



History

Paper 1G (AS) Additional Specimen Question

Paper

Question 02 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1G (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

02 'The British economy was in a much worse condition in 1900 than it had been in 1870.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

The British economy was in a worse state in 1900 than it was in 1870 due to numerous reasons. One reason for this is that during 1870, Britain's economy was in boom period but in 1900 it was in a so-called depression. A reason for the depression in 1900 was the increased competition Britain faced from other countries. Another reason for the depression was that there was a reduction in railway building. A reason for the boom period in Britain was that they were the only country in the market however this also proved to be a cause of the depression.

During 1870 Britain was experiencing a boom period and the economy was on a high, the main reason for this as Britain was the only country on the market so countries had to buy from Britain, as they couldn't get what they needed from anywhere else. This allowed Britain to charge high prices as their products couldn't of been bought from anywhere else so they had to buy from Britain which benefited the economy hugely. Britain were the first nation to industrialize and this gave them major benefits for their economy due to their industry.

Another reason for the boom during 1870 for Britain was that not only were they the first to industrialize but they ensured that they stayed ahead of other countries with the creations of new inventions, most importantly were new processes in the metal industry which resulted in mild steel taking over from malleable iron as the most popular iron. For example Henry Bessemer patented a converter system, which meant that steel could be produced in large quantities at much lower prices.

A huge population increase was also a factor in the boom period during 1870 which meant there was an increase demand for manufactured goods at home meaning that sales for the good would increase there profits of owners would increase so the British economy was to benefit. The increase in demand also led to an increase in jobs available which also benefited the economy.

Another factor for the boom during 1870 was the spread of the railways; this benefited the nation in numerous ways. It led to an increase in jobs for building the railway tracks, for building the trains and for working on the trains and in the stations. Another reason why railways contributed to the boom period was that in meant that goods could be transported around the nation quicker therefore products could get to other countries quicker. This benefited the nations economy massively.

All these reasons meant that Britain had an economic boom period during 1870, which led to their economy being in a good state during 1870 however during 1900 there was a depression for the nation.

One reason for the depression in Britain was that there was a huge reduction in the amount of railway being built. This led to a massive reduction in jobs as the demand for metals fell and the railways were the main buyers of metals so with this demand decreasing not as much metal was needed so there was no need for as many therefore was no need for as many workers so many people lost their jobs in this industry. It also meant that people who worked on the railway lost their jobs. This contributed to the depression due to the loss of jobs in the nation, the less people there were in jobs meant the worse the economy would be.

Another reason for the depression during 1900 was that serious competition mounted from other countries as they industrialised also so Britain wasn't the only nation selling industrial products so not all profits in this market weren't being made by Britain, which affected their economy. This also meant that they couldn't charge as higher prices now as other countries such as USA and Germany were selling at cheaper prices meaning that they would get the sales as they were selling at cheaper prices. This damages Britain's economy as their sales had decreased and also they were at lower prices, damaging Britain's economy.

Even though Britain received great benefits from being the first to industrialise however by 1900 it was now proving to be a disadvantage as they were using old machinery and old technology where as other countries like USA and Germany were using newer technology meaning that they could be more efficient, create better goods and sell at cheaper prices. USA had enormous natural resources and growing labour force where as Britain didn't. Also other countries were educating children better to give them better chances of becoming engineers or scientists to create the new inventions for the country where as Britain's education system was poor and people only really had skills to be labourers and there wasn't enough engineers or scientists in the nation to create the new technology to compete with the other countries. This also contributed to the depression.

Another reason for the depression during 1900 was the failure of management to respond positively to new challenges and who was appointed to the management positions. Top management positions were given to friends and family and ability wasn't really regarded, friends and family were appointed rather than people with the highest ability. Also not enough effort was put into developing new industries and not enough effort put into improving designs and reduce costs by introducing new technology. Investment was prepared to be made however wrong decisions were often made regarding investment. Too little attention was paid to the importance of science especially in chemicals and electrical engineering.

It wasn't all bad in 1900 however as even though the nation was in depression there were still some positives such as there was still economic growth just that it wasn't growing as quickly as it was in the boom period. There was growth in industrial output just the amount of growth was decreasing. However the economy was in a worse condition than what it was in 1870 due to the nation no longer being in a boom period and now facing a period of depression however due to the major success they had in the boom period in was making the time after looking worse than it actually was as there was still economic growth in the nation just not as much and not as quickly.

Commentary – Level 3

Whilst the answer attempts to consider a range of reasons, there are some significant weaknesses in the response to the question. First, the answer attempts to focus on the issue of depression by 1900, which is highly contentious, a point that seems to be accepted in the conclusion. The question is not about 'depression' per se, even if it existed. Secondly, points are made but not corroborated; there are no illustrations, for example, of the new industries which Britain 'ignored' or how, exactly, the

education systems of 'other countries (an example would be useful) were 'better'. Such assertions appear to be superficial and lacking in full understanding. The British education system was not homogenous and the Public Schools prepared its charges for imperial service. Finally, there are stylistic weaknesses which confuse meaning. It is not wholly clear what is meant by such phrases as, 'Britain was the only country in the market' and the answer repeatedly refers to 1870 and 1900 rather than 'before 1870' and 'by 1900'.

Given the range, this would achieve a low/mid-level 3 mark.