



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS1M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1M

Unit 1M: USA, 1890–1945

General Comments

There was a relatively wide range in the quality of answers presented by students for this unit. Some were clearly unprepared for the examination and this became very apparent through the confusion that often existed as to which Roosevelt was being referred to. Despite this, many students had a sound knowledge base and a clear understanding. Some students were disadvantaged by a lack of effective examination technique. The basic technique is in place for the great majority of students but there is a need to develop this more fully. This was particularly apparent in the 12 mark questions.

Question 1

- 01** There were a variety of approaches to this question. Some students took each individual President and attempted to explain why he won his particular election. Others adopted an approach based on an overview and explored the attractions of Republicanism in the context of individual leaders. Some offered a combination of both approaches. Overall the knowledge base was good and many students were able to establish links between the factors. This was most straightforward when answers had considered the common ground that enabled the Republicans to expand their popularity. The approach based on individual Presidents tended to emerge as a list and inevitably restricted the reward to a Level 3 ceiling. Some answers drifted back to the civil war and suggested that Republican support for the abolition of slavery was a key factor in Republican success after 1896. Such answers rarely succeeded in generating significant reward.
- 02** This question stimulated students and many produced well balanced responses. Presidential policies were explored, particularly trade policy and some references to foreign policy priorities. These were set against the importance of individual business enterprise and initiative. The existence of significant domestic raw materials was not lost on many students. One particularly strong factor was the acceptance of mass immigration and the impact this had on the labour market and consumer demand. There were many good answers to this question and many students were able to display their knowledge and understanding and effective examination technique. Many students were able to explore the technological developments of the day and include comments of their significance in terms of the USA's economic development.

Question 2

- 03** This question was popular and it was generally well done. Many students were able to link Harding's rejection of internationalism with his popularity, particularly in terms of the reaction of the American people to the involvement of the USA in the war. Many students referred to Harding's idea of 'normalcy', although relatively few established exactly what this was. There were many references to isolationism and the popular support that it commanded. Many answers balanced these factors against the unpopularity of Wilson. This was often developed through the popular rejection of the USA's membership of the League of Nations. A few answers were a little confused and referred back to earlier Republican administrations before the war. The issue for weaker students was often not one based on a lack of knowledge but rather on an inability to connect the details. Some

students overdeveloped points and failed to clearly define the individual characteristics and details of specific factors. In effect the factors merged into one or two factors.

- 04** There were many balanced responses to this question. Few students simply accepted that the USA was isolationist during the 1920s. Many students had the confidence to link domestic policies to foreign policy. This frequently involved considering the restrictions on immigration and the 'Red Scare' as indicators that the USA wished to distance itself from foreign connections. Many answers balanced this against the USA's participation in the Dawes Plan and other international agreements established in the 1920s. There were also frequent references to the USA's rejection of membership to the League of Nations. Overall, many students were able to offer material that suggested balance and they were rewarded accordingly. The best answers were those that did not merely offer a balanced range but also analysed the factors. There were some perceptive comments on the economic interests of the USA and how these were linked to foreign policy. In effect the argument was that the USA was isolated from foreign entanglements but not to the point where its national economic interests might be jeopardised. These answers developed an analysis of the rationale that underpinned the foreign policy. Less developed and less analytical answers simply produced an extended list of the factors for and against suggesting that the USA had an isolationist foreign policy.

Question 3

- 05** There were some very thorough answers to this question. Many students were able to offer a range of factors and establish links between them. Many focused on the impact of the Wall Street crash and the consequential rise in unemployment. This in turn was linked to a fall in consumer demand and the continuing downward spiral of growing unemployment. Many students made effective reference to the loss of confidence in banks and the problems that banks themselves faced in terms of underwriting business development and recovery. Very few students failed to consider the inaction of the Hoover administration and the consequences of this approach. Most answers had sound evidential detail to reinforce the explanations. There were, however, a number of answers which simply offered a list of three relevant factors. Although this would generally take such answers into Level 3 the approach prevents knowledgeable students from accessing Level 4. It is in the interests of students that they use their knowledge and understanding effectively and develop clear evidence that they are able to connect the factors rather than merely list them. A number of students aimed at prioritising the factors but this also requires more than merely stating that one is more important or significant than another. There must be some explanatory detail.
- 06** Despite the centrality of this topic on the specification, many students displayed only limited knowledge of the details of the New Deal. This lack of knowledge appeared to undermine the ability of such students to analyse and evaluate the success of New Deal measures in reducing unemployment. A surprising number of answers were only able to make a passing reference to specific New Deal measures and what impact they had on the reduction of unemployment. Many answers moved towards suggesting that the Second New Deal was more effective than the earlier measures, but these often included marginal detail about increasing the status of trade unions. This often meant that the clear focus of the question was not addressed. Some answers were able to include statistical detail which served to strengthen their arguments. Many answers came to the conclusion that the New Deal had a minimal influence and that the real issue was the outbreak of war. Overall this question was not answered particularly well although it must be noted that there were very few examples of purely descriptive detail outlining the content of New Deal measures.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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