



History

Paper 2S (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 3

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 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 is from a Labour Party Manifesto this makes the source less reliable as they are clearly going to be very biased on the achievements of the Conservative government and make their achievements look pointless and futile. Since Conservatives are the opposing party, Labour will take every opportunity to convey that the Conservative government was a waste of time and they did nothing but bring Britain down. However, from my own knowledge I know this is not entirely accurate. For instance, employment was high to an extent when Conservatives were in power, for example, by the 1960s nearly 5 million people were employed in service industries; this was 1 in 5 of the population and roughly the same number as in all heavy industry. However, Source A is still valuable as it is very critical of Conservatives actions during 1963-1964 but it also does not fail to recognize some of the reasons as to why Conservatives claimed that Britain was thriving.

Firstly, source A admits that Conservatives policies did lead to an 'increase in living standards and in production', ignoring its main purpose to condemn the actions of the conservatives. Therefore, this suggests that even though the Labour party tried to belittle the Conservatives actions, they failed to argue fully that Britain was not thriving under the Conservatives. From my own knowledge, I know that there was increased living standards, for instance men's weekly wages nearly doubled in the period of 10 years; it was £8.30 in 1951 and went up to £15.35 ten years later. Moreover, there was also an increase in production, for instance between the years 1957-1959 industrial production increased by 4.8%. This conveys that that Britain was indeed thriving and although Labour tried to deny it they were unsuccessful, this again makes the source valuable.

However, this source is also successful in condemning the Conservatives actions. The source criticizes the 'stop-go' policies put in place by the Conservative government. Although the stop-go policy did help the economy to some extent, but the disadvantages outweighed the advantages significantly. The stop-go policies meant the prosperity came in phases, for instance, Britain could have a short period of time where they were doing really well but then that could easily end, and the economy would be doing really badly again, this meant the economy was never stable. Moreover, the stop-go policies also caused regular issues of balance of payments, inflation, wage freezes, and high interest rates. Since this policy was not good in the long term it damaged the economy and instead of thriving, there were 'crippling' consequences. For instance, the economy expanded so much in a short period of time, it meant that the budget of April 1959 provided tax cuts of £370 million, even more than Butlers 'election give away' budget in 1955. This portrays that conservatives failed to maintain an economy which was consistent. Therefore, this source is accurate in claiming that Britain should be doing even better, because if it wasn't for Conservatives being irresponsible with the tax

cuts and the policies they introduced to control the economy, Britain may have actually had it even better. As a result, this source has limited usefulness in explaining why Britain was able to thrive in the year 1963-1964.

On the other hand, even though it is not the most useful source, Source B is still valuable in explaining why Britain was able to claim that it was thriving. Since the source is adapted from a conservative speech made by Rab Butler, the positive tone used throughout is expected. The source is highlighting specific achievements that Britain has accomplished and that they should be proud, therefore, this suggests that Britain is indeed thriving as they have something to be proud of. Moreover, the source is also accurate in stating that there were economic and technological improvements. From my own knowledge, I know that in 1961, 75% of the population had a TV in their home. As well as this, in 1961 the first man had gone into space. Therefore, this source is useful as it supports the Conservative claim that Britain was indeed thriving. In addition to this, the source is correct in stating that Wilson was more concerned about foreign affairs rather than what was actually happening in Britain. For instance, the Atlantic alliance and the special relationship which Wilson had America, meant that he was always complying with commands made by US, even at the expense of his own economy. Consequently, this claim suggests that his opinion on the economy should be undermined as he doesn't really know what is going on behind closed doors, making this source useful.

However, this source is also limited since the speech is being given by Rab Butler, a strong Conservative leader, means they are automatically going to portray themselves in a positive light. Throughout the speech Rab Butler fails to address any significant achievements that had huge impacts. Instead he explains pointless achievements such as the first commercial hovercraft service. This questions the extent to which Britain was actually thriving, because if their claim was indeed fully accurate, then Rab Butler should be talking about achievements which actually had impact on the economy. Furthermore, this speech is also away to boost party morale, which is expected to be low due to the party leader being absent and ill, so he has no other choice but to take pride in mediocre achievements. Another reason why this source is not useful, is because Rab Butler himself has to admit that they were indeed at the bottom of the league tables. From my own knowledge, I know that Britain's growth rates were the lowest in Western Europe, and that they continued to slip behind foreign competitors such as western Germany. Therefore, this suggests that Britain was not thriving liked the Conservatives had hoped and that their achievements were very much limited.

In conclusion, Source A is more valuable in explaining why the Conservatives were able to claim that Britain was thriving in 1963-1964. This is because although it is a Labour manifesto and the aim is to condemn conservative actions but instead it contradicts its own aim and recognizes some of the achievements and successes of the conservative governments. However, it also takes into consideration the negative aspects of the economy under the Conservative party. On the other hand, source B is not as valuable as it fails to provide any precise evidence to back up their own claim that Britain was indeed thriving.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer attempts to assess value by commenting on provenance, tone and argument in each case and does deploy some knowledge of context to support this assessment. There are, however, some significant weaknesses in the answer. The assessment of 'stop-go' in the context of Source A is neither convincing nor clear but the major weakness is the assessment of Source B. Wilson is not

being accused of focusing on foreign affairs, as claimed and the comments made about the achievements which Butler cites are too generalised and contentious. This is a low Level 3 answer.