



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 2041

Unit HIS3M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS3M

Unit 3M: The Making of Modern Britain, 1951–2007

General Comments

There was a fairly equal number of takers for each question and all produced a good range of responses. Most students had a fairly sound grasp of the material and very few offered pure narrative in response to the questions asked. Indeed, the vast majority showed commendable skills of analysis and their essays were well-structured and logically written. Real, argued judgements which ran through the whole essay were still fairly thin on the ground, but many arrived at a view in the conclusion. Probably the area that could be most improved upon would be in the depth of comment. There is still a tendency for students to use question words unthinkingly – in this paper, examples would be ‘world power’, ‘success’ and ‘legacy’. Paying a little more attention to the complexities of words and trying to offer more specific, personal comment would enable more students to access the highest level.

Question 1

01 Most students were able to deal with the ‘breadth’ demanded by this question, providing episodes across the period to illustrate Britain’s world status. Many addressed decolonisation, the ‘special relationship’ with USA, Britain’s involvement with Europe and the Falklands conflict, although the depth of comment and detail varied considerably. Perhaps the biggest issue was students’ failure to define what they understood by a ‘major world power’ and this led to some over-simplistic reasoning whereby any action, from joining the EEC to engaging in conflict in the Falklands was considered a sign of ‘world power’. On the other hand, Britain’s membership of NATO and its involvement in ‘behind the scenes’ diplomacy as demonstrated, for example, in Britain’s position in the UN security council, was rarely considered. Another all-too-common error was for students to stray beyond the parameters of the dates given in the question. Some spent a considerable time addressing pre-1951 but more frequently, essays went way beyond 1990, considering Blair and the Iraq wars and, in a number of cases, summarising Britain’s position in today’s world. Whilst some such answers were quite thoughtful, this material was, of course, irrelevant here.

Question 2

02 Most students were able to identify a range of Labour policies and provide some comment in relation to their successes and failures. Again, dates caused issues for the unwary and a few only dealt with Wilson’s government, ignoring the requirement to consider the whole period from 1964 to 1979. A small number also strayed from ‘domestic affairs’ and included material on foreign relations. However, for the majority, it was less the range of examples than the way they considered those examples that helped to differentiate between the mediocre and the very good. Amongst the latter, there was usually greater consideration of what ‘success’ and ‘failure’ actually meant, whilst less thoughtful students assumed every policy change was automatically a ‘success’. Some measured success by election victories and defeats, but the better students appreciated that popularity does not necessarily mean the same as success.

Question 3

- 03** This question elicited a good range of responses and a fair amount of personal comment, some of it less well-supported than that of others, on the Thatcher legacy. Overall, many students produced very well-integrated and strongly developed arguments showing the inter-relationship of the legacy with the other factors involved – primarily Tory weaknesses and Labour resurgence. Some of the detail here was truly impressive and many wrote with a keen sense of interest and involvement in the subject matter. There were, however, some who took the view that the Thatcher legacy meant that the Tories had become unelectable, so ignoring the Tory success in the 1992 election entirely. Others saw this question as an opportunity to focus on the rise of New Labour and, unfortunately, a good number of students failed to offer much in the way of evidence or analysis beyond 1997. It is a shame that some otherwise excellent answers were held back by such carelessness.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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