



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2R

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2R

Unit 2R: A Sixties Social Revolution? British Society, 1959–1975

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 2

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 2 papers were noted:

- In the compulsory source question, 1(b), some candidates failed to use both the sources and their own knowledge in responding to the question. Candidates must be reminded that unless they refer to the sources, by explicit comment on detail or views, paraphrasing or direct quotation (or if they use the sources only and show no additional knowledge), their mark will be limited to a maximum of the top of Level 2.
- Although there were fewer problems of timing than in Unit 1, some candidates clearly spent considerably longer than 15 minutes on the (a) questions and 30 minutes on the (b) questions, and consequently failed to complete their final answer. They should be reminded that even a couple of focused paragraphs could enable them to reach a Level 2 mark, whereas a string of notes would be unlikely to show skills above Level 1.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates were not familiar with the complete content requirements for their alternative. Candidates must be reminded that they need to revise all of the content of these 'depth' units, particularly since this paper features one compulsory question which can be drawn from any part of the specification content, as can the remaining two questions, from which they have to choose one.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

Whilst to some, this may not seem like History, the opportunity to study this new and vibrant period certainly seems to have stimulated the students who entered for this January's examination session. Many papers oozed with fascination and enthusiasm and candidates' knowledge of the sixties was generally very well-established. Anecdotes, although sometimes of dubious relevance, were retold with delight and script after script amazed in its recall of surprising and sometimes quite specific detail. There was little doubting the students' enjoyment of the topic, although there may still be some way to go, in certain cases, in harnessing that enthusiasm to the specific requirements of the examination. It is to teachers wishing to achieve just this, that the following comments on the individual questions are addressed.

Question 1

- (a) Although students were asked to compare the *views* in the two given sources, some mistakenly ignored *views* to write about differences in general, e.g. 'the sources are different because one was written in 1964 and the other in 2005'. Better candidates set out with a clear identification of *views* (plural) and the most able were able to make two or three contrasting points from the sources. However, to gain a mark of Level 3 or 4, candidates also needed to address, 'how far...' and recognise the underlying similarity of the views conveyed. Many drew attention to their shared appreciation of the 'golden age' and, in the most perceptive answers, there was reference to the media portrayal of that

age. Contextual own knowledge varied in type and quality. In better answers, candidates used their knowledge of the Sixties to explain the differences and similarities but not (as was another common error), to try to justify one view in preference to the other. Weaker candidates either ignored the demand or provided some unrelated factual material. It was often fascinating, but was not necessarily of much relevance to the answer,

- (b) It was pleasing to find that virtually all candidates did as instructed and combined source material with their own well-imbibed knowledge in response to this question. The very few that failed to do so (in most cases omitting any reference to the sources, as they became carried away in their determination to relay their knowledge of Sixties' life) limited their mark to a maximum of Level 2. Knowledge of what the Sixties were about was very strong here, but candidates varied in the degree to which they addressed the 'key' words of the question - both 'purchasing power' and 'transformed'. A few either misread or misunderstood 'purchasing power' altogether and talked instead of a transference of 'power'. Such provided for some interesting answers, but it was not what was asked for. Others wrote extensively about all the changes the Sixties brought – pop music, pirate radio stations, the permissive society, youth rebellion and the like – but they did not explicitly show the link between these changes and increased purchasing power, or, in some cases, asserted but failed to explain that link. Even more common was the tendency of some otherwise well-informed candidates, to ignore 'transform' and to fail to question the extent of change, beyond a token reference to Source B. The most able students advertised themselves by the way in which they explored the degree of change, commented on what remained as before and sometimes suggested that such changes as there were, were less the result of increased purchasing power than of other factors, such as new technologies. When arguments such as these were employed, candidates easily met the Level 4/5 requirement for a 'balanced' answer, since they displayed a real understanding of the differing interpretations that can be applied to the period.

Question 2

- (a) The best answers produced a good range of factors here, ranging from the problems of overseas competition, through a desire to throw off the old 'Establishment' image (a topic that was very well-known) and the need to appeal to the young and forward elements in society. Those achieving the highest marks provided some link between the reasons proposed, usually emphasising Wilson's desire to win over the voters after a period of Tory dominance in a way that suggested modernisation and change and was in keeping with the new technological developments of the age. At the lower end, some candidates became side-tracked into describing Wilson, often endearingly, or listing what he did after he came to power, so ignoring the need for specific explanations.
- (b) Most candidates who attempted this question had a very good knowledge of the liberalising legislation of the Labour governments, although the specific dates of the various acts cited were not always accurate. The abolition of the death penalty in 1965 and Theatre Act of 1968 featured less frequently than the Divorce Act, Abortion Act and Sexual Offences Act, and occasionally Race Relations Acts, but the majority of candidates were able to comment on the successes and limitations of such acts and were rather better here, than in Question 1(b) at relating these to social 'transformation' and seeing their limitations. Some weaker candidates included laws that did not belong to the period – most frequently the Obscene Publications Act of 1959 – while some also ignored 'legislation' to discuss issues like the growing use of the contraceptive pill or the spread of permissiveness on television. Fascinating though such discussions were, they did not relate explicitly to the question unless used to suggest that it was not the liberalising legislation but 'other factors' that transformed society – and then a clear focus on

1964–1970 was still required. The best candidates explored the limitations of the legislation in some depth, making some pertinent comment on the continuation of class and racial divisions.

Question 3

- (a) There was some confusion over the dates given here and a number of candidates tried to suggest that the Equal Pay Act (not passed until 1970) drove women into work, when in fact it was the desire of employers to give jobs to women who could be paid less, that was actually the attraction before 1964. Most candidates were able to produce some range of factors, although not all developed them with any precision. In better answers, for example, there was usually more than a simple comment on the greater availability of jobs. Specific explanation of why this was so, with reference to the expansion of the retail and service sectors, areas traditionally suited to women, enabled good candidates to show precise understanding. Linkage between the factors in such responses, usually involved some reference to the ‘boom’ which encouraged women to work in order to have more to spend, which in turn created jobs.
- (b) There were some well argued responses here, with most candidates agreeing that, despite the changes of the 1964–1975 era, the position of women changed little. A few brave souls chose to disagree with the quotation and such independent thinkers often wrote convincingly and achieved highly, since they had to think carefully about their arguments. In assessing change, the majority referred to legislation, but the best also looked at other issues such as the spread of the Pill, changing moral attitudes, education and growing employment opportunities. There were occasional misconceptions, including a small number who thought that women had ‘just’ achieved the vote and others who believed that free childcare arrived in these years. As always, the more historically precise and carefully argued the answer, the better the mark.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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