
History

Paper 1J (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 11/11/15

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 1J (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of British expansion in Africa in the late nineteenth century?

[25 marks]

Student response

While Source A is adapted from Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore's book "Africa since 1800", published in 1981, Source B is adapted from Denis Judd's "Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present", published in 1996. Both of the sources talk about reasoning for British expansion into Africa in the late nineteenth century, however each provides a different interpretation, which creates a question of how convincing each extract is.

Source A is convincing because it claims that there was an "appearance on the African scene of new European powers". Evidence to support this is the Berlin Conference that took place in 1884, which was called by Germans and Belgians to control how much of Africa Britain was able to expand into and had other parts of Africa given to various European countries. This shows that although Britain were already eager to expand into various parts of Africa, other powers also showed interest, particularly the Belgians and Germans who called the conference, as they wished to limit the power Britain could gain by recognising their interests along the Niger River. Furthermore, Source A is also convincing as it claims that for each power involved there was a "scramble for territory in order to reserve the largest possible sphere for its own future activities". This was known as the Scramble for Africa, which was the invasion, occupation and colonisation of African territory by European powers in the period between 1881 and 1914. This is convincing as Africa was home to an abundance of natural resources which many countries wanted to take advantage of, but also because Europeans thought it their mission to "civilise" people in the rest of the world and in this way, have power over them by expanding into Africa.

On the other hand, there remain elements of Source A that are less convincing. For example, although the Berlin Conference of 1884 introduced new European powers taking an interest in expanding into Africa, I know that expansion into North Africa had already begun to take place before this. Britain and France were the two main powers involved, as they had dual control of Egypt between 1878 and 1882, which then changed as Britain gained full control in 1882. Therefore, Source A is also unconvincing as it fails to recognise that the partition of Africa had already begun to occur prior to the Berlin Conference, in which there was an appearance of new European powers on the African scene.

Source B is convincing because it talks about the geo-political reasons for Britain expanding into Africa, claiming that it was driven by the need to “preserve the Suez Route to the old empire in India and Australasia”. Evidence of this lies in the fact that Egypt was of high interest to Britain since the French had financed the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, and they were worried that the French would impose a higher influence and undermine their power, in that they had control over Britain’s trade routes to India. Therefore, I think this extract is convincing in a way because it highlights the fact that several British leaders became concerned and preoccupied with the need to protect the Indian Empire from foreign threat, thus providing the basis for their imperial reasons behind expansion into Africa.

However, I think that Source B is also less convincing because it claims that “imperial expansion into Africa was essentially defensive”. I disagree with this claim because where Source A mentions Britain’s economic reasons behind expanding into Africa, Source B fails to do so. For example, Britain had flooded Egypt with loans and investments, and both imperialists and gentlemanly capitalists who had volunteered their money were worried that the French would undermine this. Therefore, Extract B is unconvincing because it seems implausible that Britain was solely driven to expand into Africa for geopolitical reasons, when their economy was under threat and harm could have come to various creditors and investors. In addition to this, another reason Source B is unconvincing is because it claims that there was an “imagined foreign threat”. My knowledge tells me that threat from other European powers were clearly apparent, especially after the Berlin Conference in which Germany and Belgium called for Africa to be divided up between powers, without regard to culture or politics.

In conclusion, my opinion is that Source A is more convincing in its examination of British motivations behind expansion into Egypt. Despite intervention from other European powers, Britain was clearly eager to expand into Africa in order to establish good trade links, in addition to their interests along the Niger River and willingness to create a large sphere for its future activities there.

Commentary – Level 4

The strength of this answer lies in the consistent attempt to interrogate the interpretations which are in the extracts and assess the extent to which they are convincing by deployment of knowledge of context. Key quotations from the extracts are used and then tested by the application of knowledge. This approach is wholly appropriate and effective.

There are some weaknesses. The introduction serves little purpose and adds nothing to the response. The assessment of extract A does not consistently focus on British expansion and in places, becomes somewhat too general. The assessment of the limitations of extract A is not fully convincing. The conclusion is brief, but it does build on what has been assessed in the answer. There are also some stylistic weaknesses.

Nevertheless, given clear understanding of the extract and effective, in the main, deployment of knowledge of context, this is a top level 4 response.