



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2Q

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2Q

Unit 2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975

General Comments

The overall quality of candidate performance was good. It was clear that the majority of candidates had come to the examination well-prepared in terms of their knowledge and understanding. There is, however, some room for further development in terms of examination technique in order to enable the candidates to fully benefit from these solid foundations. Candidates need to be fully aware of the importance of identifying **both** similarities and differences in Question 1(a) and also developing some relevant knowledge of their own. In Question 1(b) it is important to consider all three of the sources in addition to any relevant own knowledge and develop balanced responses based on these two areas. In Questions 2(a) and 3a candidates should aim at identifying at least three reasons and establish clear links between them if they are to enter the higher levels of reward. The best answers to questions 2(b) and 3(b) are those that develop balanced explanations founded on well-selected supporting evidence that leads to a relevant conclusion. Candidates need to be familiar with the generic level descriptors in order to enhance their effective usage of good examination technique.

Question 1

- (a) Many responses reached Levels 2 or 3. It was apparent that many candidates were able to identify similarities and differences in the views although some merely recited the content of the sources without clearly focusing on the similarities and differences. The better answers were those that were able to refer to the wider context and use this knowledge to place Kennedy's views into a wider framework that that referred to in the two sources.
- (b) Relatively few candidates produced entirely source-based responses. There were some good examples of balanced answers. These often called upon evidence which illustrated Kennedy's commitment to use military force whilst also including evidence that suggested his reluctance to escalate the USA's military commitment to protect South Vietnam. A number of candidates explored the military implications of the Strategic Hamlets programme while others saw this programme as clear evidence of non-military intervention. Both views were rewarded if they were backed by substantive evidence. Less developed answers tended to be those that lacked balanced and placed too much reliance on the detail in Source C. There were some examples of candidates drifting into considerable irrelevancy. Very few candidates made the error of failing to make reference to any of the sources.

Question 2

- (a) There were many well-informed responses to this question. The majority of candidates were able to develop a good range of factors. This sound knowledge base was often not supported by developed explanatory content. Also, many candidates did not reach Level 4 because they did not establish clear connections and links between the factors they had raised. Relatively few were able to prioritise the factors or show how they were collectively interrelated. Only a small minority of answers suggested a real lack of knowledge or preparation.

- (b) Answers to this question varied significantly in quality. A minority of answers made no mention of the importance of the Tet Offensive as an influential factor on public opinion. A small minority of answers focused solely on the massacre to the exclusion of any other contributory factors. Such responses tended to be narrow and lacking in any clear balance. Others brought a small range of factors into the answer. These tended to focus on the massacre and the Tet Offensive. The best answers were those that were able to offer a wide range of relevant detail that focused on the whole period in the question. Some candidates were able to emphasise the ongoing opposition to the war and fixed this as early as 1965. Equally, many answers placed considerable emphasis on the impact of returning troops. Others focused on the specific contribution of the media. Range not only enabled candidates to develop some balance but also to reach well formed conclusions and judgements.

Question 3

- (a) Many good answers were seen for this question. Despite this some answers drifted into irrelevancy by considering the consequences of the Tet Offensive rather than the reasons for it happening. The best answers were those that presented a range of factors and linked them in terms of their relative importance. There were some well developed explanations of the links between the offensive and the diplomatic expectations of the North Vietnamese. Most answers were able to develop at least two of the factors and offer some explanatory detail to support them.
- (b) There were some quite sophisticated answers to this question. These tended to place a clear link between militarism and diplomacy and argued that militarism was a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They often took direct military action head on and showed how this was undertaken for diplomatic reasons. Many candidates drew upon their knowledge and understanding of the invasion of Cambodia and the bombing campaigns introduced by Nixon. Sometimes this detail simply led to the view that Nixon was only interested in militarism. This almost inevitably led to a lack of balance and well honed judgements.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.