was a great deal of descriptive material on the issues around the decline of the Liberals; many clearly wished for a question on Lloyd George, and on the issues that prevented Labour becoming a threatening opposition, much of this material was often descriptive but relevant; better responses were able to assess the relevant importance of these factors against the role played by Baldwin. Although coverage of the 1930s was less than on Baldwin's role in the 1920s, most students covered the Abdication Crisis, although this had minimal impact as it was right at the end of the period of Conservative dominance. Similarly, students referred to the role of other Conservatives in this period; when considering the role of reformers such as Chamberlain this was a valid comment, although less so when considering his role as Prime Minister after 1937. Overall students who produced an evaluation of the importance of Baldwin in Conservative balanced against the importance of other factors were rewarded well on this question.

### **Question 3**

- 03** This question was answered most successfully by students, perhaps because of the narrow focus and despite being towards the end of the syllabus. The best answers were aware of Conservative strengths in the 1951 election, such as the reorganisation of the party, clear attractive policies such as the promise to build 300,000 answers per year and the acceptance of the Welfare State. Some good answers referred to the development of consensus politics as a factor in Conservative success, commenting that voters did not fear that the Conservative would undo popular Labour policies such as the NHS. There was frequent reference to the role of Churchill as leader but also, from better students, a reference to new and effective leaders such as Butler and Macmillan. Some very good answers pointed to the impact of the electoral system and made the point that Labour actually gained more votes in this election. In some answers students went off focus and wrote a great deal on Liberal collapse which had some but limited relevance. Most

students concentrated far more on Labour weaknesses, although weaker answers delivered a tirade against the Welfare State and Labour's mistakes in choosing public spending, without considering that the Conservatives were also committed to these policies. Good answers mentioned the dislike of 'Austerity' as a key factor in the electorate turning against Labour, and the highest achieving responses linked this to the situation in 1951, with the financial crisis prompted by involvement in the Korean War and the resulting splits over welfare cuts. Overall student who balanced Conservative strengths against Labour problems and weaknesses were well rewarded on this question.

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