

History

Answers and commentaries

A-level (7042)

1K The making of a Superpower: USA 1865—1975

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

Contents

The below content table is interactive. You can click on the title of the question to go directly to that page.

Question 1	3
Question 2	10
Question 4	13

Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History Component 1K The making of a Superpower: USA, 1865–1975 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

Question 1

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to American society in the 1920s and 1930s.

[30 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of the interpretations put forward in all three extracts and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. Evaluation of the arguments will be well-supported and convincing. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of the interpretations given in all three extracts and combines this with knowledge of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. The evaluation of the arguments will be mostly well-supported, and convincing, but may have minor limitations of depth and breadth. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Provides some supported comment on the interpretations given in all three extracts and comments on the strength of these arguments in relation to their historical context. There is some analysis and evaluation but there may be an imbalance in the degree and depth of comments offered on the strength of the arguments. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** Provides some accurate comment on the interpretations given in at least two of the extracts, with reference to the historical context. The answer may contain some analysis, but there is little, if any, evaluation. Some of the comments on the strength of the arguments may contain some generalisation, inaccuracy or irrelevance. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**

A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/1K USA – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

- L1:** Either shows an accurate understanding of the interpretation given in one extract only or addresses two/three extracts, but in a generalist way, showing limited accurate understanding of the arguments they contain, although there may be some general awareness of the historical context. Any comments on the strength of the arguments are likely to be generalist and contain some inaccuracy and/or irrelevance. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Extract A is very positive of American society in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, it says that 'A new world of consumption and self-indulgence appeared' with 'leisure activities and entertainment becoming big business.' This is convincing as I know that during the period, sales of goods such as radios and cars, among other consumer goods, massively increased. Activities such as sport were hugely publicised, and the invention of labour saving devices such as the washing machine, along with cars, meant that more Americans could watch them. The period also saw the development of celebrities such as Lindbergh and Charlie Chaplin, who were massively popular with the American public. The extract also states that 'the consumer culture of the 1920's continued it's conquest of America throughout the 1930's, even in the face of massive unemployment and grinding poverty. This is somewhat convincing as I know that the collapse of the stock market in 1929, along with the subsequent Great Depression, led to huge unemployment in America, the development of slums known as 'Hoovervilles' and the collapse of many small businesses. However, the statement that consumer culture continued is less convincing, as the high levels of unemployment led to less consumers of manufactured goods, and led to deflation, which meant that less people could buy products as they were laid off to cut costs in the factories. The extract also states that 'by 1940, the Depression and New Deals had created positive changes even in the lives of African Americans.' This is convincing because several New Deal agencies were set up to create employment, such as the PWA, CWA and CCC, along with Federal Project. One which was set up to support artists. Several of these agencies were known to be 'colour blind' in that they employed African-Americans just as readily as white Americans, which led to increased economic opportunities and therefore a higher standard of living for African Americans. However, this extract does not mention the negatives of the period.

Extract B addresses these negatives, and is much more critical of American Society during the 1920's and 1930's. For example it describes the 1920's as a 'turbulent decade. Protests against a flood of immigrants led to turbulent times.' This is convincing as I know that immigration to the USA had been increasing for several decades, especially from Eastern and Southern Europe. These areas tended to be more Catholic or Jewish. and this led to backlash from the traditionally white, Protestant American population. This fear led to increased racism and the introduction of immigration quotas, which sought to reduce immigration from Asia, as well as southern and Eastern Europe, in favour of Northern and Western Europeans, who were generally white protestants. The extract also states that 'most wealth was concentrated at the top.' This is convincing because I know that white industrial workers' wages rose by around 25% during the 1920's, the profits of the corporations and businesses that employed them rose by twice that. By 1930, the top 5% of the population owned more wealth than the bottom 60%. In addition, though more and more people could afford to buy washing machines and radios, less than half of American households by 1930 actually owned one. Many Americans during the period invested in the stock market and while this allowed for greater economic opportunities for some, it also led to the collapse of corporations. The extract describes America as 'divided by the haves and have nots' and this was certainly the case during and after the Great Depression, as unemployment rose drastically and the poor were hit far harder than the wealthy.

Extract C is also positive of American society between the 1920's and 1930's. It describes American society as 'transformed into a modern and cosmopolitan society.' This is convincing as the period led to greater freedom, especially among women. 'Flappers' wore short skirts and went out dancing and drinking in public, and accessed birth control. Products such as cigarettes were advertised to them, with cigarettes becoming known as 'torches of liberty' Speakeasies also developed during the period, as a place to legally drink despite the prohibition. Women were able to vote, and had more free time to go out due to labour saving devices such as the washing machine. The extract also describes how there was 'a burst of cultural creativity.' This is convincing as the 1920's were known as the 'Jazz age' due to the new style of music. Jazz was a result of African-Americans embracing their culture and it became incredibly popular both on the radio and in newly developed jazz clubs, and these allowed black musicians to reach a larger audience. The extract also states that 'FDR's New Deal exuded confidence and optimism'. This is convincing as I know that FDR was elected due to his promises to end the Great Depression after Hoover failed to do so, and many of his New Deal reforms were drastically different than those of previous presidents. In particular Federal Project One was intended to support artists, and other creatives to create music, murals and paintings to promote American culture.

Overall, the three extracts contain a lot of factual information, and show a balanced representation of American Society in the 1920's and 1930's. They are convincing as they contain both positive and negative and negative interpretations of the period, and cover most, if not all, aspects of American society and how they developed during the 1920's and 1930's.

This is a Level 4 response

This presents a broadly sound level of evaluation. The arguments in each extract are identified and there is an attempt at a balanced argument. The supporting information is used to support argument, but this information is often undeveloped or lacking in some sophistication. The approach means that, whilst it is clear that the extracts are understood and that the arguments are accurately identified, the actual evaluation is less secure and at times is reliant on generic support. The same information is occasionally utilised across the extracts, for example reference to the increased use of radios and the prevalence of cars. The evaluation of Extract C is stronger due to the use of much more carefully selected supporting knowledge.

Response B

Source A shows that in the 1920s, 'women now voted.' This is true and women gained the right to vote with the passing of the 19th Amendment. However, politicians did not seek to win their support as women did not tend to vote as a group, mostly following their husbands choice. This meant that legislation tended to work against women, and they did not make much political improvements, however, notable women did become a part of congress, like Nellie Tayloe Ross, Governor of Wyoming and Bertha Knight Landes, mayor of Seattle. Source A also claims that 'a world of self indulgence appeared.' This can be supported by the 'flapper' craze that spread among young middle class women, they bobbed their hair, wore short skirts, smoke and drank in public and went to the speakeasies unchaperoned. However it focused on self indulgence and beauty rather than real issues. This shows these points are true and increases the value of the source.

Source A also claimed that 'everyone listened to radios.' This is also true in 1920, KDKA, the first radio station was formed, and by 1922, there were 500 radio stations across the USA. Many people listened to radios together, which were usually bought on credit. 50 million listened to the fight between Jack Demsey and Gene Tunney. In 1926 WBC was founded, followed by CBS in 1927. Radio programmes ranged from, westerns to detectives, to music and comedy. They also provided opportunities for sponsorship – Pepsodent sponsored the popular show 'Amos and Andy'.

Finally, Source A claims 'New Products and brands were advertised.' This is true: a consumerism boom occurred in the 1920s, previously advertising was mainly the written word telling the attributes of a product, but now the growth in industrial production required a continuous market, it was no longer enough to sell a durable manufacturing product people needed to be convinced they had to buy things frequently, so companies hired psychologists to target specific groups. Slogans, brand names, celebrity endorsement and consumer aspirations were new methods that developed. One cigarette company encouraged women to smoke with the slogan 'touches of freedom'.

Source B says in the 1920s there were 'protests' due to a 'flood of immigrants'. This is true and led to the immigration acts in the early 1920s. The literacy act forced people to prove they could read a short passage in English to enter the USA. The immigration quota act set immigration to 3% as a proportion of the 1910 census of immigrants ethnicities the USA at this time. Then the National origins act set immigration to 2% of the 1890 census. It then limited immigration to 150,000 a year, meaning western Europe had 85% of immigration places, there were to be no asians at all. People blamed WW1 for rivalries between european countries and wanted to stay as far apart from Europe as possible.

Source B also claims the KKK had been revived. This is true. The second KKK emerged as a WASPS movement, they were anti Jew, Catholic, black, against all foreigners. The second KKK emerged from the fact there had been increasing immigration to the cities during world war one from African-americans and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who brought with them dangerous political ideas like socialism and anarchism. When veterans had to re-enter the workforce, many found their jobs had been taken. The KKK lit burning crosses, wore white sheets and hoods, and beat up, lynched and mutilated anyone they considered an

'enemy', usually by tarring and feathering. However, the decline of the KKK came when Daniel Stevenson, accused of sexually motivated murder, was refused pardon and exposed illegal activities of the clan, leading to a decline in support from politicians who had initially supported them.

Finally source A claims that 'black united' 'did not make much headway.' This is true, however Marcus Garvey did lead a spirited campaign promoting the 'black defence' 'movement' where African-Americans would return to where they originated. However, Marcus Garvey would eventually be imprisoned for irregularities in the 'Black Star line' and arrested for mail fraud, and there were no major improvements made by the NAACP in this period. All three points are true and this increases the value of the source.

"Source C claimed people in the 1920s, flocked to jazz clubs'. This is true, jazz originated from slaves who encouraged to sing in order to increase production they used 'washboards', cans, pickaxes to create a distinctive brand of rhythm, and by changing the rhythm and syncopating it, jazz was formed. Jazz was another thing that was popular with the middle class youth, that was seen as a fall in moral standards by the older generation and rural individuals. Many cities banned jazz, but this just made it more popular in speakeasies. Particularly frightening to the 'anti flirt leagues' was jazz's links to sex through its older name of 'blues and boogie-woogie'. Source C also claims that people 'drank in prohibition era speakeasies.' This is also true, the Volstead act (18th Amendment) banned the public consumption of alcohol. However, this proved impossible to enforce as the USA had 18,700 miles of coastline, and federal authorities could not stop alcohol being smuggled in. The prohibition unit of the internal revenue service never had more than 2,500 employees and at least 10% became paid members of gangs. The result was that cities like New York had more speakeasies than they had ever had saloons, and the government could not stop all the 'moonshine' being made by 'bootleggers' under the light of the moon.

Finally source C says there was a 'spread of Hollywood movies'. This is true, movies had been around since the start of the century. However, they soon became the fourth largest industry in terms of capital, movies were shot in elaborate picture palaces like the Roxy in New York, which cost 8 million to build, and movies featured popular actors like Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and actresses like Clara Bow, the it girl, and 'Theda Bara' the vamp. These points are all true increasing the value of the source.

To conclude together all three sources provide a very good explanation for life in the 20s together Source A highlights the consumer and xx and how this had a positive impact on the lives of citizens. Source B is more negative, showing the impact of growing intolerance in society towards immigrants and African-Americans, and source C highlights the changing society and forms of entertainment, such as the cinema and jazz. However, while source A and C are much more positive, source B presents a conflicting negative view on society.

This is a Level 3 response

The response confuses argument with factual observation and this is apparent from the outset by identifying the 19th Amendment as something to evaluate. The focus should be determining if the view being advanced in the extract is convincing or not. The response has some good, specific knowledge, but this is only rarely linked to supporting an evaluation of opinion. Instead the information, for example on the flappers, is used simply to add detail to an identified theme or factor. In the absence of consistent argument, there is also very little attempt at balance. However, there is some attempt to offer an evaluation and this is more apparent for Extract A. This attempt at evaluation with some links to subject knowledge, is enough to lift this to Level 3.

Question 2

'The years 1865 to 1896 were a time of significant progress for former slaves in America's southern states.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Overall, between the years 1865 and 1896 there was not significant progress made by former slaves in America's southern states. Though laws were passed to promote their civil rights, such as the 15th Amendment, they were ignored or avoided by the southern government such as the Jim Crow Laws designed to stop former slaves from voting.

During the years 1865 and 1896, there was an attempt to help and support the former slaves in the south. For example, Lincoln formally freed all slaves in 1865 by passing the 13th Amendment. In addition, the Freedman's Bureau was set up to help former slaves find employment and education. This was quite successful and though it was originally only supposed to run for a year, it was later extended to five years. In addition, Radical Reconstruction under President Grant was beneficial to the former slaves in the south. During this time, the 14th and 15th Amendments were passed, which gave African Americans full citizenship and basic civil rights, and allowed them to vote, respectively. This led to black participation in politics, which in turn led to African Americans being elected to important offices, such as senators, especially in Mississippi. Furthermore, the Civil Rights Bill attempted to ensure that African Americans had access to the same public facilities as White Americans.

However, there is more evidence against the claim that the years 1865 to 1896 were a time of significant progress for former slaves in America's southern states. For example, after the end of the civil war, the Northern states were keen to reintegrate Southern states into the union. This meant they were lenient on the southern population and there was no major land reform. This meant that former slaves had no choice but to return to the plantations to work. This problem was exacerbated by the introduction of 'Black Codes' in the south which were a legal way of ensuring the status quo remained largely unchanged from before the civil war. The exact codes varied from state to state, though they generally meant that out of work slaves could be forced into working on the plantation and those who quit jobs could be refused their wages. In short, they were still slaves in all but name.

In addition, the failure of Radical Reconstruction after the compromise of 1877 marked an end to Northern attempts to 'modernise' the south. The 'redeemer' governments that sprang up in the south during this time sought to return the south to how it was before the civil war. This led to the introduction of 'Jim Crow' laws which were ways to prevent African Americans from voting without violating the 15th Amendment. For example, the Grandfather Clause' stipulated that a person could only vote if their grandfather had voted. Of course this meant that all ex-slaves were prevented from voting. Other examples include poll taxes, which the poor ex-slaves could not afford to pay, or literacy tests that were biased against the largely uneducated ex-slaves.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court were not sympathetic to the cause of ex-slaves. For example, in the Plessy V Ferguson case, the court ruled that white Americans and African Americans did not have to share public facilities, as long as there were 'separate but equal' facilities for both. This ruling effectively legalised segregation, and the southern states immediately and unanimously ignored the 'equal' part of the ruling. Public facilities for non-

white were invariably smaller and less clean than their white counterparts, and this went against the Civil Rights Bill that congress had passed in 1867.

In conclusion, though there were attempts by Norther politicians between the years 1865 and 1898 to improve the positions of ex-slaves, the period did not mark a time of significant progress as many of the measures implemented were either outright ignored or creatively avoided by the southern states.

This is a Level 4 response

The response establishes a clear view at the outset and some knowledge is identified to support this. The argument is not powerfully pursued but there is some good, well selected knowledge used in order to support argument which largely predominates in this response. However, there are sections, for example in the first two paragraphs, in which this knowledge is so plentiful that the individual argument is lost. A largely chronological approach with obvious balance, but also that fails to develop a fully analytical argument as demanded at Level 5. A response that does have some attempt to address the question but which struggles to integrate the knowledge effectively.

Question 4

'In the years 1945 to 1968, the growth of the US economy was entirely due to an increase in consumer demand.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Following WW2, the USA was under the influence of a great economic boom, the war had provided a great many opportunities for America, combined with its rapidly growing industry and the significant effect of consumer demand; the USA had grown into an economic powerhouse by 1968.

The view that the growth of the economy increasing due to consumer demand is not valid. The war had a profound effect on the growth of the US economy. Before the war, 14% of the nation's workforce was unemployed but by 1948 the problem had been nearly eradicated as the need for soldiers, radio operators and factory workers rose significantly. With the great empires distracted by the war in Europe, the US was able to move into a great deal of suddenly deprived foreign markets. Many countries also owed massive sums to the US thanks to their cash and carry policy, providing a welcome boost to their GDP even as much of the money was shovelled back into Europe to aid the Marshall plan.

The consumer goods industry grew rapidly as more and more Americans grew prosperous enough to afford luxury items such as cars. As the car industry grew and co-ownership climbed rapidly, the housing market also grew as families could afford to live far way from the big cities and drive into work instead.

During the period 1945-1968, consumer demand grew rapidly. Access to easy credit allowed for Americans to buy items and then pay them off in monthly instalments instead of a simple upfront payment. The 'baby boom' led to great amounts of demand for items such as nappys or baby food and the need to house so many new families to the development of sprawling suburbs, built using newly devised techniques. As labour-saving devices such as washing machines or dishwashers were bought en masse the average US family was left with far more time on their hands. Many corporations used the greater amounts of spare time to their opportunity, using advertisement to encourage the use of their products in this free time. By the end of this 3 in 4 households owned a television set. During this period of profitability, the average person in the US would consume around 3,000 calories a day, nearly twice that of the average European.

To conclude, though the war had managed to completely pull the US from its Great Depression slump, it was the ever increasing demand of the period that allowed the US to maintain its post war boom. Though the view that it is entirely responsible is not valid, it does play the most significant role. The US' increased industrial capacity primarily used to keep up with consumer demand, rather than to support the wars of the period.

This is a Level 3 response

There is a general contextual introduction that does not add much to the answer. The approach is a very sequential one considering randomly identified factors or themes in turn. The supporting information can be specific but this is also often quite generalised, especially when considering labour saving machinery or the impact in the home. There is some attempt at analysis and evaluation, but this is limited very much to the end of a paragraph or to the largely assertive conclusion. This marginal attempt at providing an answer to the question is enough to lift it to Level 3 but the lack of further analysis or a well substantiated judgement limits the script from going further.

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at aqa.org.uk/7042

You can talk directly to the History subject team

E: history@aca.org.uk

T: 0161 958 3865

Copyright © 2023 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA Education (AQA) is a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723).

Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

