



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS1M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1M

Unit 1M: USA, 1890–1945

General Comments

The quality of the responses to this paper was mixed. The work of the best students was directly argued, fluently written and supported by confident and well selected knowledge. It was pleasing that most answers, at all levels of quality, showed clear evidence of a focus on the specific wording of the questions. This was generally so, although some responses to Question 1:02 did drift into irrelevancy by extend beyond 1914 as defined in the question. Examples of the inclusion of unrelated and irrelevant factual detail for its own sake were relatively rare. Despite this emphasis on relevancy there were frequent weaknesses that led to underachievement in some answers. These were characterised by indications of being rushed and uncontrolled. There was frequently a lack of clarity or accuracy of expression. More successful answers were characterised by their fluency and precision. They were often founded on well selected evidential detail that clearly showed developed understanding and confidence. Some of the best responses to the 24 mark questions displayed a mature stylistic approach in the language rather than a merely a mechanical listing of points or comments simply bolted on to predominantly factual paragraphs.

There were very few examples of papers which had been badly timed. Very few students failed to answer the required number of questions in the time allowed. Although there was a reasonably even spread of responses across the range of questions available, Questions 2 and 3 were the most popular. Answers to Question 1 were not only less frequent but also generally less confident and developed.

Question 1

- 01** Some students were able to deploy a good knowledge of Wilson's 14 Points and refer effectively to collective security, disarmament and an end to secret treaties. These were presented as elements of 'Wilsonian idealism' and linked to the League of Nations. Often such answers were able to refer to Wilson's desire to be a mediator. Less developed answers focused mainly on the desire to preserve lasting peace. Such responses were rather narrow and did not enable students who adopted this approach to enter into Level 4 very easily. The weakest responses tended to be those that suggested that Wilson wanted to turn the USA into a global power and the League of Nations was the means by which this would be achieved.
- 02** Many students addressed this question directly and then went on to ignore the end date. Many answers went beyond 1914 and went into detail on the reasons why the USA entered the First World War and the attempts by Wilson to develop the USA's influence in the post-war settlement. Another issue that emerged in a number of responses was the excessive use of descriptive detail. It was clear that many students knew a lot but they did not then apply this knowledge as evidential material to address the 'How successful' element of the question. The best answers were those that were able to develop relevant detail to support an evaluation of the work of successive Presidents and reach a conclusion of their individual contributions to the expansion of the influence of the United States. Some very good answers were able to define what was meant by influence.

Question 2

- 03** Many answers to this question were able to display a wide range of relevant reasons. Knowledge of the role and relative importance of temperance movements was generally secure. Some very good answers were able to distinguish between long and short term factors which led to the introduction of the Volstead Act. Many were aware that 'dry' states already existed in the USA by 1919. There was some good detail developed on the specific context of American society at the end of the First World War. One widespread misconception that became apparent in some responses was the notion that the United States was importing beer from Germany and the Volstead Act was a way to end this. Generally, weaker answers lacked accuracy and controlled expression rather than an inadequate grasp of general reasons.
- 04** The responses to this question were very variable in quality. Many effective answers used solid knowledge of the activities of criminal enterprises and the corruption and underfunding of law enforcement to provide a balanced assessment based on wide ranging and relevant knowledge. Good students were able to link the notions of popular demand with organised criminal supply and production and extend this to suggest that there was a widespread production system that went beyond organised crime. A large number of adequate answers provided reasonably accurate accounts of the role of organised crime but with limited and rather uncritical comment. A substantial minority of inadequate answers lacked accuracy or basic coherence.

Question 3

- 05** Many sound Level 3 responses were produced in answer to this question. Many students had access to a range of relevant reasons and were able to develop some reasonable detail in support. What was less frequent were responses that could make links between the factors. Linkage may be established by prioritising the factors or developing thematic divisions based on political, social and economic reasons for example. The obvious linkage is that which is based on direct comments on the inter relationship of the factors. Finally, an overall awareness and depth in the explanations is also linkage. Simply listing accurate and relevant factors will almost certainly limit the mark. A number of answers failed to focus on 1932. Too many students indulged in lengthy generalised accounts of the origins of the Wall Street Crash.
- 06** Answers to this question were usually well informed on the policies of the New Deal. One weakness was a tendency to write at length about the opposition to Roosevelt's policies without making any attempts to connect this opposition to a lack of success in achieving recovery. Too many answers were imbalanced, with too much attention to the 100 Days and the first New Deal whilst neglecting the important developments from 1937. A substantial number of more successful answers showed convincing understanding of the 'Roosevelt recession' and how the economy was stimulated by increased demand as the European war developed from 1939 to 1941. Again, a number of students did not respect the key dates in the question and went on to include irrelevant material relating to the American war effort from 1941.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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