



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1M

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1M

Unit 1M: USA, 1890–1945

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 1

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 1 papers were noted:

- Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three, each consisting of a part (a) and a part (b), i.e. 4 sub-questions in total. Whether due to timing issues or to a misunderstanding of the rubric, a few candidates either answered all six sub-questions or answered only one question. The format of Unit 1 papers is significantly different from AQA's legacy units, so it is vital that all candidates are aware in advance of what they will be required to do.
- Timing issues caused other problems too. This is a one hour 15 minute paper, thus allowing roughly 12 minutes in which to complete the (a) questions and 25 minutes for the (b) questions. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper and in addition to those who attempted only one question, there were others who missed out a part-question or lapsed into notes. Selecting relevant material and maintaining a strong focus on the question is part of the skill being tested in this examination and candidates need to realise that they will penalise themselves heavily if they fail to tackle the two questions required, in full. Furthermore, since they are asked to write in continuous prose – which is the only way any sense of argument can be conveyed – notes will never score highly.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates had not studied, or revised, the full specification content for their chosen alternative. It must be emphasised that the three questions may be drawn from any part of that content. Without a secure understanding of the complete content, candidates will find it extremely difficult to perform well.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

There were a few rubric errors this year. It is important that candidates only answer two questions rather than three because the time is limited.

Of the three questions the third one was the most popular and question one was the least popular. There was a full range of answers only on Questions 2 and 3. The best answers were well organised, focused on the question and set out a clear historical argument supported with detailed own knowledge. Many candidates did not prioritise their reasons or make a clear judgement or inter relate the reasons given and so did not get into Level 4 on the (a) parts of the questions.

Question 1

- (a) This was done reasonably well with many candidates able to write three clear reasons. However some tended towards a narrative of events connected to the immigrant experience rather than developing their answer. Often candidates wrote about the formation of ghettos without explaining a link to 'fear'. Some extensive knowledge was displayed of the fear of communism in this period. Some references were made to Chinese immigrants which clearly related to the 1880s rather than the dates in the question.
- (b) The answers to this question showed a degree of confusion with Imperialism. Some candidates were aware of the connection of President Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement and were able to discuss his Anti Trust measures. Knowledge of Progressivism was thin although prohibition was occasionally mentioned. The treatment of immigrants during this period and their connection to this era were under-developed.

Question 2

- (a) This proved reasonably accessible for those who answered it. Many candidates were able to recognise the unpopularity of the Democrats and Woodrow Wilson but were confused as to who was standing in the election. The return to 'Normalcy' was often used but the understanding as to what it meant was weak. Many candidates got into Level 3 but some lacked detail. Good comprehension of the issues surrounding the entry into the League of Nations was displayed in the best of answers.
- (b) There were some very good answers here. Candidates who knew some details about the Republican Presidents scored better than those who talked in general terms about policies. Herbert Hoover's role remained under developed compared to Andrew Mellon. Laissez faire was well-understood. The use of other factors was the main way the answer was balanced. In weaker answers there was a tendency to use information on 'Big business' which clearly belonged to an earlier era. For example, Andrew Carnegie died in 1919. Occasionally candidates digressed and wrote about the Stock Market Crash which was not needed.

Question 3

- (a) This was reasonably answered; however there was a tendency to assert information rather than give reasons supported with own knowledge. There were also some misunderstandings with regards to 'Fireside Chats', which were not weekly and did not involve Congress. Many answers were in the lower reaches of Level 3 because the support for the reasons given was so thin. It was surprising that more candidates did not understand that the radio was an important medium in this period.
- (b) This question was answered well by many candidates. Some of the responses involved a focused answer putting both sides for and against the New Deal. Also candidates used the advent of World War II to balance their answers. Many answers were able to use the alphabet agencies and the second New Deal to support their comments. There was a slight tendency to wander onto opposition rather than stay focused. Also, a narrative about the different agencies, rather than making a connection to the economy, kept some answers in the lower levels.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.
