



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel

In GCE History (8HI0/2H)

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2H.1: The USA, c1920– 55: boom,
bust and recovery

Option 2H.2: The USA, 1955–92: conformity
and challenge

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Examiner Report 8HI0 2H

Introduction

It is clear that centres are continuing to concentrate AS entry on students who may not be moving on to A Level. However, following the pandemic, there was evidence this year that more potential A Level candidates were present in the AS entry than in previous sessions. The percentage of candidates scoring at higher levels was slightly higher than in previous sessions. Nevertheless, Section A source analysis, with its emphasis on value and weight, is not fully appreciated by weaker candidates.

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range with the A Level paper 2H, which deals with 2H.1: The USA, c1920–55: boom, bust and recovery and 2H.2: The USA, 1955–92: conformity and challenge. The paper was divided into two sections: Section A was aimed at the in-depth evaluation and analysis of source material and Section B focused on the evaluation of key features in depth, exploring cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

It was clear that standards in Section B continue to be higher than those in Section A and that many candidates at this level find the concept of making an inference from the material within the source too difficult. Teachers and candidates need to follow the requirements of the Section A mark scheme carefully in order to be clear about what is meant by 'value' and 'weight'. As in previous years, some candidates continue to write too much generalised comment without regard to the source material, or to paraphrase the source without considering its value or (Part b) reliability. The major weakness was often in considering the provenance and comments were too often stereotypical, or too often missing entirely. We remind centres that candidates should assess 'weight' by using contextual knowledge to challenge or confirm what is in the source, or to discuss the values of its audience, rather than just claiming that the source discusses an aspect of the topic, so it must have weight. It is also necessary to analyse the nature, origin and purpose of the source through its provenance in order to assess weight.

As before, many responses were largely made up of comments about what is missing from the source, suggesting that this made it less valuable, or gave it less weight. Credit is given to comments about what is not in the source only if it is possible to show that this material is missing for a reason, for example because the source is a deliberate piece of propaganda, or, for example, the author is not in a position to comment about key issues and that for this reason the source is unrepresentative. The trend to score higher in the (a) question than the (b) question remained true this year, perhaps because 'weight' is still not fully understood. The detailed knowledge base required to add contextual material was often good, but candidates need to understand that contextual knowledge must be linked to what is in the source and used to confirm or challenge inferences from the source itself, as well as to assess value or weight in the ways described above. Too many candidates are ignoring the substance of the source material and writing detailed material about the theme in general. A reminder: AO1 is not assessed in Section A.

There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer both questions. The ability range was very diverse, but the design of the paper allowed all abilities to be catered for. Essay writing in Section B continues to improve, but it was noticeable this year that weaker candidates did not read the question carefully enough and simply rehearsed what they had learnt. Lack of knowledge was clear on individual questions and we strongly advise

teachers and candidates to pay careful attention to the wording of the specification, as the full range of topics is open for assessment. Candidates continue to identify key themes in an introduction and to make a judgement in a conclusion. The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

8HI0_2H.1_Q01a

Strong responses had a clear focus on the value of the source in terms of the methods used by the civil rights movement in the first half of the 1950s. At the highest level, candidates selected key points from the source and made valid inferences about them, supporting each one with their own knowledge of the historical context, for example, the NAACP had brought a number of cases to the courts to test segregation on inter-state transportation. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that Jo Ann Robinson was responding for an organisation of black women directly to the Mayor, which suggests that the city authorities were concerned about the influence even of the least powerful in society. Weaker responses simply wrote generally about the idea that this was an early example of women's protest.

8HI0_2H.1_Q01b

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not understand the need to make inferences from the source, for example that the law enforcers were motivated by fear of communism rather than by a sense of fair play. Many candidates failed to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about Sacco and Vanzetti. Weaker candidates gave weight to the source only because the writer was a communist. Others missed out any comment about the provenance. However, stronger candidates linked the direction the court was taking against Sacco and Vanzetti with the fact that the Red Scare was seen as an attack by a rich elite on the un-American activities carried out by an unfavoured class of outsiders, justifiable in order to defend the nation.

Examiner Tip

Try to integrate contextual knowledge with a supported inference. In this way a valid inference is explained by confirming matters of detail in the source or expanding them. This will enable you to reach Level 3 in both bullet points 1 and 2 of the mark scheme.

8HI0_2H.2_Q02a

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not understand the need to make inferences from the source, for example that electors now subordinated negative views about a candidate's sexual orientation if he was seen as competent on vital economic issues. Many candidates failed

to make inferences and simply supported quotations with their wider knowledge about the progress of the gay rights movement. Weaker candidates gave value to the source only because it was a newspaper. Others missed out any comment about the provenance. However, stronger candidates noted that Californian newspapers often had more to report on gay rights in the 1970s than those in other parts of America, so this would be a valuable source to note the progress of gay rights in California. They also supported their responses with stronger contextual material, e.g. that Milk and liberal San Francisco mayor, George Moscone were assassinated in 1978. Their assassin received a sentence of voluntary manslaughter, indicating that prejudice against homosexuality remained strong.

Examiner Tip

Turn supported inferences into reasoned inferences by using contextual knowledge to confirm or reject the points inferred in the source.

8HI0_2H.2_Q02b

Strong responses had a clear focus on the weight of the source in relation to an enquiry into the objectives of women's rights groups in the 1960s. At the highest level, candidates selected key points from the source and made valid inferences about them, supporting each one with their own knowledge of the historical context, for example, that there was something fundamentally new about the objectives of women's rights through co-operation, but that a more radical wing of the movement was creating waves. Comments about provenance were thoughtful and may have considered that the fact that Redstockings, whose radical views may not be typical of the women's movement as a whole, may be just a small part of the general campaign for women's rights. Weaker responses simply wrote generally about the idea that this was an example of women's protest.

8HI0_2H.1_Q03

Weaker responses indicated two main problems in this question. First, there was often a tendency to write about the causes of the Crash. Secondly, most candidates thought that all Hoover's policies were a complete disaster, so there was insufficient balance. However, this question was mostly well answered. The most successful candidates understood the need to identify three or four interventions by Hoover and to reach a judgement about the extent to which they failed. Indeed, this proved to be a popular mainstream question and there were some excellent responses linking tariffs to farm policies and banking to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

Examiner Tip

Be sure that you are able to choose suitable analysis both for and against the proposition when making a judgement about the relative success of the individual named in the question. It is not possible to make this judgement when set against other stated criteria of dubious validity. Try to offer detailed evidence for each issue, too. Remember that this is a depth study.

8HI0_2H.1_Q04

There were a number of very well supported responses and candidates had an excellent knowledge of the alphabet agencies and their strengths and weaknesses in attempting to improve the lives of the American people. For example, many candidates noted that the CCC was successful because young men sent their \$30 a month home to their families and the CCC left a legacy of outdoor recreation areas, however, it was not successful in changing the lives of certain groups of people, e.g. there was considerable discrimination against ethnic minorities, especially with the introduction of segregated camps in 1935. This kind of balance was often repeated for other agencies, especially the AAA, NRA and CWA. Some candidates read the question as: it was factors other than the agencies that improved lives. This was a perfectly legitimate response, as long as the agencies themselves were also considered.

Examiner Tip

In this type of question, it is very important to note both strengths and weaknesses in evidence for each of three or four alphabet agencies.

8HI0_2H.1_Q05

A number of responses to this question were very generalised and usually wrote vaguely about movies during World War II supporting war aims being anti-Nazi, while post war movies were directed against communism. While this is an excellent point, there did need to be some specific evidence, which was often lacking. There were a very few strong responses that made detailed points about the two periods e.g., Hollywood directors produced wartime documentaries for government and military agencies like *Why We Fight* (1942–44); these had a similar impact on patriotism as did later Korean War productions like *The Crime of Korea*.

Examiner Tip

Similarity and difference questions across two periods require a particularly clear structure. E.g. these are the similarities across both periods versus these are the differences – on balance there are more or stronger similarities / differences. Or (e.g.) here is a topic relevant to both periods and here are the similarities / difference in its treatment; here is another topic (ditto) and another (ditto). On balance more topics show similarities than differences (or vice-versa).

8HI0_2H.2_Q06

Many candidates fell into the trap of rehearsing what they had revised rather than paying close attention to the target focus, which was challenges to cultural conformity in the United States. Many read this as an opportunity to narrate the details of Lucille Ball's performances in *I Love Lucy* or the behaviour of teenage car drivers, without linking such material to the focus on cultural conformity. However, many candidates were able to analyse the challenges presented by the beats, or the diverse effects of film and TV on teenage culture. Most candidates who did read the question carefully provided some very detailed knowledge about (e.g.) teenage

rebellion challenging cultural conformity, a feature captured in movies such as *Rebel Without a Cause*. One surprising response, but not without its merits, was the argument by a number of candidates who decided that cultural conformity was only possible for white, middle class America, as ethnic minorities and poorer whites were unable to conform by keeping up with an increasingly materialistic culture. Others noted that student culture failed to conform to established norms. Student movements began to challenge both sexual stereotyping in the curriculum and a culture of cold war confrontation in a nuclear age.

Examiner Tip

A clear sense of organisation often sets up the target focus first, before producing the counter argument, rather than sandwiching the latter in the middle of the response.

8HI0_2H.2_Q07

This was a popular question and there were some very thoughtful attempts to demonstrate wholesale change in the status of black Americans from the beginning of Johnson's Presidency to the end of Carter's Presidency, thereby disagreeing with the proposition. Stronger candidates went beyond 1968 (many did not), often using Supreme Court judgements in the 1970s as the basis for consideration. Most were able to balance the argument by indicating that legislative and judicial changes did not necessarily bring improvements in reality.

Examiner Tip

Allow enough time and space in the essay to write a substantial and well-considered conclusion that judges the extent to which the argument suggested by the question is confirmed or challenged. The basis of the judgement is that one aspect is more important, influential or significant, or, as in this case, the extent of change. The best candidates will be able to compare the relative importance / significance / degree of similarity / extent of change (e.g.) of all the key features they have outlined.

8HI0_2H.2_Q08

There was a widespread misreading of this question, which required the extent to which the influence of the Religious Right changed in the years 1981-92. Most candidates read: 'What were the key features of the policies of the Religious Right?' There were, however, many strong responses that showed a decline in the influence of the Religious Right, for example as gay rights made significant progress, becoming a more accepted and a permanent feature of American life in most cities, balancing that argument against Reagan's appointments to the Supreme Court, indicating an advancement for the values of the Religious Right as these choices made the Court less activist, less liberal and more conservative.

Examiner Tip

Take a highlighter pen to the question as printed and mark out key words and phrases that show the concept, the focus and the chronology to be considered.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

Value of Source Question (Qa)

- Be prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Explore beyond stereotypical reactions to particular types of provenance. Not all old people are blighted by poor memories; look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid discussions about what is missing from the source when assessing its value to the enquiry unless there is a clear reason for the author missing such points.

Weight of Source Question (Qb)

In addition to the advice on Qa:

- Be prepared to assess the strength of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- In coming to a judgement about the provenance take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose

- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source.

Section B Essay questions

- You must provide factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Plan your answer effectively before you begin
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically.