



History

Paper 2S (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 05/01/16

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 2S (AS): 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 why the Conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963–1964?

[25 marks]

Student response

Source A claims that not only was there a rise in the standard of living in 1963-1964, but also that Britain's economic situation seemed good only because it had been much worse off a few decades ago, and since both of these reasons can be directly linked to why the Conservatives were able to claim the country was thriving, I would say that this is the more valuable source.

The first reason Source A gives as to why Britain may have appeared to be thriving comes with the mention of an "increase in production and in living standards." It is true that in the years prior to 1963 there had been a growth of 30% in living standards, as well as an increase of 27% in industrial production from 1952 to 1959. The people of Britain felt this boom, especially as the average annual wage of those in employment rose by 7% in 1960. In addition, the source refers to "stop-go policies" which was an economic policy adopted by the Conservatives in order to give them control of the vast inflation happening in Britain. The fact that there was even a need to put a curb on increasing demand shows just how much the economy of Britain was growing; so much so that there were concerns it would overheat. Moreover, the fact that this is an extract from a Labour representative increases how valuable it is, because at a manifesto the aim would have been to promote their own party and bash the Conservative's evident by the critical tone throughout, and so the fact that even someone greatly opposing the Conservatives had to admit that there had been some prosperity in Britain suggests that Britain's improvement in living standards and production was undeniable. Source A therefore provides valuable information as to why the Conservatives claimed Britain was thriving, as it makes it clear that the general feeling of the early 60s was that the country was growing rapidly, thus the Tories were seemingly correct in their claim of a thriving Britain.

The source goes on to give another reason as to why it was acceptable for the Conservatives to say Britain was thriving, when it quotes " 'You've never had it so good' " but then claims that "Britain could and should have had it a whole lot better." The first quotation is taken from Macmillan's speech at the rally to his party in 1957, and he said it with reference to the fact that although Britain's economy had never been so 'good' in terms of unemployment which was at all-time low of 1%, wages which were ever-increasing, and standards of living, Macmillan was in fact warning people that this booming period based on the fragile stop-go economics could not last, as inflation was getting dangerously high – sure enough, in 1961 a 'pay pause' was introduced to hold down wage inflation as concerns grew about an overheating economy. This links to the first idea of an increase in production and in living standards due to inflation, and tells that the Conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving because although their economic policy of stop-go economics caused the underlying problem of inflation and could not carry on long term, in 1963-64 the consequences of this policy were yet to hit, and so Britain was still benefiting from being at the affluent peak economically. In addition to

inflation as a reason for the Conservatives being able to claim a thrive, this part of the source also suggests another reason, which is people only felt they were thriving due to the contrast of how things had been over the previous decades, i.e. 'never had it so good.' The current population of Britain was majorly influenced by two events; the Great Depression of the 30s in which there was mass unemployment of up to 70% in some areas, and the Second World War which cost Britain one quarter of its wealth. When this source says that in the period of Conservative dominance Britain should have had it better, it suggests that people were simply complacent with how things were because after the tragedy of the previous decades, they would be satisfied with any economic improvements - e.g. rations ending in 1954 - rather than push for more. Source A is therefore valuable in that it gives an explanation as to why the people of Britain would have agreed with the Conservative's claim that the country was thriving even if there were dangers of inflation, which is that they were simply grateful for any improvement.

Whereas Source A can be trusted with its views, Source B is more misleading as it says that Britain is "a first class country determined to keep in the lead." From this, one would suppose that the main reason for the Conservative's claim of a thriving Britain was that it was stronger economically than any other country, especially since this has been said by the Conservatives themselves. However, although this may have been the case in the early 50s - for example in 1950 Britain had a greater share in world trade than all countries except the USA which exceeded it only by 2% - this was only due to other countries' major setbacks following World War Two, and by the time the 60s came around, Britain was massively falling behind its neighbours. By 1962, not only did the USA now have 5% more share in trade than Britain, but we had also been taken over by West Germany whose share had risen from 7% to 20% whilst ours had fallen. The country was being beaten in other areas too; in terms of productivity, the average British worker made 20% less than a German, and 30% less than in France. The fact that Britain was slipping behind proved fatal in January 1963 when we were vetoed entry to the EEC by the French – clear evidence that Britain was losing its place as a power due to its economic failings. This source comes from Rab Butler's speech to the Conservative Party Conference which may explain why he gives a distorted view about Britain's place in the world as he is trying to keep up the façade that Britain is thriving under Conservative dominance, like it was in the early 50s. The celebratory and exaggerative tone confirms this source's lack of value, as it has the sole purpose of promoting Britain under Conservative rule, and thus does not give any valuable suggestion as to why they could claim Britain was thriving when said statistics state otherwise.

One thing both Source B and Source A acknowledge is that Britain was more economically stable in 1963-64 than it was in the past. Whilst this has been mentioned in Source A with the reference to Rab's "never had it so good" it is evident in Source B with the line; "Britain is... changing and going ahead." It is true that the idea of moving forward had to be linked with the idea of changing, as everyone wanted to leave behind the misery of the Great Depression and the struggle of the WWII, and this could not be done without changing and improving Britain's economic situation so that they may never return to the unemployment of the Depression nor the rations of the war. The fact that both sources mention the idea that Britain was greater than it had been for decades proves how this is a principal reason for the Conservative's claim that Britain was thriving. Nevertheless, I believe that Source A is more valuable in explaining this concept as it also puts forward the idea that Britain wasn't as thriving as it could have been due to people's satisfaction with any improvement from times prior, meanwhile Source B is limited in that it is of Conservative origin and so is unlikely to give any information about why people were content to agree that Britain was thriving when really it could have been better.

The Conservatives could claim Britain was thriving 1963-64 firstly because there was some undeniable growth in the economy, which was felt by the population through an increased standard of living, and secondly because the people of Britain still remembered the economic hardship of the gone decades, so to them the definition of 'thriving' didn't have to be much, so long as it was an improvement, thus the Conservatives could acceptably claim this, even if they had missed some opportunity of having it 'a whole lot better.' Therefore Source A is the most valuable in explaining these claims, as it is able to make reference to each, without being limited by political intentions like Source B is.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer attempts to respond to the question consistently and deploys knowledge of context to challenge or corroborate some of the views and arguments. There are, however, a number of weaknesses in this response.

First, it is too narrow in its assessment of Source A. It is the case that the source is acknowledging that there was prosperity at the time and this is important, but the source is essentially, highly critical of the Tory record and this has not been assessed in any detail or at all, in parts. It thus lacks a balanced appraisal of the source.

Secondly, the assessment of Source B is also partial, focussing in a few points without a general assessment of what the source is saying.

Thirdly, much more needs to be made of the provenances of these sources, the significance of the fact that Source A is the Labour Manifesto and Source B a speech to the Conservative Conference at the time of MacMillan's illness. There is some comment, but it is not sufficiently explicit. This also applies to comments on tone.

Finally, there is some confusion at times, as to whether 'stop, go' was effective and over the significance of inflation.