



History

Paper 2J (AS) Additional Specimen Question

Paper

Question 02 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 2J (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

02 'Economic differences were the major cause of division between the North and South by 1850.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

Americas largest problem, morally and economically, was the worsening issue of sectionalism between the north and south between the years 1820 to 1850. The main cause of this tension was down to slavery in the south which only seemed to worsen the relations of the two sides. Americas political system was unlike most other countries in the 19th century, with no monarch, the US citizens had the power to elect a congress and president. The main struggle for power was between two rivalry parties, the democrats, representing minimal government intervention and the Whigs who favoured federal spending on internal improvements. The unique system of government has much influence over the sectional disputes between the north and south. Overall I agree with the view because the main cause of friction and conflict was down to the differences in trade, independence and the economy. However, it is important not to exclude other factors in causing a division in the union. Slavery, the peculiar institution of the south, created an impoverished society of which the north had shown their moral disapproval of.

Many historians have heavily focused on how the economic differences have led to a division between the north and south, supporting the view in question. The main difference in the two societies was their economies and political beliefs. While the north believed that federal spending was fully beneficial and led to internal improvements, the south strongly opposed federal spending as it simply meant increased taxation. We can see evidence of this opposition in November 24th 1832 when South Carolina formally nullified tariff laws and threatened to secede from the union. Their decision to declare the tariff null and void was backed by J.C Calhoun, vice president to Andrew Jackson. This threat of secession widened the division between north and south and Jackson saw this as a direct attack and a serious threat to the union, threatening to use force. Sectionalism only seemed to worsen as the south questioned the benefit of laws passed for themselves. It seemed that taxes favoured the northern economy, fuelling their trade and benefitting local craftsmen, while it put large agricultural businesses at a disadvantage, therefor worsening the South's trade and economy, pulling the sectional gap even wider.

Another key economic difference between the north and south that caused greater sectionalism was the containment of slavery. The Missouri compromise of 1820 and the emancipation of slaves from the north worsened the economic differences and while opening the north to development, urbanisation and diversification, it stifled the southern economic growth. The continuation of slavery in the south meant that they were fully reliant on agriculture and specific crops. While individual slave and plantation owners may have benefited from the slave trade, the effect on wider economic development is also important. The souths reliance on crops meant that if they were to fail then the owners would face large losses and low income. Reluctant and uneducated slaves had no interest in

new farming techniques and so southern farms lost competitiveness with their northern counterparts. Their 'peculiar institution' also made it difficult to establish trading networks, holding back their economy in development. This caused greater division in the union as their economic situation was not able to improve while the north was open for development. Slave labour was holding them back from any form of growth.

However, there are other factors which caused a division between the north and south by 1850. Although slavery had a huge economic impact in the south and was a major cause of conflict due to the repressed economic development, it also caused a moral and ethical division in the union. The north disagreed with the custody of slaves in the south for moral reasons, people believed in prosperity which meant free labour. Although the north was the more individualistic protestant faith and the south were catholic, congressmen and northerners believed that this domination of slaves was unchristian and that God hates slavery, the people feared that they would be punished by God for this cruel institution. These moral concerns were raised during the Wilmott debate. This worsened the division in the union as the south were increasingly frustrated with the north's lack of common interests. They aimed to cut off any chances the south had of expansion, even though the land gained would be in the south, following the Missouri compromise. The whole difference in opinions really contributed to the division in the union and worsened their views of the other side.

Another key ideology that was partly to blame for the division between north and south was manifest destiny. This is the political and religious belief that it was America's destiny to expand westward, exploring the hidden (despite the native Americans) territories. This idea was pursued by Polk but ultimately completed by the U.S. peace commissioner Nicholas Trist. Despite the negative views on slavery from the north, Polk initiated a number of acts to shift the native Americans, ending with the Indian removal act of 1828 allowing the U.S. army to force up to 5 tribes out of the area, leading to a number of harsh deaths. Although both the north and south had the same drive to expand into Texas, they both had very different ideas about the destiny of that land. The north hoped to increase its sovereignty through colonization, the south saw it as a chance to expand its agriculture industry and influence the rest of the world using slavery. These different ideas about what is to be done with newly gained territories contributed massively to the division in the union. After the Mexican war, it had to be decided what the fate of the newly gained territories was to be. The Wilmott proviso and debate of 1846 shows the north's unwillingness to find a middle ground and lack of interest in common interests. It stated that slavery was to be excluded from any territory gained by the U.S. from Mexico. Although the proviso was firmly supported, the amendment was not passed. However, the proviso did cause enough of a stir to challenge Polk's pro-southern view and get enough supporters to enflame the growing controversy over slavery. The proviso is a clear example of how manifest destiny caused an increase in division in the union as both sides were unwilling to find a compromise.

In conclusion, there were many different factors that caused a division in the union, economic and other reasons widened the sectional difference between the north and south. Arguably the most significant difference between the north and south was economically. The economic situation of the south created a vicious cycle of under development. The influx of immigrants throughout this time period meant that many immigrants had great skills to offer to societies, and the north's economy was benefiting from this immigration while the south continued in their old ways, using slave labour to make money for individual plantation owners. Economically slavery was never viable and was never going to help an economy grow which the south failed to identify, and so division between the north and south was necessary to eradicate the cruel institution and enable growth for the whole of America, promoting 'liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable'.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer has a degree of range with supporting detail which is generally, but not always accurate, but there are some weaknesses in the response to the question. The introduction is too general and not specifically linked to the question. Importantly, the issue of economic difference, between the industrialising North and the mono-culture economy of the South is not convincingly assessed, with undue emphasis given to the tariff issue, important though this was. Thereafter, there is a more controlled and detailed assessment of the other reasons, which places the response at low Level 4.