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History

Paper 2Q (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 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 2Q (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

**01** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining McCarthyism in the United States?

**[25 marks]**

#### Student response

On the one hand Source A is very valuable in explaining McCarthyism in the United States. The speech made by McCarthy in Source A has value as 1950, when the speech was made, was a time when the threat and fear of communism was high on both a domestic and international level. The Soviet Union had set up puppet governments in Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, China had fallen to communism and now the Soviet also had the atomic bomb. Moreover the Red scare was apparent throughout the US with incidents such as the Hollywood 10. This is important as it allows us to understand the context behind McCarthyism; America strongly feared communism. This source is helpful because it demonstrates the means by which McCarthy achieved McCarthyism. He used harsh tones and hostile words which are evidence in source A to embellish the threat of communism and to heighten the Red scare to his advantage. In 1949 McCarthy was voted worst senator in America so in an attempt to boost his popularity he was creating an atmosphere of trepidation and terror throughout the whole of the US where communism was concerned. In Source A there are examples of the unsubstantial and inflammatory claims with which McCarthyism was launched: "57 cases of individuals who are loyal to the Communist Party". This demonstrates a key element of McCarthyism which would shape the way in which people reacted to McCarthy and his actions. McCarthy would attack government employees, the media and anyone who opposed him and brand them as a communist; this can be seen in Source B because it evidences the methods used by McCarthy and the way in which McCarthyism emerged, but also allows us to infer the wider implications of McCarthyism for the US public.

While Source A is valuable in many respects, it nevertheless has certain limitations to its value in explaining McCarthyism. As it was a speech made by McCarthy himself, it is expected that it doesn't show the whole picture of McCarthyism. He was using many speeches similar to that in Source A to boost his popularity throughout America. This limits its value as exaggeration is likely and therefore this doesn't show and explain the true nature of McCarthyism. Moreover, it shows no opposition to him as it is him making the speech and this is limiting as it is a biased source. If source A was taken at face value and the wider context wasn't considered, it could be interpreted that the threat of communism within the US government was as high as McCarthy claims. And the probability of this being accurate is minimal. The tone and the arguments made within the source are not necessarily factual and without wider context consideration, such as McCarthy being voted worst senator, could be misconstrued. Furthermore, Source A has limited value as it doesn't fully explore the reasons behind the emergence of McCarthyism. The red scare and the 1948 opinion poll about Truman's stance towards the Soviets are both contributing factors but are omitted from Source A, and therefore this is a clear reason why source A isn't valuable in explaining McCarthyism in the United States.

On the other hand, Source B is very valuable in explaining McCarthyism. This source was written in 1954, which adds value to the source as it suggests Swing has had time to reflect on past events and present more of an impartial view than he previously might have. Also, with reference to Source A, source B shows a contrasting side to McCarthyism in which the consequences of the attacks by McCarthy are evident – Swing lost his job as a result of McCarthy. Furthermore, this source is valuable as it includes valid reasons and effects of McCarthyism. Swing, the author of the memoirs suggests that McCarthy used communism to his advantage to boost his popularity and become “powerful”. After being voted the worst senator in the US he needed a way to increase his public image in a positive light and he used the Red Scare to achieve this. Source B also suggests that the Red Scare shouldn’t entirely be blamed on McCarthy; this is a valid point and adds value to the source because events such as the Hollywood 10 and HUAC already existed without McCarthy. The tone of the memoirs of the source seems impartial at both the beginning and the end. This increases the value of the source in explaining McCarthyism in the US as it decreases the probability of the source being biased against McCarthy so gives a more accurate account of McCarthyism at the time in the US.

However, source B also has limited value in explaining McCarthyism in the United States. Swing attempts to remain unbiased and balanced throughout the source, but this isn’t quite achieved. He was burned and attacked by McCarthy, therefore will undoubtedly feel angry towards him which could cloud his judgement and the validity of this source. This source also has limited value as it seems to suggest that the fear of communism in the US was trivial, not genuine. Americans feared communism to the extent of believing McCarthy’s unsubstantial claims. And the Soviet gaining the atomic bomb heightened this fear. In the middle of the source Swing attacks and criticises McCarthy to a large excess. This limits the value of the source as it suggests that the middle, and most, of the source is biased against McCarthy. Swing attempts to be balanced throughout but actually detests McCarthy and this can be inferred in the source. Due to this, the value of the source is limited because the explanation of McCarthyism isn’t entirely factual.

With a view to which source is more valuable in explaining McCarthyism in the United States, I understand that McCarthyism came about mainly as an attempt by Senator McCarthy to use the Red Scare to his advantage to boost his popularity. Also, McCarthyism destroyed many lives as a result of his unsubstantial claims to communists within the US. In my opinion, Source B is more valuable as it not only suggests the damage that McCarthy caused; it also explains the main reasons behind McCarthyism. While source A has more limited value as it could be entirely misinterpreted if taken at face-value and doesn’t show the effect of McCarthyism in the wider public of the US. Therefore Source B is more valuable in explaining McCarthyism in the United States.

#### **Commentary – Level 4**

This is a consistently relevant and analytical response with effective comments on provenance and tone and some comment on content. Deployment of the knowledge of context is generally accurate and appropriate. It provides a balanced assessment of each source and has a clear conclusion as to relative value. There is some lack of development of points made, but the major weakness of the answer is that its assessment of the content of the sources is too narrow. There are no specific references to the characterisation of the communists as made by McCarthy in Source A and no assessment of the claims that Source B as to the harm caused by McCarthyism. Thus, though persuasive, it is a Level 4 response.