



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2R

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2R

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

General Comments

Candidates were generally well-prepared for this paper and many were able to write two focused and thoughtful answers, mostly answering questions 1 and 2, with question 3 being decidedly less popular. There were, of course, those who struggled to assemble the material and who saw questions 1(b) and 2(b), for example, as invitations to write all they knew about the sixties. However, the most successful candidates were those who were not only able to select relevant information to direct their answers but were also prepared to advance a view, using their knowledge to support a clear line of argument. It should be emphasised that it is not enough for candidates to write in a generalist way, speaking of ‘the people’, for example, as though they were one easily identifiable group who all thought and acted in the same way. One of the fascinations of a study of the Sixties should be in appreciating the diversity of society and, sadly, this was not apparent in all answers. Another essential is an understanding of the terminology of the unit. Candidates should be familiar with terms such as ‘permissive society’ or ‘British culture’, and it may be that some students require more discussion and guidance as to what these imply. Finally, Question 1 of this paper is based on sources. Although responses here were mostly good and some were very impressive, it would be helpful to remind candidates to read Source C very carefully before attempting question 1(b). The purpose of this source is to help candidates in that answer and in this particular paper, the ideas it raised provided a good deal of the ‘balance’ that was needed for a higher level response.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were familiar with the views of Mary Whitehouse and the changes in television in the 1960s and they were able to apply this knowledge effectively in this source comparison question. Almost all saw the clear contrast between the views of the sources, although some were able to explain these better than others. To achieve high marks it was, for example, necessary to go beyond stating that Source B referred to Mary Whitehouse as ‘good-humoured’ whilst Source A called her ‘ignorant’; both terms needed explaining with reference to context to illustrate the two different viewpoints. Some candidates got far too bogged down in provenance, with some trying unsuccessfully to suggest that Source A had the more ‘modern’ viewpoint, since it was written nearly 30 years after Source B. The best answers provided some clearly stated and explained comparisons, coupled with an awareness of similarity in noting that both sources accepted that 1960s TV could be ‘controversial’ and that Whitehouse was given few media opportunities to put her case. Set within a strong contextual understanding and offering a conclusion which addressed the ‘how far’ element directly, such answers were able to achieve the highest marks.
- (b) There were many sound responses to this question, with candidates weighing up the part of television against other factors responsible for the development of the ‘permissive society’. The main issue with weaker candidates was their understanding of what constituted permissive behaviour, which was not always well known, despite the term being used in the Unit’s content requirements. Some looked quite simply at the part of television in provoking ‘change’ and referred to issues like the move from communal to private leisure pursuits. Others tried to balance TV against changes in fashion and music,

seemingly unaware that the latter changes were more a reflection than a cause of the spread of 'permissive' values. The better candidates, made this very point and more successful analyses adopted a broader framework, picking up some of the points mentioned in Source C about the disappearance of censorship, the erosion of 'Christian values', the impact of affluence and the legislative changes of the period.

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates displayed an excellent understanding of the growth in car ownership and some were able to give some quite precise details of the attractions of ownership and the celebrity endorsement given to cars like the Mini. Some seemed a little hazy about the emergence of the car industry, even alleging that cars were first produced in the 1960s or that this era saw the first assembly lines. However, most answers were sound and the best identified a range of factors, keeping strictly to the causes of growth rather than straying into the consequences. As some able candidates pointed out, the rise of out-of-town shopping, suburban living and commuting may have perpetuated demand but were not prime reasons for the initial growth which was more connected to affluence and availability. Such linkage and understanding was rewarded at the highest level.
- (b) Whilst there were some balanced and focused answers to this question, too many candidates wasted time explaining why there was a growth in the number of holidays taken abroad – or indeed, in the number of holidays taken anywhere. Some provided vivid accounts of holidaying at Butlins, in guest houses or by camper van in the remoter parts of Great Britain, but this was largely irrelevant to the question posed. Only the briefest mention of travel in the UK was needed as an example of the limitations of the impact of foreign culture because of the small numbers involved in overseas travel. Better answers looked more closely at the results of the emergent 'package holidays', noting some of the foreign influences that began to affect the British cuisine and High Street in particular, whilst fully aware of the limitations imposed by the package mentality. A few tried to turn this into a discussion of other factors influencing British culture in the 1960s, which was not the main thrust of this agree/disagree question. Skillfully done, some comment on, for example, immigration having a greater effect than package holidays, could be credited, (and the spread of curry houses and Chinese take-aways was not, as some alleged, brought about by holidaying in Spain), but long descriptions of all the causes of social and cultural change were not appropriate here. Finally, there was some confusion over what constituted cultural change. Since the word 'culture' is used twice in the specification content, candidates in this unit should be familiar with the term and there was really no excuse for those who strayed into irrelevant discussion on the spread of affluence, or repeated material already used in the answer to 1(b).

Question 3

- (a) The knowledge displayed here was mostly good, although a few very weak students confused comprehensive schools with state schools, alleging that before this time all pupils had to pay fees. Most referred to the inadequacies of the 11+ system, the social ideology of the Labour Party and Crosland in particular and the advantages expected from all-inclusive neighbourhood schools. By linking these factors and setting them in the context of reform and concern for Britain's future status in the world at the time, many candidates were able to reach the highest level.

- (b) Again, candidates displayed a solid, and in some cases precise, knowledge of the expansion of higher education in the period but most took issue with the premise of the quotation that this meant equality of opportunity. Some brought in their knowledge of the disadvantages suffered by immigrants and of the continuing struggle of women for equality. Others looked at the social picture, noting the remaining social divides and the continuing importance of money, family support and middle class aspirations. Whatever argument was adopted, a well-balanced answer which weighed the new opportunities against the continuing limitations scored well and the more specific and well-selected the supporting information was, the higher the mark.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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