



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS1G

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1G

Unit 1G: Britain, 1815–1865

General Comments

There were fewer excellent answers produced by candidates than one would expect in a candidature dominated by those re-sitting but the general standard was higher than in preceding January sessions and it was clear that hard work had been undertaken in centres, in particular the studying of comments made in previous reports. The vast majority of candidates managed to produce answers of approximately balanced length but there were, as might be expected, a significant minority who struggled to complete a fourth answer – practising timed answers may help some to eliminate this problem. There were only a couple of instances of rubric infringement.

Question 1

- 01** In general, this question was answered very well with candidates drawing upon a wide variety of knowledge relating to why the landowners supported Lord Liverpool. Appropriate credit was given to both those who offered a selection of reasons, such as ideology, economic benefit and repression of revolutionary threats. It was good to see that, in response to last summer's report, fewer candidates simply opened the first paragraph with "The most important reason was" without offering an explanation for their opinion. Some candidates reached Level 4 via a sophisticated linking of class and power. Candidates should bear in mind that the initiative for abolishing income tax did in fact come from the backbenches rather than from Lord Liverpool himself.
- 02** Many of the answers to this question were a pleasure to read as they showed a strong array of knowledge and it was good to see that Elizabeth Fry is being more widely credited for her part in Peel's reforms as a way of introducing balance. Some students will be disappointed when they find they wrote at length about the reforms of the 1840s but the vast majority of candidates welcomed the opportunity of a question extending to 1829 to be credited for their knowledge of Catholic Emancipation and the Metropolitan Police Act.

Question 2

- 03** In general, the answers to this question were good with a clear understanding of a variety of factors such as the economic depression, budget deficit and loss of reforming zeal under Melbourne. This last point may be challenged at a higher academic level but it is a generally held view and so it was fully credited. The list of reforms after 1834 does question the traditional view of Melbourne and the brightest students might therefore question it as a means of demonstrating balance or overview in Level 4 of a 12 mark question.

A weakness of some answers was their focus on the poor who lacked the vote; whilst it should not be denied that they had a rough time it was the middle class defecting to the Tories that cost the Whigs support in electoral terms. The knowledge displayed by some candidates of the reform of the Tory party after 1834 went beyond the Tamworth

Manifesto to include organisational reform. This is definitely the limit of any detail required on the topic at AS.

- 04** It was clear that setting a question on Chartism was popular and that most students were very familiar with a range of factors such as division, “umbrella” organisation and geography that were important to its failure as well as the economic issues raised directly in the question. In response to earlier reports, the role of successive governments in standing up to Chartism received more prominence and contributed to more responses offering a balance. The importance of the Mid-Victorian boom was generally recognised as was the impact of Peel’s reforms in leading to it. It was good to see that previous injunctions had been heeded and far fewer candidates offered irrelevant attempts to argue that the Chartists succeeded in the end.

Question 3

There were few responses to Question 3 (less than 10% of the entry) and the standard was often low but still better than when Ireland last came up. It is a requirement of the specification that all major aspects are covered regularly and Ireland forms part of “Threats to the United Kingdom.” In writing the specification, the foreign policy was cut short at 1846 in order to leave room for Ireland, as the Crimean War would have added a significant chunk to the specification.

- 05** Of those candidates who did this question there were few that did not mention the economic divisions in Ireland. Most candidates linked the date to Catholic Emancipation and pointed to the electoral handicap faced by those Catholics who could have afforded to stand for Parliament. The best responses drew these threads together by arguing that British rule was unpopular because 90% of the population felt alienated over religion as well as often being hungry.
- 06** As indicated in the general remarks, there was a greater understanding of Ireland this time but it was often very thin. The difficulty in assessing this is that it could well be the case that, with two very central and popular questions available, many of the candidates opting to do Ireland were weaker than average. The most important point for candidates to understand is that there is always balance underlying these essay questions so there are some reforms that work as well as those errors which lead to bitterness. It can be argued that by 1865, the future direction of Irish nationalism has not yet been determined as the peaceful O’Connellite tradition is being maintained by Butt whilst the violent tradition of Wolfe Tone continues in the Fenians/IRB.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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