



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 1G (A-level)
Question 01 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1G (A-level): Additional specimen question paper

01 Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to the growth of affluence amongst the working classes.

[30 marks]

Student response

These three extracts are all linked to the growth of affluence amongst the working classes in the years after World War II. There are some reference to the period before the war but the arguments are about the postwar years.

Extract A is convincing. It tells us that in 1938, the top 100,000 earners in the UK received 11.7% of all personal income before tax but in 1955 only 5.3% did so and the share of the top million had also fallen. This means that the rich were less well off, suggesting that the working class were more affluent. This is convincing because these are facts and statistics so do not contain opinion. The extract also makes the comment that the real wages of the bottom 12 million of the total employed population of 22 million rose by 24% between 1949 and 1955. This is a very clear statement about growing affluence and shows some figures to support it. It is therefore convincing.

From my own knowledge I know that this links to the post-war boom when workers did well and there was almost full employment.

Extract A makes many convincing statements. It argues that the 1950s saw the advent of the affluent working class which led to the never-had-it-so-good years of the late 1950s and 1960s. I know this to be true from my own knowledge. It links to Macmillan's speech in 1957 when he said that the people had 'never had it so good', and he should have known since he was the Prime Minister. However, I also know from my own knowledge that he also went on to talk about economic problems and asked 'is it too good to be true?' He was worried about inflation and Britain's sluggish growth rates compared to other countries. However, this doesn't alter the argument. The working class had plenty of jobs -including work for women in the growing service industries and jobs for young people who helped their family incomes. The late 1950s and 1960s are called the an age of consumerism and people bought more cars, household goods and luxuries. This shows that this extract has a convincing argument

Extract B also refers to Macmillan's 'never had it so good' speech but it is much less positive about everything. It says that the income gap widened in the 1950s, even though it had narrowed in the 1940s. This suggests that the working class would be worse off. This goes against the evidence that working people were enjoying more jobs and more affluence. It seems to misunderstand Macmillan's speech and even says that times were better in the late 1930s, ignoring the impact of the 'hungry thirties' which made this a wretched time for many working class people, particularly in the north of England. It may be that the writer does not mean to imply that the working people suffered and only that the rich got even richer but it is not very clear. Therefore I do not find this a very convincing source.

Extract C is a better extract because it explains how the real wages of workers, which increased in the war years when there was full employment. This links to Extract A although it is referring to an earlier period. This is about the impact of total war on Britain which gave workers and especially women new opportunities to earn money. The extract tells us about the government wanting to maintain full employment in a 1944 white paper. It also mentions the beginning of the welfare state, which I know to have been a massive breakthrough for workers providing care 'from the cradle to the grave'. This was provided by the postwar labour government which wanted to help workers who couldn't afford private insurance. This is what is meant by 'New Jerusalem projects' and it is convincing.

Extract C is very convincing when it says that there were 13 years of uninterrupted prosperity under the Tories and that living standards doubled in a generation. This is correct and it ties in with Extract A. The extract is right to say that there was increased home ownership and that people bought cars, TVs and other consumer items. I know that these were boom products in the 1960s. It is also quite convincing when it says that people worked for only 5 days a week, because they used to work on Saturdays as well, but of course this wasn't everybody. It says workers got 2 weeks holiday, which was true for many, and I know that by the 1960s some people were even going on package holidays abroad, particularly to Spain. So this source shows a very convincing picture of the growth of affluence amongst the working classes.

None of these extracts provide very much detail. Extract A is the best because it has a lot of statistics, but Extract C also refers to some government acts. Extract A and Extract C do provide convincing arguments that the working classes became better off after the war and they have enough evidence to support their views. Extract B tries to suggest this was not the case but it isn't written very clearly and the other extracts and my own knowledge prove it wrong. So, I think Extracts A and C provide the most convincing evidence.

Commentary – Level 3

This is a moderately successful answer, but contains weaknesses. Overall, it does recognise the arguments advanced in the extracts, albeit descriptively and there are, on occasions, examples of knowledge of context which support the judgements offered in relation to how far the arguments are convincing. There are, however, some significant weaknesses in the answer. The introduction is descriptive and adds nothing of value and the conclusion is unnecessary as comparative assessment is not required. It is unbalanced, with very limited assessment of Extract B. The use of the first person detracts from what should be an objective assessment and the use of words such as 'true' suggest immaturity of understanding of the nature of historical interpretations. It is also very assertive in its judgements without appropriate reference to context and the references to statistics as 'facts' and to MacMillan being in a position to 'know' simply because he was Prime Minister suggests an unsophisticated appreciation of historical evidence. It is a Level 3 answer.