



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS1M**

***Report on the Examination***

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# *Unit HIS1M*

## **Unit 1M: USA, 1890–1945**

### **General Comments**

There were a few rubric errors this year where candidates either answered all the questions or too many 24 mark questions. It is important that candidates answer two questions to give them a reasonable opportunity to show what they can do.

There was a full range of answers on all questions. The best answers were clearly focused on the questions and set out to analyse rather than provide a description.

In general, on the 12-mark questions some candidates still chose to provide a description instead of developing reasons which did not get them out of Level 2. Others did not prioritise their reasons or make a clear judgement or inter relate the reasons given and so did not get into Level 4. Also some artificial links were made on weaker answers. Candidates need to explain at least three well developed reasons for Level 3 and these should be clearly set out. In 24-mark questions, one of the main weaknesses was a lack of focus on either the period or the main factor in the question which inevitably led to loosely linked description or assertion.

In AS, candidates need not refer to Historians or historiography or make vague assertions about 'some historians' or even text book writers, as these are not required and waste time. Often these types of reference were used to mask a lack of knowledge and led to confusion.

### **Question 1**

- 01** This was done well by a number of candidates. A range of reasons were provided. Better answers referred to the Zimmerman Telegram as the catalyst. They also provided a well written conclusion explaining what they thought was the most important reason. Weaker candidates spent a lot of time explaining why the US did not enter the war in 1914 which was not the question. Some candidates confused justification for entry rather than reasons for the US actually entering the war in 1917. There was a fair amount of inaccuracy with regards to the sinking of the Lusitania where some candidates thought it was an American ship and others referred to it as the Maine sinking.
- 02** There were some very good answers here. The best answers were able to examine the changing aims of Woodrow Wilson over the period 1912–1920. They then explicitly explained whether he had achieved them. Weaker answers ignored aims and answered a slightly different question with regards to success and failure in general which did not get them out of the lower levels. There seemed to be some confusion over Wilson's aims before the First World War as he was referred to as an Imperialist. Also some candidates only focused on the post-war settlement and confused the Treaty of Versailles with the League of Nations.

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**Question 2**

- 03** This proved very accessible for those who answered it. Better answers stayed focused on the Automobile industry rather than why the car became more popular. Often reasons related more to the nineteenth or early twentieth century rather than the 1920s. However, a lot of candidates were able to develop three clear reasons and make valid links.
- 04** There were some very well balanced answers here. Often candidates developed an argument which was clearly developed to argue that Republican policies were both successful in the early part of the 1920s and later less successful and unable to cope with the downward trajectory of the economy. Some candidates were well versed in the weakness of the farming economy and brought this into the argument. Weaker answers just focused on 1928–1932 and so tended to be unbalanced. Some tried to turn the question into one centred on other factors. The main downfall was where candidates knew very little about Republican policies and just mentioned briefly *laissez faire*. Candidates need to focus on the time period for the question because some wrote about the New Deal era which was not relevant.

**Question 3**

- 05** This was not done as well as the other 12 mark questions because candidates struggled to stay focused on the period 1939–1941. Some of the New Deal policies were relevant especially those relating to the Second New Deal or work schemes like the TVA which carried on providing employment. Also some reasons clearly related to post 1941 instead of the first part of the Second World War. The best answers created and linked three reasons often around the US beginning preparations to fight and supplying the Allies. The weakest answers did not understand the word ‘decline’ and so wrote about how unemployment increased.
- 06** Of all the questions on the paper this had the weakest responses. Despite there being a good section in the recommended text book on this topic many candidates did not seem to understand the question or have enough information to hand about changes to society. Many clearly hoped for a question on foreign policy and growth of the US as a superpower. There were a few outstanding responses where candidates were able to create a precise argument focused on women, ethnic minorities and society in general. These answers were able to balance by showing that often changes were of a superficial and temporary nature. There were some Level One marks given because candidates were not focused on American society at all.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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