



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2P

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2P

Unit 2P: The Campaign for African-American Civil Rights in the USA, 1950–1968

General Comments

This proved to be a slightly more challenging paper than in previous cycles with one question in each of the optional questions causing some students trouble. Nevertheless there were a number of very good answers and the questions posed stretched the best students whilst revealing gaps in the knowledge of the weaker students. It was particularly gratifying to see students bringing in less well-known evidence, reflecting the nature of the depth study. Events like the 1957 and 1960 Civil Rights Acts seem much better known to students now than two years ago. Some centres continue to advise students to use historiography but this rarely adds anything to an answer particularly when it is delivered in the form 'a marxist historian would argue...'.

Question 1

- 01** Question 1 was reasonably well answered with the vast majority of students identifying at least one difference between the two in relation to the strength of the KKK. Own knowledge was often deployed and this was frequently of direct relevance to the question posed, most commonly with reference to the '*Mississippi Burning*' murders. Similarity of views was more problematic for the students and it was surprising how many misinterpreted Source B as being in support of the Klan. An excellent opportunity to pick out an obvious similarity in terms of lack of government action was not as frequently taken as had been hoped and students had problems differentiating between local and federal government. In addition students are still trying to explain **why** the sources differ in terms of bias or when they were written, despite the focus of the question being on **how far** they differ.
- 02** This was a very accessible question with balance provided in Source C, however this balance was not as well used as might have been expected and few students engaged with the idea that King felt that moderate whites had been more deleterious to the movement than the Klan or the White Citizens Councils. Most students produced similar essays which touched on the 'greatest hits' of the movement – Montgomery, Little Rock and the March on Washington – but the better students were able to bring less well known evidence to their answers, for example suggesting that the opposition provided by Laurie Pritchett at Albany was far more effective than that of the Klan. The best students fully engaged with the question and turned it around to suggest that, in fact, Southern Opposition helped the movement by bringing media attention to the crimes being committed in the South such as the murder of Emmett Till and the treatment of campaigners in Birmingham in 1963.

Question 2

- 03** This proved to be a difficult question and some students struggled with it, producing generalised answers, misinterpreting or addressing issues outside the chronological range. Many students failed to understand the meaning of the word 'undermined' and produced answers suggesting the reasons why blacks were oppressed. Still others took 'undermined' to mean how were the intentions of Plessy v Ferguson 'separate but equal'

undermined by whites seeking to treat blacks poorly. Finally there was much discussion of the Brown decision which was given in 1954, outside the range of the question. Here it was clear that students didn't appreciate the length of time that cases take to reach the Supreme Court, Brown was first heard in 1951, so discussion of how the progress of Brown undermined Plessy v Ferguson was credited. The appointment of Earl Warren, the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, Blacks returning from WW2, the three Supreme Court cases won by the NAACP between 1950 and 1953 were all worthy of credit but it is clear that some students still feel the course begins with Brown.

- 04** This question was answered well with many students able to put forward both positive and negative aspects of both the Kennedy and Eisenhower administrations. Better students were able to bring in discussion of the importance of precedents being set and wheels being put in motion, along with the influence of Robert Kennedy on his brother. There was appreciation for the difficulty both faced in reconciling their private prejudice with moral obligation and the realities of running for public office in the US, and there was some sensible consideration of the wider geopolitical distractions of the Cold War.

Question 3

- 05** This question was answered well and students had a clear appreciation of the reasons behind the outbreak of rioting after 1964. However it is noticeable how few students seek to link these reasons together effectively, and many answers were presented as three discrete points with no connectivity implied whatsoever. A few students cited the assassination of King as the primary reason for the riots and, whilst this undeniably led to rioting, to suggest an event from 1968 was the primary reason for riots that occurred in 1965 was clearly incorrect.
- 06** This question was answered poorly with many students failing to appreciate two essential aspects of the question; firstly that it referred to 'urban' blacks, and secondly that it referred to 'US politicians' not just President Johnson. As a result there was much discussion of how the Voting Rights Act helped urban blacks or how events in Selma showed that urban blacks were not satisfied. The better answers engaged with both of these aspects, suggesting that the riots illustrated how urban blacks felt that little was being done to address their problems, and how King turning his attention to the North failed to generate significant presidential intervention. This was well linked to the escalating cost of Vietnam. When it came to the idea of 'US Politicians' there was good knowledge in terms of Richard Daley's obstructive attitude in Chicago, along with discussion of the unco-operative nature of 'dixiecrat' engagement with the 'Great Society' legislation and of the contribution of Robert Kennedy after his brother's death.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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