



History

Paper 2S (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 2

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

The most valuable source in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964 is source A, due to its failure to put forward a consistent argument. As it is the Labour Party Manifesto this source would be expected to condemn the actions of the conservatives throughout. However it is this expectation of the source that makes it particularly work. In the source it admits that conservative policies have led to an 'increase in production and in City standards', ignoring its main purpose to condemn the actions of the conservatives. This therefore suggests that, even though they aimed to, the Labour party were not able to argue fully that Britain hadn't thrived under the conservatives. Interestingly this makes this source very valuable in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain were thriving as it suggested that Britain was thriving so well that the Labour party could not argue that it wouldn't. In addition to this although the provenance of the source might encourage people to expect facts and figures to be twisted, I know that when Labour admit that these has been an 'increase in living standards', this is accurate. I understand this to be accurate as, under conservative rule, men's weekly wages nearly doubled in 10 years (from £8.30 in 1951 to £15.35 10 years later). I also know that when it explains how there has been 'an increase in production' this is also accurate. Between 1957 to 1959 industrial production increased by about 4.8%, this failure to twist the facts in its favour increase the usefulness of the source. It implies that Labour did not have any other choice, but to admit the increase in production and living standards that had happened as a result of the conservatives being in power. This therefore makes this source even more valuable as not only does the increase in production and living standards argue that Britain was thriving, but also the fact that the Labour party had to admit it was thriving, suggesting that Britain was thriving so well the labour party, Although they wanted to, could not argue that wasn't.

However this source is made less useful when it is successful in condemning the actions of the conservative party. Because it is a Labour party manifesto its tone is very negative towards the conservatives and aim to criticise their action. This therefore limits the source in its usefulness to explain why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. Furthermore this source argues that the conservatives have not helped to improve the lives of working people. This therefore suggests that Britain was not thriving between 1963-1964 under the conservatives. I also know from my own knowledge that during their time in power the conservatives used tax cuts irresponsibly to gain votes. In 1953 £136 million in tax cuts was given away and in April 1959 there were tax cuts of £370 Million. This irresponsible use of tax cuts can be used to support points that source A talks about, such as 'Tory decline' and the 'crippling consequences' of a conservative actions. These ideas suggest that the conservatives were irresponsible during their time in power and were not able to control the economy. These points made in Source A therefore give a reason why

the conservatives were not able to claim Britain were thriving between 1963 and 1964 as without the irresponsible tax cuts it could have been doing a lot better. This therefore limits this source's usefulness in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. Furthermore the source also criticises the stop-go policies put in place by the conservatives. The stop-go policies led by the conservatives could be argued to have helped to control the British economy. However there were many disadvantages of these policies. This method of 'stop-go' meant that performance of the British economy was not consistent; instead it went through good and bad stages. The 'stop-go' policy also led to high interest rates, wage freezes and created a balance of payment crisis. However, the largest disadvantage of 'stop-go' policies was that it was not good in the long term. It worked okay in the short term but in the long term it was damaging. Therefore the policies lead to Britain struggling to thrive later on. It is for this reason that this source can use these criticisms to give another explanation for why the conservatives were not able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. This therefore further limits how valuable this source is in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964.

Although it is not the most useful source, source B is still valuable in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. Firstly as it is a conservative party conference speech made by R.A Butler it has a positive tone towards conservative actions and aims moral within the conservative party by encouraging a sense of pride in what the conservative party and Britain has achieved. This source overall focuses on the success of Britain and the conservative party and encourages that they are something to be proud of. This idea that Britain has something to be proud of suggests that Britain are thriving. The source also gives a list of achievements that people should be proud of. This list of achievements suggests that Britain is not only thriving, but that Britain is a working country in terms of economic and technological developments. I also know from my own knowledge that Britain's growth rate rose from 4% in 1963 to nearly 6% in 1964, suggesting that Britain was advancing and developing. This list of achievements and developments, and the encouragement of pride contribute to the usefulness of the source, as they can be used as an explanation for why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. This source also claims that the conservatives work for the 'British people' and have helped to improve the lives of the 'British people'. Under the conservatives there were massive increases in private savings as people were warning enough to earn a disposable income. Furthermore, during the time the conservatives had been in power unemployment had fallen below 2% in addition to this public home ownership and consumer spending increased greatly under the conservatives. Therefore these improvements in the lives of the British people, and the sources speaks of these improvements help to make the source valuable. This is because these improvements in the lives of the British people can be used as an explanation for why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. Overall, the main message of source B is that Britain has thrived under the conservatives, due to its provenance and aim. This therefore makes source useful.

However there are some limitations of source B that make it less valuable. Firstly it could be argued that the achievements listed in the source are not important and do not make much of an impact relating to how much/well Britain is thriving. The fact that R.A Butler, a strong conservative, does not have many achievements to talk about except for less important things such as a 'commercial hovercraft service' suggests that Britain is not thriving under the conservatives. Furthermore as it is a conservative party conference speech, which is aimed to support and boost morale of the conservative party, the use of the mediocre achievements limits the source even further. This use of lesser achievements for a party conference speech suggests that Britain has not thrived under the

conservatives, and therefore can be used as an explanation for why the conservatives were not able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. In addition to this in the source Butler admits that Britain were at the bottom of some of the international league tables. The fact that Butler mentions this in a conservative party conference emphasises its importance. This is because Butler would be expected to ignore this, as it can be used as a criticism of conservative actions. However by citing this in his speech it suggests that Britain being at the bottom of some of the league tables is a large problem. Furthermore, I know from my own knowledge that during the time that the conservatives were in power. Britain's GDP growth rate was the lowest in Western Europe. This can be used to suggest that Britain was not thriving under the conservatives and the fact that it was in a conservative party conference speech exaggerates the importance and usefulness of this point. This use of Britain being low in some league table limits how useful the source is as it can be used as an important explanation for why the conservatives were not able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964.

Overall although both sources are useful in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964, I think that source A is more useful. This is down to its surprising usefulness that contradicts its expected tone and aim. Although it is a Labour Party manifesto that aims to criticise and condemn the conservatives it is still a useful source in explaining why the conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. It is for this reason, and the fact that it contradicts its aim and tone, that source A is the most valuable source.

Commentary – Borderline Level 4/5

An interesting and thoughtful response which is somewhat unusual in identifying Source A as the more valuable, but does so in a persuasive and supported manner. The answer carefully and generally appropriately deploys knowledge of context to corroborate and challenge the arguments and there is effective comment on provenance, tone and purpose.

The answer would have been more effective with development of some of the points made. For example, it suggests that 'stop, go policies' were damaging without developing this or supporting it fully. The use of statistics could also be more precise: are the figures cited per annum or over a defined period?

Nevertheless, this is an effective response on the border of Level 4/5.