

# A-LEVEL HISTORY

A-level (7042)

## Marked Papers

Paper 2Q - The American Dream:  
Reality and illusion, 1945-1980

Understand how to apply the mark scheme  
for our sample assessment papers.

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# EXAMPLE RESPONSES



## Example responses plus commentary

The following student responses are intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. These responses have not been completed under timed examination conditions. They are not intended to be viewed as 'model' answers and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

## Specimen Paper 2Q, The American Dream: Reality and Illusion, 1945-1980

### Question 01

**With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context assess the value of these sources to an historian studying the escalation of the US war effort in Vietnam in the years 1964 to 1968.**

**[30 marks]**

### Mark scheme

- |            |   |              |
|------------|---|--------------|
| <b>L5:</b> | Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context.   | <b>25-30</b> |
| <b>L4:</b> | Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context.   | <b>19-24</b> |
| <b>L3:</b> | Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. | <b>13-18</b> |
| <b>L2:</b> | The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), <b>or</b> it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context.   | <b>7-12</b>  |
| <b>L1:</b> | The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context.   | <b>1-6</b>   |
|            | Nothing worthy of credit.   | <b>0</b>     |

## Student one

### Response

Source A is very useful for an historian studying the escalation of the war in Vietnam because it is a confidential assessment of the conditions from a State Department advisor. The State Department was the US instrument of government which was responsible for foreign affairs and therefore for the escalation of the US war effort in Vietnam. As it is confidential we can trust that the source has spoken the truth as Richard McNaughton saw it in November 1964. Confidentiality encourages honesty as the opinions will not be scrutinised by the public. The written style is formal, concise and appropriate for an informative document that wishes to convey with as little embellishment as possible an accurate assessment of the situation in Vietnam in relation to the USA's war aims.

The source is written in November 1964 when Johnson was campaigning on a peace platform for election. It is therefore of great interest to the historian studying the escalation of the war in Vietnam as it gives a very different picture of the situation in Vietnam and the government's intentions there to the public impression that Johnson was projecting. 1964 was a critical year in the escalation of the Vietnam conflict. The CIA had suffered setbacks in their attacks on north Vietnam earlier in the year and as a result Johnson had approved NSAM 288 in March. In August the Tokin incident, in which the US ships the Maddoc and the Turner Joy were attacked, resulted in overwhelming Senate support for greater intervention in Vietnam. We can therefore see that this source describes the worsening situation but away from the prying eyes of the voting US public. It is therefore valuable in telling us about the longer term intentions of the USA vis a vis Vietnam. On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1965 under Johnson's command, with the advice received from the State Department, like that provided in source A the bombing of north Vietnam, Operation Rolling Thunder began. The next month on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1965 the first US marines set foot on US soil. It is clear therefore that in the chronology of the escalation of the war in Vietnam this source is critically placed. Not only that but the central role that its author played in advising the US president on the course of action to take makes this an extremely valuable source for the historian studying the US escalation of the war effort in Vietnam.

The source is limited for the historians it was written prior to the first US marines arriving in Vietnam and therefore it is only useful for informing the historian in the first stages of the escalation of the war in Vietnam. It does not detail any of the events or causes of the greater escalation that occurs in the latter years of the period 1964 – 1968. Furthermore, as the source is for the State Department and not for the military it only outlines the benefits and potential risks to action. It does nothing to detail the steps that the US might take in the escalation of the war.

Source B, like source A is highly valuable to the historian studying the escalation of the war effort in Vietnam from 1964 – 1968 because of its provenance. Like source A it is from an author who is right at the heart of government and therefore in a position to know the USA's intentions and have inside knowledge about the escalation. It too is similarly placed in the earlier part of the period and so can inform the historian about the initial stages of escalation and the motivations for it. Again, like source A this is a limit too as it informs us only about the earlier stages and is

more focused on the intentions and hopes of the US government rather than the more bitter realities of the Tet Offensive that served to erode public support for the war at home. Like source A, source B is also a confidential document and therefore we can consider it to be an honest reflection of Bundy's opinions. Bundy was as National Security Advisor to Johnson and was a keen advocate of the escalation of the war effort. We can assume that his advice had a significant impact on the decisions that Johnson made in regards to the war effort. We also know that Bundy had been a Harvard ~Professor of statistics and that as a result he was convinced of the USA's ability to win the war by virtue of its superior economic, technological and demographic power. Bundy takes a calculating approach in source B, acknowledging the risks but overall reaching the decision that they are outweighed by the benefits of the 'effort'.

The source is particularly valuable in that it focuses on the use of air power in the war effort. The memorandum is written just six days before Johnson authorised Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing campaign of northern Vietnam. However, this also reveals its greatest limitation. The historian using this source to study the war effort in the period would not be aware of the later escalation of troop numbers. By the end of 1965 there were 175,000 US troops in Vietnam and by the end of 1966 this number had reached 250,000. The source can be used therefore by the historian to show how the US hoped to run a limited air campaign in the north but became increasingly committed, inadvertently, to putting troops on the ground.

Source C is valuable as a source for the historian studying the escalation of the US war effort as it is the words of the US president, Johnson, Commander in Chief of the US forces, who escalated the war between the years 1964 – 1968. In the source Johnson gives his reasons why the US has to fight in Vietnam. He cites long standing US policy ideas of Domino Theory and the USA's commitment to Containment and their connection to American National security. He argues that both Kennedy and Eisenhower committed themselves to action in Vietnam, showing how the escalation is not his idea alone. It suggests that Johnson is uneasy about the public's perception of the war effort and this is why he is using the names of former presidents to secure legitimacy for his action. This is particularly powerful with Kennedy because of his assassination. Finally, Johnson explains how many people have died so far and that for this reason the USA cannot give up. The source is however limited in its use as it is a statement to the American people and so we cannot tell if these are the real reasons why Johnson is committed to the war in Vietnam as they are words for public consumption. This speech is given in July 1965 when LBJ was experiencing 70% approval ratings from the public. However, by 1967 these had dropped to 40%. Eventually the war made Johnson the least popular president of the twentieth Century. This source is a valuable record of Johnson's awareness that this will be the impact of his war. However, it is not conclusive evidence as, like source A and B it comes relatively early on in the period and tells us nothing of the disastrous events of the Tet Offensive on US moral.

In conclusion Source C shows Johnson's justification to the public for the escalating war effort. Source A and B show the opinions of his confidential advisors. Johnson tried to steer a compromise position between the Hawks and the Doves within his administration but ultimately was dragged into the war effort. However, none of these

sources show the other side of the argument, they do not give us evidence about Johnson's reticence to become involved. In this they are all limited and give a one-sided perspective of the war effort. In a similar way none of these provide details of the escalation. They simply focus on the reasons and justifications for the escalation. As none of them come from after 1965 we do not get any of the sense of disaster that so characterises the later escalation up until 1968 when the impact of the war effort caused Johnson to not seek re-election.

### Commentary

The answer is generally good with very strong comments on the provenance of the sources, especially those of A and B and how the provenance influences value. Deployment of contextual knowledge is good and accurate and is used in the assessment of value. There are, however, some weaknesses in the response. The assessment of the content and argument of Source A lacks specificity and is too general. It is expected that there would be assessment of what the source says about the aims of policy and the implications of its assessment of the position at the time it was written. Source B is fully assessed, but the assessment of C is somewhat undeveloped and not fully convincing; what were Johnson's intentions when making the speech and how effectively were they met in it? It should be noted also that conclusions are not required.

Overall, this is a strong Level 4 answer.

## Question 04

**‘Richard Nixon proved himself to be a master of statesmanship in foreign affairs’**

**Assess the validity of this view.**

**[25 marks]**

### Mark scheme

- |            |   |              |
|------------|---|--------------|
| <b>L5:</b> | 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.  | <b>21-25</b> |
| <b>L4:</b> | 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.   | <b>16-20</b> |
| <b>L3:</b> | 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.   | <b>11-15</b> |
| <b>L2:</b> | 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. | <b>6-10</b>  |
| <b>L1:</b> | 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.  | <b>1-5</b>   |
|            | Nothing worthy of credit.   | <b>0</b>     |

## Student one

### Response

Richard Nixon was, and remains, a towering figure in US history. Before the ignominious 'Watergate' scandal and Nixon's subsequent resignation in 1974, he served as both Vice President under Eisenhower and President from 1969-1974. It is clear that Nixon played a key role in foreign affairs during the most tumultuous period of the Cold War, and followed a policy of *détente* in his own administration, yet the view that he "proved himself to be a master of statesmanship in foreign affairs" is highly disputable. Indeed, Nixon's longevity, albeit followed by abrupt exit from the political stage, had versed him well in foreign affairs, but by no means made him a "master of statesmanship".

There is an argument, although tainted, that Nixon was successful in foreign affairs, proving himself to be a master of statesmanship. Proponents of this interpretation argue that Nixon's improved relations with China and the USSR were a mark of genius-hailing a new era of Cold War relations and deepening the Sino-Soviet division. Indeed, Nixon's visit to China in 1972 created a media sensation, with the headline "online Nixon could go to China". Nixon met with Mao for an hour and discussed solutions for the situation in Taiwan, Vietnam and beginning trade links. This unprecedented move into 'red territory' suggests that Nixon was able to manipulate the Sino-Soviet divisions for US advantage. However, in reality, it has been argued that Mao was the real winner of the trip. After all, China continued to pose a threat to Taiwan, North Vietnam emerged victorious in the Vietnam War and Chinese patronage began to dominate South East Asia. Therefore, although well-received at the time, Nixon's improved China-US relations were not the hallmark of "master Statesmanship", but rather a symbolic action which empowered Chinese influence in the region. The improved US-Soviet relations under Nixon are also frequently applauded, yet the relationship was short lived. The *détente* proved to be limited in the fact of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 and Brezhnev did not have the same relations with other Presidents as he had with Nixon. Finally, Vietnamisation and Nixon's attempts to secure 'peace with honour' could suggest he was a master of statesmanship. Indeed by the end of 1971, 66% of US combat troops had left Vietnam and 55% of the US public supported his policies of bombing North Vietnam. Yet the policy of Vietnamisation was ultimately a failure. This was evidence as early as 1971, when 5,000 elite South Vietnamese troops began the Lam Son Offensive. The televised images of South Vietnamese soldiers trying to hang onto American helicopter skids to escape battle promoted marches of 3,000 in Washington. Indeed, it was clear that the ARVN was a policy of wishful thinking, which was not supported by the South Vietnamese government, and culminated in the embarrassing fall of the South in 1975. Therefore Nixon's *détente* was good for public image but was no more than symbolic in real terms, and his policy of vietnamisation ultimately failed. In other words, Nixon should not be regarded as a "master of statesmanship in foreign affairs".

Nonetheless, some regard Nixon's decision to partner with Henry Kissinger – as his National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State – as a stroke of genius. Indeed, the Harvard professor negotiated the Paris Peace Accords of 1973, bringing

an end to the Vietnam War. It seemed that Kissinger had secured a 'peace with honour', organising a ceasefire, prisoner of war exchange and a 'Committee of National Reconciliation' to contain Communists. More importantly, he ensured the continued existence of Vietnam under the leadership of Thieu. For his efforts, Kissinger was awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize, yet Nixon's appointment of Kissinger as Secretary of State can hardly earn him the title "master of statesmanship". Kissinger's practice of 'realpolitik', encouraged by Nixon, had devastating effects of the Bombing campaign during November 1972. The consequences of realpolitik policies were also seen in Chile where Nixon's administration had supported the Coup d'état which had overthrown socialist, elected Allende and replaced him with the autocratic dictator General Pinochet. Under this regime large-scale torture and 50,000 deaths occurred. This directly undermined US philosophy of self-determination and democracy, so he should not have been considered a 'master' statesman. Therefore, whilst the Kissinger-Nixon partnership may have produced peace on the surface, the long-term consequences were not only morally dubious, but also ineffective as seen in Vietnam and Chile.

Ultimately, Richard Nixon was far from a "master of statesmanship in foreign affairs". His short-lived "success" in Vietnam fulfilled his campaign promise, but did not put adequate measures in place to replace the US forces who left. Thus, the embarrassing fall of Saigon in 1975 marked the end of US influence in the region as a direct result of Nixon's policy of Vietnamisation. Indeed, Nixon's symbolic détente also, ironically, reduced US power in the region as it gave rise to Chinese ambitions in South-East Asia. Improved US-Soviet relations were superficial in the sense that they did not hold up after Nixon's resignation or in the face of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, Nixon and Kissinger's practice of realpolitik gave rise to an autocratic dictatorship in Chile, clearly undermined American values of democracy and self-determination. Thus, perhaps Nixon should be titled a "master of manipulation and manoeuvring in foreign affairs", for although he could conduct the direction of the international stage, he did not necessarily produce the most effective, long lasting or morally justified solutions.

### Commentary

This is a consistently analytical, well-focused response with a clear judgement. Indeed, the only reason why this potentially excellent answer is not Level 5 is the lack of development and full appropriate detail to corroborate fully the points made. With this slightly greater development, the answer would clearly be Level 5.

This is a borderline Levels 4/5 answer.

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