



History

Paper 1K (AS) Additional Specimen Question
Paper

Question 01 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 26/02/16

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

While both extracts A and B comment on the position of African Americans during the years 1865 to 1910, they have contrasting views on it. Extract A suggests even after the Reconstruction period, the status of African Americans were not that different from the civil War Era. But Extract B suggests that their living standards got higher for they made many economic progressions. Unfortunately, considering the fact that the blacks suffered, not only economically but also politically and socially, Extract A seems to be more valid in the sense that it draws attentions to the political and social oppression the blacks had suffered.

As Extract A comments, many of the laws calling for equal treatment were meaningless. Especially under Johnson's tenancy, all Southern states except for Florida, Louisiana, and Carolina regulated dominant control. Under the Redeemer governments, the Southern States passed the black codes and the Jim Crow laws which prevented the blacks from joining the mainstream society. For instance, Jim Crow laws in Georgia set a minimum distance between white and black amateur baseball fields and no white female nurse could work in a ward with a black man. Such clearly adds evidence to Extract A's claim that laws calling for equal treatment were "meaningless". A also supports its idea that the South returned to "white supremacy". Although the 14th Amendment was passed, in many cases it was overruled by the Jim Crow laws which promoted "separate but equal". For instance in the 'Plessy V the notion of Ferguson' case the court supported 'separate but equal accommodations on railroads, and in 'Cunning v The Board of Education' it was in favour of segregation in schools between the blacks and the whites in short, many of Extract A's claims are valid in the sense that the mistreatment of the blacks still carried on.

Nonetheless, not all of claims made by Extract A is valid. For instance, it states "the Negro remained dependent upon privileged whites for work". However, this was not the case. Most notably the Tuskegee Institute was established by a black man named Bocker T Washington where poor black farm boys developed their farming skills. As a result by 1915, the average agricultural income of the blacks increased significantly. Also even after the Freedmens Bureau was gone, the black illiteracy rate continued to fall from 81% in 1870 to 64% in 1890 which suggests the effectiveness of the estimated number of 400 black schools built during Reconstruction. It further suggests that the blacks have become independent enough to increase their diving stumland by their own means. As a result, by 1900, there were 105 black newspapers in the country. In this regard Extract A's claim that the blacks were dependent on the whites seem to be invalid.

Extract B on the other hand, seems to over-exaggerate the progress of African Americans by only limiting its scope in economic terms. For instance, it comments on “a dramatic rise in black per capita income”, increase in “black land ownership” and catering of “black customers”. It seems to neglect the fact that racial persecution still took place throughout 1865 to 1910. For instance, from 1882 to 1890, more than 2500 black men were lynched. One of them included the lynching of Sam House to which over 2000 white Georgians came to watch. But not a single white was accused of lynching until 1918. Such statistics related to lynching demonstrates the blacks still suffered. The blacks were expressed politically during this time period as well. For instance the registered number of black voters in Louisiana fell from approximately 130,000 in 1896 to 5,000 in 1900 and the figure was only 2000 in Alabama. Given that voter participation reached its peak during the Gilded age, the decrease in black voters seems to be the result of political oppression of the Redeemer governments through the implementation of poll taxes, illiteracy tests, and grand father clauses. Also blacks political participation decreased notably in the late nineteenth century. While there were 5 black senators, 15 black representatives and more than 600 blacks on state legislatures during the Reconstruction era, George White was the only black congressman left in 1900. And it was not until the mid 1900s, Georgia had elected another black senator. For extract B suggests blacks were better off by only looking at their economic progress while overlooking the social and political oppression they suffered from, its claim does not seem to be very valid.

Nonetheless, blacks did make economic progress throughout this time period as Extract B suggests. Not only did they see an increase in “per capita income” and “land ownership”, but many of them managed to escape from where they had once been cruelly exploited. For instance, the Black Exoduster movement provided the opportunity for many Southern blacks to acquire freeland in Kansas. Also some blacks even managed to acquire freeland in the West through the Homestead Act. Furthermore, the Great Migration provided the opportunity for some blacks to move up north where they could find jobs in industrial sectors such as making turpentine which helped them to escape the disaster of the Boil Weeks. In short, although Extract B’s interpretation is limited in scope, its claims made on the blacks’ improvement of living standard seems to be valid.

In conclusion, both Extracts A and B are valid and invalid in one way or the other. But given that Extract B only looks at the blacks economic status as a way of evaluating their standard of living overlooking the political and social oppression they were under, Extract A seems to be more convincing in explaining the position of African Americans in the years 1865 to 1910.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a very strong response, with careful assessment of the extent to which each extract is convincing by deployment of accurate and full knowledge of context. Strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation are fully examined and accurately identified and this is a Level 5 response.