



History

Paper 1K (AS) Additional Specimen Question
Paper

Question 01 Student 1

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 1K (AS): Additional specimen question paper

01 With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more convincing in explaining the position of African Americans in the South in the years 1865 to 1910?

[25 marks]

Student response

After the Civil War ended, Slavery was abolished under the 13th Amendment to its constitution. One of the questions facing the politicians of that era was about what to do with such an influx of poor labour force, which under 14th Amendment was made American citizens. Some people argue that Reconstruction era set major foundation for future development of the African American (AA) lives, but the others argue that hardly any difference could be noticed at all. Sources A and B present such contrasting view points.

Source A argues that despite all the liberalising laws that took place, hardly anything was changed in AA way of life. Partially it is supported by fact – they were still very much tied to agriculture in south since there was nothing else they could do.

South lacked industrialisation and was still very much an agricultural economy – hence the only types of jobs that AAs could find were the ones on the plantations of their previous landlords, and they therefore remained hugely dependent upon privileged whites. Source A is also valid saying that some African Americans actually manages to get elected – in the years that we are looking at, 12 black were elected to congress, while numerous others could serve in other political areas.

There also is evidence to support source A's saying that the vote could be taken away from the AAs, as that was what started to happen straight after the Compromise Agreement of 1877, when President Hayes agreed to remove federal troops from the south. Democrats immediately began seizing power, in the process known as formation of the 'solid south'. They did buy some of the black votes, but much more than that, they used aggression and intimidation of vigorous groups such as KKK or the Knights of White Camelia, who lynched and tortured blacks and black sympathisers. Between 1880 and 1910 2,500 people were lynched, which is a strong evidence to support source A's viewpoint that anything hardly changed for AAs as a result of Amendment liberalising legislation.

It is also valid in the sense that white activists did turn away from the South as they realised that support for AA case was costing them too much – all education system for AAs ran on charity help.

Death of Thaddeus Stevens in 1869 also contributed to decline of whites interest to the AAs in the south. He was the leader of Radical Republicans, who wanted to make AAs completely equal citizens, and was the 'loudest single voice heard in support of the African American case', which all supports source A's validity. In respect that decline of whites' interest did mean that situation for AAs did not improve.

On the other hand, source A may be seen as invalid, as it doesn't mention, primarily, legislation that was taken in the south to actually segregate black people.

Jim Crow laws, that made segregation in public legal, in Louisiana, for example, segregation in railroad cars was compulsory.

Neither it mentions the 1890 poll tax in Mississippi, which was a measure taken to prevent black people from voting.

Also, it doesn't mention any of the advances, some of which did occur as a result of liberalising legislation. For example, it has nothing to argue Source B's point that black land ownership increased and by 1910 20% of black farmers owned their land.

The advances in education, prompted by Brother J Washington, a powerful spokesman, are also not mentioned. There was a university in Alabama; opened specifically for black people, high schools started to accept black students.

Charities continued to subsidise the building of schools, so black literacy double, despite less than half were actually literate. All these points support invalidity of source A.

Source B perspective, takes the opposite viewpoint, arguing that advances in African American way of life were major. It makes a valid point that 'after emancipation' black standards of living were increased, which is true as they stopped being a property of the landowners. Their working conditions improved and before 1876 there was the union army that helped to restore order, making sure that African Americans were better off.

The point about the drop in black mortality rate also seems valid, as no figures could be collected before emancipation. AAs were not even viewed as humans and hence less of them were killed now that they no longer belonged to the plantations.

The fact that source B gives time limits to its points, makes it more convincing, as it is clear that the author is aware that not all his arguments apply throughout the time. For example, it says that 'dramatic rise in black per capita income' only occurred in immediate post war years. This is likely to be valid, since at that time most confederacy leaders were not pardoned and were virtually powerful – hence couldn't do much about the AAs. The KKK therefore was not really active, which allowed AAs to be careful and work more, which is where the increase comes from. Radical Republicans were also very popular at the other, as they were seen as modern and very honourable. The 'dramatic' increase comes from the fact that as slaves AAs didn't earn money. All these points make source B convincing in its opinion on why AAs did benefit.

On the other hand it is not that valid, as just like source A, it doesn't mention any of the discriminating legislation.

The Black codes, which supposedly grade blacks and whites 'separate but equal, were effectively just undermining their rights. It was illegal for black people to not work, they couldn't change job without employer's permission – all this was to force them back to plantations and to pay them the minimum possible wages. Source B is completely in valid in ignoring such discrimination.

It was supported by weak Presidents and ultra-conservative Supreme Court, which made decisions such as the Slaughterhouse Cases or the Civil Rights cases, where effectively it cancelled 14th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act 1875. Ignoring all these points make source B unconvincing.

Overall, despite both source having their strong sides and limitations, the Reconstruction period was certainly a time of loss for AA's. Black legislation had undermined their human rights, rising racist tides of opinion make the fact that Source B ignored the negative side of the argument less valid. Source A also does not give a full picture however, using the contextual knowledge of the time, Source A's viewpoint is certainly more convincing than the one of Source B.

Commentary – Level 4

This is an effective response, identifying the differences in the overall interpretations and supporting arguments. Deployment of the knowledge of context is appropriate and generally convincing. Some care needs to be exercised about the use of arguments of omission, as the principal task is to interrogate what is said in the extracts and there is some lack of balance of treatment, with more on A than B, but a strong Level 4 response overall.