



History

Paper 2S (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 03 Student 1

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

03 'British society became more liberal in the 1960s.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

British society did become more liberal in the 1960s due to the reforming legislations that were passed throughout this period. Until 1964 abortion was illegal, the only way of terminating a pregnancy was a private clinic, which would be very expensive or search for a backstreet abortionist. Between 100,000 and 200,000 illegal abortions were performed each year and around 35,000 women were admitted to hospitals with complications as a result. Between 1958 and 1960, 82 women died from backstreet abortions. The Abortion Law Reform Association had campaigned for a reform in the law from 1945, however it was the thalidomide disaster of 1959 to 1962 that made a move convincing public argument. David Steel the Liberal MP led the reform campaign in Parliament, both Conservatives and Labour parties agreed so Roy Jenkins ensured an all night Commons sitting in order to pass the bill. An Abortion Act permitted the legal termination of a pregnancy within the first 28 weeks, under medical supervision and with the written consent of 2 doctors. Safe abortions gave women more choice and independence in their decisions. Women having more choice meant the number of backstreet abortions decreased so women were no longer risking their lives. This gave women more freedom and did make the British society more liberal.

The 1960s were filled with important legislations that needed to be passed and one of these was the legislation of homosexual relations. Up until the 1960s men could be imprisoned for nearly two years for being in a homosexual relationship. The Conservatives had rejected the Wolfenden recommendation to decriminalise homosexuality and the Labour government were divided on the issue in 1964. Leo Abse, a Labour backbencher, took the cause and Roy Jenkins support was able to get him enough parliamentary time for his private members bill to become law as the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. This did not legalise homosexuality it decriminalised them with three conditions: both partners had consent; both had to be over the age of 21, it had to be in private. This did not completely end prosecutions for homosexual practices but it made both men and women live with the person they want instead of being scared of being imprisoned. Again like the Abortion Act this gave people freedom on how they want to live their lives.

The last liberal reforming legislation is the Divorce Act. This gave people more freedom to get a divorce to a partner they just weren't happy with, which again made the British society more liberal. Before the 1960s you could only get a divorce if one party had evidence that the other had committed adultery. Roy Jenkins believed that the laws were out of date so introduced the Divorce Reform Act which was passed in 1969. This meant couples could divorce if: they had lived apart for two years and both partners agreed to a divorce or they had lived apart for five years and one partner wanted the divorce. Following the divorce there was a huge increase in the number of divorces. In 1950 there

had been fewer than 2 divorce decrees per 1000 married couples in England and Wales, but by the mid 1970s nearly 10 in every 1000 marriages ended this way. Like both other legislations above this gave freedom like the Divorce Act did.

Commentary – Borderline Level 2/3

This is a limited response, identifying, somewhat descriptively, three pieces of legislation that represented a move to a more liberal society. Whilst the detail is impressive, the answer asserts that the legislation made society more liberal, without any attempt to define what this means and there is no assessment of the extent to which society was not more liberal. Such an unbalanced response, irrespective of the control of detail, would be limited to the borderline of Level 2/3.