



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1L**

***Report on the Examination***

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# *Unit HIS1L*

## **Unit 1L: Britain, 1906–1951**

### **General Comments**

This was the sixth sitting of examination for Unit HIS1L of the current History Specification. The paper proved to be accessible to the vast majority of candidates. All scripts were marked in accordance with the mark scheme and where there were responses which did not fall neatly into that scheme, the principles of it were applied to these more unusual answers. The level of historical knowledge was generally good. For the 12 marks questions most candidates answering Questions 03 and 05 achieved marks in Levels 3 or 4, although rather fewer than half attempting Question 01 did so. Overall, in these questions candidates avoided just description and went straight into required explanations. In the 24 mark questions, most candidates seemed equipped to make assessments rather than simply to describe. Almost half of those attempting Questions 02 and 06 achieved marks in Levels 3, 4 and 5, whereas almost two-thirds did so for Question 04. Question 1 was by far the most popular and Question 2 (marginally less popular than Question 3) the least popular, though candidates scored more highly in both parts of Question 2 than in the other questions.

Marks awarded to individual candidates ranged from the really excellent with the maximum of 72, or close to that, down to script totals in single figures. As previously, the very best scripts, that is those achieving Levels 4 and 5 marks, were distinguished by their features of secure and appropriate selected knowledge, sound understanding (including of historical interpretations), explicit and developed explanation or balanced argument, judgement and effective structure. The weakest scripts were those unable to demonstrate basic knowledge and/or were confused and/or were irrelevant.

Most candidates found the time available for answering both parts of two questions manageable and paced themselves successfully. A few candidates failed to complete four responses, most of these finishing the final answer in notes form for which few marks could be awarded. As in previous examinations, a small number of candidates chose to answer both of their 24 mark questions first before tackling those with a tariff of 12 marks. With each 12 mark question always linked to the 24 mark question which follows most of those who adopted this approach provided answers to the 12 mark questions which were either brief and/or repeated, often irrelevantly, material deployed in the response to the 24 mark questions.

Quality of Written Communication was generally competent, though there was considerable variation from those who wrote in sound English throughout their scripts to those whose statements frequently lacked clarity or were ambiguous. In some cases use of phrases such as 'this could be', or 'this may have been a reason', or 'perhaps', continued, as in previous examinations, to give the impression that some candidates were not confident in formulating an argument. The handwriting in only a few scripts was so poor that argument could not be easily followed. The standards of spelling and punctuation were on the whole reasonable. Significant minorities however misspelt 'parliament' and 'Britain'. The main spelling mistakes of names were of 'Chamberlain', 'Mosley', 'Keynes', 'Marshall' and 'Attlee'

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**Question 1**

- 01** Approximately three-quarters of candidates answering this question received marks at the middle of Level 2 and above. Although rather under half of those attempting the question gained marks in Levels 3 and 4, many of these, in fact almost 20 per cent of the total responses to it, were well-focused, identified a range of specific explanations backed by precise supporting evidence, made links, were clearly in command of the subject and therefore received marks in Level 4. They provided at least three convincing reasons with some development as to why free trade was an issue in the 1906 Election, with nearly all arguing that it was the central one. Many of the candidates who received marks at the bottom of Level 3, or more usually in Level 2, answered a different question on why the Conservatives lost the Election, thereby losing sharp focus. Though most of these mentioned free trade and tariff reform, they also wrote about Booth's and Rowntree's Reports, 'Chinese slavery', the Taff Vale case and even the Lib-Lab pact. There were responses which linked such issues to that of free trade, but many included it in something of a list of reasons for the Conservative defeat. The concept of imperial preference was only fully understood by answers in Levels 3 and 4. Some thought tariff reform was official Conservative policy, rather than the Conservatives being divided on the issue. A few believed that Chamberlain was leader of the Conservatives. Rather more were aware of the Liberals becoming re-united in defence of free trade and 'the Big Loaf' with the best recognising that that process had already begun in opposition to the Conservative Education and Licensing Acts.
- 02** Almost half of the candidates responding to this question received marks in Level 3 and above, but only one third of these were in Levels 4 and 5. Those in Level 3 were characterised by essentially narrative accounts of the constitutional struggle with limited assessment about the degree of success achieved by the Liberal governments. The best answers in Levels 4 and 5 considered the People's Budget, the two Elections of 1910, the Parliament Bill/Act and the process of getting the two pieces of key legislation through the House of Lords. Whilst seeing this as eventually successful for the Liberals, they balanced this by emphasising the importance of the loss of their majority in the Commons, the fact that the Lords still had a delaying power illustrated over their sustained opposition to the Home Rule Bill, and the concessions which had to be made to the Irish Nationalists and also to Labour over payment of MPs and the Trade Union Act. Some considered the longer term issues for the Liberals and/or their failure to extend the vote for Parliament to women, a burning political and constitutional issue of the time. The weakest answers tended to be mostly irrelevant in writing about the Liberals' social reforms, often with copious material on such matters as school dinners, medical inspection, pensions and National Insurance. Some of these responses did include, usually briefly, reference to the 1909 Budget and the Parliament Bill. Clearly there was conceptual misunderstanding of 'political and constitutional reform', although in some cases it was clear that candidates knew about the welfare reforms and were determined to write about them come what may.

**Question 2**

- 03** Although this topic had not featured in any previous examination for the Unit, it attracted a substantial number of candidates and both parts of Question 2 were the best answered on the paper. In part 03 over a quarter of the responses gained marks in Level 4. They provided specific reasons, frequently more than three, with precise selective evidence and a good understanding of connections between them. The effects of the Depression and the seeming failure of governments to deal with them and especially unemployment were well recorded. More was known about the British Union of Fascists (BUF) than the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and particularly the qualities or attraction of

Mosley as a leader, as well as other detail. Some noticed the withdrawal of support for Mosley by the *Daily Mail* after the riots at Olympia. The appeal to some in Britain of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin and their regimes was cited as a relevant factor. Some of the very sound answers were also aware that some 'left-wingers' were attracted to the CPGB as a means of fighting fascism and actually did so in the Spanish Civil War. The point was also made that extremism had something of a class base and that members of the traditional working class attracted to extremism were as likely to support the BUF as the CPGB. Many answers, including some in Level 2, were aware of the limited appeal of extremist parties, or their decline as economic conditions improved, or the relative stability of the British democracy and its main political parties. Answers which did not achieve higher than Level 2 marks were in the main either limited in the range of reasons given, though nearly all cited the Depression, or wrote mostly in generalisations about extremism.

- 04** Of the responses, nearly two-thirds were awarded marks in Level 3 and above with almost one third receiving marks in Levels 4 and 5. As with Part 03 most candidates were in control of knowledge and understanding of the subject. Whilst there was some marginal overlap with answers to Part 03, for example citing reaction to the violence at Olympia or in Cable Street as reasons other than government policies for reducing support for extremism, most answers focused sharply on the actions of British governments. There was good knowledge of the Incitement to Disaffection and Public Order Acts even if some were not quite sure of the correct name of the former. Again the stability of the political system and especially of the National governments was acknowledged. The lack of success of the extremist parties in both national and local elections was well-known. Many also cited Labour's distancing from communism and Bevin's importance in opposing Communist influence within the trade unions. Re-armament as a government policy was featured strongly as a cause of decline in the appeal of extremism, but with recognition that it was a government policy enacted for different reasons than to reduce unemployment. Some very good answers distinguished between regions of the United Kingdom. Most responses argued that the decline in the appeal of extremist parties in the later part of the decade was as much to do with global developments, relative economic recovery and fall in unemployment as to government policies, thus helping to give a balanced response to the central issue of the Question about how successful British governments were in dealing with extremism. Overall there was little misunderstanding, although a handful attempted to link appeasement with the government's handling of extremism. However, the links were tenuous and had limited relevance to a unit dealing with British domestic history. Answers in Level 2 had some knowledge of Mosley (though many misspelt his name) and the BUF, but there was little reference to the CPGB, with Harry Pollitt ignored.

### **Question 3**

- 05** This question was answered reasonably successfully with well over half of the responses receiving marks in the top two Levels. Almost one fifth of the total answers were in Level 4. Most candidates provided a range of specific explanations. There was discussion of the need for Britain to change from the wartime to a post-war economy and of the huge national debt, as well as having to deal with the massive destruction and devastation of infrastructure and housing. The need to finance Labour's plans especially for the health service and welfare state were cited in sound answers. Some responses considered the ongoing needs of defence and Attlee's aim of developing atomic weapons, and the finance required to maintain the empire, even with independence for India and withdrawal from Palestine. A few really sound answers cited British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey as evidence of the need for outside financial assistance which could come only from the USA, despite its ending of the Lend-Lease arrangements. Knowledge of the range of American financial support was generally sound and linked to the needs of

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Britain in the second half of the 1940s. On the other hand, responses in Level 2 tended to be generalised, either about destruction and the need for new housing, and/or were confused about Keynes's 'mission', the loan he achieved and the Marshall Plan, for example calling the latter 'another loan', or in some cases ignoring it altogether. A few very weak answers over-emphasised the importance of the bad winter of 1947 as a reason for seeking aid.

- 06** This question was answered fairly successfully overall, with nearly half of the responses receiving marks in the top three Levels. Over one fifth of candidates gained marks in Levels 4 and 5. Most answers placed the policy of nationalisation, or more frequently implementation of the policy in relation to specific industries, in a wider context of other reasons for economic recovery, usually noting how difficult that was to achieve in the period. An impressive number were aware that the process of nationalisation had been well underway during the Second World War and that implementation in several industries was essentially further development of policy. Sound answers showed that nationalisation did have shortcomings, such as the failure to appoint new management in the coal industry, the need for massive investment, or the requirement to compensate shareholders. Many responses, especially those in Levels 4 and 5, noted that the relentless export drive gained considerable support from nationalisation with its controls of energy and transport. Such answers also emphasised the importance of austerity policies for economic recovery (though some credited this to Dalton rather than to Cripps). A few mentioned devaluation. American help, especially through Marshall Plan monies, was cited as important, although weaker answers in Level 2 tended to repeat the rather generalised remarks about it they had made in answering part 05. Responses in Level 2 often depended on description of some nationalised industries especially coal and some gave detail on the problems of the 1947 winter without sharp focus on the question. Very weak answers did not seem aware of which industries were actually nationalised and wrote generally without specific reference. However, the main weakness in many responses in Levels 2 and 1 was lack of understanding of the concept of nationalisation. Some believed it to be, or wanted to write about because they had prepared answers, the creation of the welfare state and particularly the National Health Service. While 'nationalisation' as a concept could be applied to the NHS, only better answers really understood the connection especially in following wartime developments mainly connected with the hospitals. It was again stronger responses which made the point that nationalisation was important in the maintenance of full employment, without which social welfare reforms, and especially the NHS, could not have been as successful as they were.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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