

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCE History (6HI01) C

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Publications Code US030583

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General Introduction

Candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated on the amount of knowledge shown and the serious application given to answering almost the entire range of questions across the six options. Legibility was generally good, and very few scripts were difficult to read.

The standard of English and spelling is a perennial concern. Colloquialisms were commonplace and the use of abbreviations seems to be on the increase. Some abbreviations might be tolerated where they are in general use, such as MLK for Martin Luther King. However, to link MLK to JFK and LBJ, and to credit him with the passing of the CRA and the VRA, not to mention the success of the MBB, can be confusing and often obscures the point being made.

It is interesting to note that long narrative answers, which were once common, no longer appear very often. Fewer candidates reiterate the question at the beginning of their answers, and more are attempting to engage with the question from the outset. Some groups of candidates, however, appear to bring a learned response to the examination room, with a succession of scripts offering the same factors and the same supporting evidence. While this approach may produce an acceptable level of attainment, it can be a limiting tactic because candidates have difficulty in accessing a wider pool of evidence and ideas in order to show their own initiative and thinking; such answers find it difficult to meet the direct focus and explicit understanding required for Level 5 marks. Answers at Level 5 require elements of sophistication in which candidates can provide analysis, inter-related links and judgements using evidence which reflects their own opinions and thoughts on the specific question asked.

Stated factor questions were generally approached with a discussion of the stated factor in the first paragraph and a consideration of other factors in the following paragraphs. However, some candidates were not able to play the factors confidently one against the other as the answer unfolded. Also a substantial number of answers applied a stated factor approach where none was needed or desirable. Question D9 asked 'How successful was Martin Luther King's campaign for civil rights in the years 1955-68?' There is no invitation in this question to consider other factors influencing civil rights, such as Malcolm X and Black Power, but many answers dealt only briefly with King's campaign as one of several, often irrelevant, factors.

A number of answers displayed an imbalance between content and analysis. Many of these were answers with a great deal of relevant content but with limited discussion of the effects or the significance of events, which thereby hindered the development of a detailed and focused analysis. Some perhaps considered the significance self-evident. For example, some answers on the Provisional Government (Question D5) contained much relevant detail about the continuation of the war, but then simply stated that this 'made them unpopular.' Lenin's slogan of 'Peace, Bread, Land' was apparently so popular it made the outcome of the October/November revolution a foregone conclusion. However, there are also an increasing number of answers which provide secure analysis, and often very good conclusions, but do not

provide sufficient relevant and accurate factual supporting material to justify their argument.

Overall, however, there were few overtly weak answers, with most finding their home somewhere within Levels 3 and 4.

Option C

Option C centres continue to prepare candidates well for the Empire topics. Most candidates are clearly aware of change over time and the different factors affecting the expansion and contraction of the British Empire. Examiners saw a range of answers across all Levels and all topics except for C4. Most candidates have at least a reasonable knowledge of their chosen topics and show some understanding of the question asked, but many competent answers fail to attain Level 5 because of the lack of a direct approach to the specific question asked and/or the failure to select appropriate, accurate supporting material. Indeed, some candidates appear to be writing prepared general answers/paragraphs supported by detailed knowledge that they then attempt to 'fit' to the question by including brief references to the key words and adding a balanced conclusion at the end. This leads to a series of statements which are well focused (Level 4) but not directly focused (Level 5). Addressing the focus of the question is a crucial factor in gaining success in this exam and, to reach the higher Levels, candidates need to create a reasoned argument throughout the answer that leads to a justified conclusion. Chronological awareness and knowledge was at times also lacking. Questions which require an explanation of change over time should show an awareness of the key dates and, perhaps even more importantly, the amount time between key events and developments. However, despite these weaknesses, the majority of candidates are at the very least attempting to engage with the question focus (Level 3). The best answers show clear engagement with all aspects of the question asked and come to well-reasoned judgements in an articulate and interesting manner. Examiners note that many of the answers suggest that the candidates enjoy studying the topics covered.

Unit 1 questions are designed to cover a range of key concepts at AS level including causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance and not all questions require a multi-factor response. In this paper there were questions which considered the concept of change/significance through the discussion of turning points (these questions are considered in more detail below). A variety of different questions can be found across Unit 1 Option papers and it has always been recommended that centres use all of the past papers, mark schemes and Principal Examiner reports to inform their teaching and learning strategies. Candidates should be responding to the specific questions set on the examination paper and the mark scheme Levels clearly credit those who attempt to engage with the key wording of the questions.

C1 – The Origins of the British Empire, c1680-1763

This is a popular topic and, as in previous examination sessions, candidates are well prepared with a clear understanding and knowledge of the different factors affecting the development of Empire. There is some evidence that candidates are increasingly aware of specific examples of expansion with good knowledge of different geographic regions but many answers still make generalised statements leading to Level 3 and mid-Level 4 marks. There was less reference to the early development of trading companies in this session with more focus on the time period of the topic itself and also clear evidence of an increased understanding of significance of William III's accession. However, it is important that candidates focus on the wording of the question asked rather than produce general answers which refer to the expansion of Empire without reference to the key words.

Q1. This question focused on the extent to which the Atlantic slave trade fuelled the growth of the British Empire. Weaker answers described the nature of the slave trade and/or explained the significance of the slave trade to the expansion of the Empire in general. Most answers were able to compare the role of the Atlantic trade in relation to other factors in the general expansion of Empire and so were able to reach Level 3 –mid-Level 4. However, few answers addressed the extent to which the Atlantic trade actually fuelled the expansion of Empire. The best answers suggested that either the Atlantic trade created conditions for the future development of British trade and industry, and thus the expansion of Empire, or that it had a lesser significance than either the desire to increase British prestige or the development of British interests in India.

Q2. This question focused on the concepts of change and significance, and required a discussion of the extent to which British success in the Seven Years War was the key point of expansion in the growth of the British Empire in the years c1680-1763. Candidates should approach turning point questions with reference to the 'given event' as a key moment of change/significance rather than as just another factor. As one candidate stated:

'The question above suggests that by the end of this period – the Seven Years War – was the turning point for the British, where effectively the British Empire was won, which is true as the British obtained an empire on which the sun never sets, however, the accuracy on which this is the turning point can be argued ... as Britain was (already) placed and elevated throughout this period which made it possible for this battle to be such a success. Therefore, we need to analyse the events chronologically which led up to this battle to determine whether the success was so momentous that the Britain actually won the empire or whether this outcome was inevitable due to extraordinary events before.'

There is no expected approach to this type of question but candidates should discuss the significance of the event in relation to the extent of its

impact and/or in relation to other possible key turning points. Answers which acknowledged the key wording with references to points of change or significance in relation to other events but still used the terminology of a multi-factor question could be credited at the higher levels. However, many answers to this question did highlight the concerns outlined in the general introduction to Option C about the use of prepared multi-factor answers. Many candidates produced a general discussion of the different factors involved in the expansion of Empire with no reference to, or attempt to use, the key wording of 'turning point' at all suggesting that they were not really focused on the question set on the paper itself. Generalised answers which were competent and well-supported but made little attempt to engage with the key wording could achieve up to mid-Level 4 marks. There were some very good answers which were able to develop and explain the significance of the successes in the Seven Years War in relation to other possible turning points such as the accession of William III, the creation of the Bank of England, the Treaty of Utrecht and changes to the powers of East India Company in either 1807 or 1812. Most argued that the Seven Years War brought the Empire great territorial expansion but that the other developments created the long-term foundations of the Empire. A few suggested that success in 1763 laid both the seeds of future expansion in India and the loss of the American colonies. Candidates who were willing and able to focus on the wording of the question produced some interesting and engaging answers.

C2 – Relations with the American Colonies and the War of Independence, c1740-89

This is a popular topic and as with topic C1 candidates are generally well prepared and have a good understanding of the key issues but in recent examination sessions concerns about chronological awareness and the use of generalised assertions rather than specific factual support have begun to appear.

Q3. Candidates are well prepared for questions about the course and outcome of the War of Independence. This was a turning point question that required a discussion as to the relative importance of the French intervention in 1778 in changing the course of the war. The comments made in Q2 above in relation to concerns about candidates not focusing on the wording of the question, also apply to this question as well (please read comments to Q2). Many candidates were able to develop and explain the significance of the French intervention and to evaluate its contribution to the war in relation to other possible turning points. Alternative turning points suggested were Long Island, Trenton, winter survival at Valley Forge, the failure of the Carolinas campaign, Saratoga and Yorktown. However, the turning point nature of the question did highlight weaknesses in chronology and the use of generalised supporting evidence. Many candidates seemed unsure of exactly when many of the major events took place and, in particular, their knowledge of when the battles of Saratoga and Yorktown took place often affected the effectiveness of their whole answer. A disappointing number of candidates failed to suggest any more than that

the French provided weapons and trained leaders to the Americans while distracting the British and/or seemed unaware of Yorktown or the peace process. Candidates willing to engage with the question set often produced interesting and engaging discussions as to just how much the French did contribute to the outcome of the War and whether the Americans had already turned the tide.

Q4. Although attempted by fewer candidates there were more answers to a post-1783 question than on previous papers. Coverage of the post-1783 situation in both America and Britain is a requirement of the specification if candidates are to have access to the full choice of questions available. Most answers were aware of the initial weaknesses in 1783 but, although able to identify the weaknesses, were not able to explain the extent to which they were overcome in any detail. Some candidates just narrated the constitutional arguments but the better answers were able to discuss the extent to which political disagreements had been solved by 1789 and there was some very good evaluation of the economic situation. Unfortunately, some assumed that the question referred to the period before the War of Independence and described the fraught relationship with the British up to 1776.

C3 – The Slave Trade, Slavery and the Anti-Slavery Campaigns, c1760-1833

This topic is by far the most popular topic studied for Option C and the answers often show enthusiasm and engagement. There is also clear evidence that centres are focusing more on the key issues covered by the specification. However, the answers to this topic do include more Level 2 and Level 3 narrative and descriptive driven answers than in other topics and chronological awareness is often weak.

Q5. There were more answers to an economics of slavery focused question than there has been in the past and most were aware of a debate on the extent to which the economic value of the slave trade was declining or continued to be important. Indeed, some candidates had an impressive knowledge of the value of the slave trade which they used to very good effect. These candidates were able to discuss the impact of the American Revolution, the on-going war with France, the growing consumer society in Britain and the boycotts of the anti-slavery campaigns. However, many just described the effect of the slave trade on the British economy, particularly British ports, or the operation of the slave trade itself. Some drifted into an explanation of the ending of the slave trade describing the various factors responsible for its abolition and therefore presenting little information relevant to the question. A few answers also provided information more relevant to the slave plantation economy in the 1820s and/or the impact of abolition after 1807, and there were a few candidates who seemed to interpret the wording 'by 1807' as 'after 1807'.

Q6. This was by far the most popular question and it is clear that most candidates had a good knowledge of the significance of Thomas Clarkson and other individuals involved in the campaigns for abolition. However, not

all candidates appreciated that this was a question focused on the relative significance of individual contributions and wrote long descriptions of the actions of the anti-slavery groups. Some credit could be given to those who argued that Clarkson could not have been as significant without the work of the abolitionist groups but this required an explicit evaluation which most of these answers did not provide. The best answers addressed the whole period and attempted to weigh the significance of individuals, even if they did not compare individuals to each other, but too many simply described the actions of various individuals. These answers could usually be credited up to mid-Level 4 depending on the quality of the supporting material. Many answers were also imbalanced with far too much emphasis on what Thomas Clarkson did rather than the significance of his actions. Most candidates chose to discuss Clarkson in relation to the other named individuals in the specification/clarification – William Wilberforce, Olaudah Equiano, John Newton and Thomas Fowell Buxton. However, some candidates also mentioned Granville Sharp, Lord Grenville, William Pitt, Elizabeth Heyrick and Sam Sharpe, but it should be noted that some of these were more pertinent than others as the question was focused on anti-slavery campaigning. It is pleasing to see that many candidates are aware of the revisionist debates concerning the role of certain individuals in the achievement of abolition, but there were too many answers which made no reference to the work of Wilberforce at all or suggested that he played no significant role at all in comparison to Equiano. There are also a significant number of candidates who appear to believe that both Equiano (died 1797) and Newton (died 1807) were campaigning in the 1810s and 1820s. Some candidates suggested that Granville Sharp and Lord Grenville are the same person. There are also a worrying number of candidates who are under the impression that Clarkson was a Quaker which is why he was not an MP. Chronological misunderstandings, inaccuracy and descriptive writing are the key areas of weakness in this topic which prevent candidates from achieving the higher Level marks.

C4 – Commerce and Conquest: India, c1760-c1835

The Principal Examiner is not aware of any answers to Q7 and Q8.

C5 – Commerce and Imperial Expansion, c1815-70

There were very few answers to this topic and those seen answered Q10. These candidates were aware of the discussion surrounding the positive and negative impact of British trade on the economic development of different geographic areas under British influence and were able to give examples from India, China, the Dominions, Africa and Latin America. Most answers mentioned the opium trade and the detrimental effect of the British control of trading patterns on indigenous industries in India and Africa. Some answers, however, saw this as an 'other factors' question and attempts to discuss the role of Christian missionaries and the navy often resulted in rather answers.

C6 – Britain and the Scramble for Africa, c1875-1914

This is a popular topic and most candidates are well prepared with detailed knowledge of both the general factors affecting the expansion of imperial rule in Africa and developments in different geographic areas. However, there were some answers which appeared to rely, to some extent, on prepared information about the different theories of imperial expansion, rather than measuring relative significance and comparing the importance of factors. Some candidates were able to use this information to address the focus of the question directly and create a sustained argument (Level 5) but many of these answers, although competent and accurate, were made up of well-focused assertions/statements which showed an understanding of the key issues which is more indicative of Level 4. This was seen particularly in Q12 where the given factor was less obviously connected to metropolitan theories and candidates found it difficult to develop the given factor across the time period.

Q11. This was by far the most popular question. Almost all the answers were well-focused but not necessarily thoroughly engaged with question asked (see paragraph above). Many answers were impressive in their ability to handle material covering not only a wide range of contributing factors but also change over time and different geographic areas. The most successful answers were those which were able to discuss the desire to protect British interests from imperial rivals in relation to other motivating factors. Some excellent answers suggested that the desire to protect interests became more imperative after the Berlin (West Africa) Conference when formal expansion became necessary. However, a thematic and/or geographic approach does require candidates to use specific key dates in order to show chronological understanding and the deployment of accurate chronology was less apparent than in previous sessions. In particular, events along the Nile Valley and in southern Africa were often given less than secure dating. There was also often some confusion over the relationship between the Boer Republics and Britain.

Q12. This question was, in general, answered poorly with many candidates writing answers which were more appropriate to previous questions set on the changing nature of popular support for Empire across the time period. Many answers were focused almost entirely on the period of the Boer War with a brief mention of the public desire to avenge the death of General Gordon. There were often quite simple assertions made as to the initial popularity of the Boer War leading to almost complete disillusion with Empire as a result of British policies against the Boers. However, there were some excellent answers which were able to discuss the influence of popular pressure on government policies, the growth of jingoism and the public response to the activities of men-on-the-spot along with a more subtle understanding of the impact of the Boer War.

C7 – Retreat from Empire: Decolonisation in Africa, c1957-81

There were fewer answers to this topic than usual in the January examination session and many of the answers were weak in their approach with a lack of detailed knowledge and chronological awareness.

Q13. There were very few answers to this question. The development of African nationalism is a key area of the specification but answers are very generalised and lacking in detail. Candidates are aware of general factors affecting nationalism in the 1950s referring to the influence of African participation in World War II, Cold War politics, Indian independence, European decolonisation and the growth of liberation ideologies but often assert these influences rather than showing how they contributed to growth. Answers also rarely use specific examples except for references to Ghana and Kenya, and even then few of the answers were able to develop the given factor of the success of Ghanaian independence beyond a few brief references to the relationship between Nkrumah and Arden-Clarke and a lack of white settlers.

Q14. This was the most popular question with candidates clearly more confident in discussing the reasons for the decolonisation of Africa from the 1950s. Candidates were generally able to discuss a variety of factors but the given factor itself was often poorly developed. In particular, a worrying number of candidates referred to the Boer War and attempted to argue that the British public had lost interest in Empire from that point, with the result that this was a significant factor in 1957. This was further compounded by reference to a number of inaccuracies and misconceptions which are common in this topic. Many candidates assume that the post-War, 'anti-imperialist' Labour government planned a rapid decolonisation from 1945 and seem unaware of the New Imperialist policies that saw increased colonial development in Africa in order to prepare for decolonisation in the longer term. Also a significant number of answers still suggest that Macmillan was elected as a Labour Prime Minister after the Suez Crisis in 1957. Stronger answers, however, were able to show that many British people were still proud of the African Empire, desired to emigrate to the settler colonies and wished to keep the last vestiges of British prestige but that continued post-War austerity, Cold War realities, the development of the Welfare State and the difficulties caused by events such as Mau Mau and the Suez Affair were beginning to change the attitudes of both the British public and politicians.

Summary

Centres might consider the following areas of weakness in many answers:

- a) Answer the question set – are candidates concentrating on the specific wording in the question and the dates covered?
- b) Chronological awareness and application – do candidates know the key dates and are they able to explain/expand points made with accurate reference to the order in which events happened?
- c) Supporting material – are candidates using sufficient relevant, specific and accurate material to support their analysis and, in particular, the conclusions to which they come?
- d) Reaching a judgement – is a relevant and analytical conclusion just placed at the end of a response which makes a series of developed assertions/explanations or does the conclusion reached reflect the argument made and sustained in the main body of the essay?

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Order Code US030583 January 2012

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