



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2F

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS2F

Unit 2F: Challenging British Dominance: The Loss of the American Colonies, 1754–1783

General Comments

Overall, this unit seems to have made a successful start. Evidence suggests that most centres have attempted to cover the entire specification, doing so with genuine focus, discernment and historical analysis. It was encouraging to note that centres had not avoided the French and Indian Wars; whilst more candidates opted for Question 3 rather than Question 2, this was by no means an overwhelming division, and a considerable number of quality responses to Question 2 were noted. The main issue of concern was the failure of many candidates to perform as well in the source comparison exercise, Question 01, as they subsequently performed in the rest of the paper; greater preparation for the source comparison exercise would appear appropriate for future examinations.

Question 1

Question 01

Candidates usually made a genuine attempt to allocate sufficient time to this question, but responses were often disappointing, possibly reflecting limited training in source analysis. It was not unusual for candidates to reverse the main difference between the sources. George III in Source A clearly underestimated the task facing the British in North America, but some candidates used his reference to 'desire for independence' (line 6) to argue that George III was seriously worried about the situation in North America. Conversely, candidates noted the reference to 'a minor dispute within the Empire' (Source B, line 4-5) and concluded that this was Christie's personal view, rather than his opinion of the British government's view in 1774. Such misinterpretations inevitably affected candidate performance throughout the whole of their response to Question 01, although they did not necessarily have an adverse effect on responses to Question 02.

Even those candidates with an appropriate understanding of the basic contrast between the sources sometimes struggled to build on this and supply a wider range of differences. They should have mentioned how Source A regarded the disturbances as confined to the Boston area, whilst Source B refers to Boston receiving 'support...from other provinces'; Source A attributed the cause of the 1774 disturbances to the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766, whilst Source B felt that it was the result of the long-term progression towards 'mature political communities', a development 'of more than a century'; Source A felt that a mere four regiments would be sufficient to deal with the disturbance, whereas the implication in Source B was that a much greater force would be needed. A common misinterpretation of Source B was that 'looking towards a new relationship with the parent state' involved building positive links with Britain, rather than seeking independence. Candidates need also to be aware that the directive to explain 'how far the views differ' requires them to identify points of agreement as well as points of difference. Most did, but a significant number contented themselves with differences only. Both sources agreed on taxation as a major short-term cause of unrest, and both identified Boston as the heart of the unrest.

Question 02

Most candidates, including those who had experienced difficulties with Question 01, were able to integrate source extraction with their own knowledge to produce responses which were usually secure and focused. A notable weakness was a failure to use the full date range, candidates often confining their responses to the pre-1770 period or (less frequently) the post-1770 period; whilst coverage of the entire period was not required, the expectation was that there would be coverage of at least ten years. Most candidates focused on British politicians and the legislation produced by them after 1763, together with their later response to colonial activities. Usually this material would be set in the context of the financial and strategic implications of British victory over the French in the French and Indian Wars, and the resultant disappearance of the traditional policy of 'salutary neglect'. Candidates would then make reference to the attitude of colonial leaders, with some centres clearly emphasising 1770 as the date when colonial response became more important than British initiatives (a view which perhaps overlooks earlier issues such as the Stamp Act Congress). Source A was usually recognised as indicative of the limitations of British understanding of the colonial mind, whilst Source B was seen to indicate the long-term development of a spirit of independence within the colonies. Usage of Source C was relatively disappointing; although most candidates made at least some reference to this source, few took advantage of the 'decisive stage' dates quoted in the source which provided good indicators of the main events of the period.

Question 2**Question 03**

There were some competent responses here. Better candidates placed Anglo-French hostilities in North America in the broader context of long-term Anglo-French relations, notably mentioning (though not in significant detail) the inadequacy of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle as a resolution of differences. There was also reference to the nature of French and British expansion in North America, and the strategic importance of the Ohio valley. Often this would be followed by description of the deteriorating situation in the Ohio valley between 1754 and 1756; whilst some of these descriptions were predominantly narrative, in many cases candidates made pertinent comments demonstrating the importance/relevance of particular events, thus supplying a focused response.

Question 04

Most candidates disagreed with the quotation, placing greater emphasis on the impact of Pitt after the establishment of the Pitt/Newcastle ministry, a perfectly valid and acceptable position. Relatively few candidates abandoned the navy completely, however, and in most cases reference was made to naval supremacy and the effectiveness of blockading tactics. There was usually reference to other factors, notably French preoccupation with European affairs, divisions between French military commanders, and the organisational successes of Loudon with British military forces in North America. Rather surprisingly, there was only limited reference to Wolfe and Amherst, the triumph at Quebec, and the inspirational value of the 'Year of Victories'. Hawke's victory over the Brest fleet at Quiberon Bay was also often neglected, despite the focus on naval successes supplied by the question. Overall, some encouragement was taken from the fact that there was very little evidence of any confusion between the French and Indian Wars and the broader conflict of the Seven Years' War. Teachers have clearly done an effective job in distinguishing between those aspects of the wider conflict which were relevant to the North American situation (such as Pitt's arrangement of subsidies for Frederick the Great in order to ensure distraction for the French in Europe) and those which were not (such as Prussian military victories in Europe and British triumphs in India).

Question 3

Question 05

There were some good responses to this question, with candidates often able to offer a good range of reasons for French involvement in the conflict. Such factors included revenge, the hope of developing trade with America, the impact of American negotiators in Paris, the prospect of support from Spain, and, not least, Saratoga. Weaker responses focused on a somewhat limited range of factors, and often dwelt excessively on generalised references to long-term Anglo-French rivalry. There was also a tendency for some candidates to drift beyond the reasons for French involvement and to examine the impact of this involvement, material much more appropriate to Question 06.

Question 06

Another question which caused few apparent problems to those candidates with knowledge. Most were able to make extensive comment on the qualities and weaknesses of the major British commanders, usually applying their observations to military campaigns and battles in a constructive fashion; whilst some drifted into narration here, most were able to identify the failings of the appropriate commanders, and there were often focused observations. Most candidates were also able to contrast these military weaknesses with a range of other factors, such as weak direction by London politicians, the impact of distance and terrain, the role of American militias and the leadership of George Washington, foreign intervention, and the alienation of loyalist support by insensitive British tactics. There was no evidence that the question caused any problems to those with suitable knowledge.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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