



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**History A 4040**

**40402A American West, 1840–1895**

***Report on the Examination***

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# 40402A American West, 1840–1895

## General Issues

The general quality of the work produced by candidates was good and impressed the examiners. Most candidates demonstrated a broad knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key issues identified in the syllabus and the people and events specified. No part of the paper was misinterpreted and there were few cases where candidates had failed to provide an answer. Even weaker candidates were able to write at often considerable length on the later parts of questions 1, 2 or 3. While the main issues and trends in the history of the American West that the paper covered seemed well understood, there were some small specific areas where candidates displayed weaker knowledge and understanding. This was evident in relation to the answers to Question 2. However it is good to see candidates in the examination integrating their knowledge of the period with the historical skills they have learned to demonstrate convincing historical reasoning. The value of the large, colour images used in the paper was evident; they proved stimulating and accessible across the full ability range.

The demands of this paper were broadly consistent with those of the legacy specification. Question 1 and Questions 2 or 3 of Section B offered the opportunity for all candidates to show what they understood, knew and could do. It was noticeable that the more able candidates distinguished themselves on Question 1(e) and on 2(c) or 3(c). In Question 1 of the paper many candidates used knowledge well to support their answers to parts 1(c) to 1(e). In Section B candidates showed a marked preference for Question 3 about the settlement of the West rather than Question 2 on the Cattle Industry.

## Section A

### Question 1(a)

The majority of candidates successfully comprehended and drew inferences about the Plains Indians' attitude to the land from these sources. Knowledge of the Indians' attitude was not called for, but many candidates chose to use their own knowledge when answering this question. The majority of candidates reached a high level 2, being able to draw more than one valid inference about Indian attitudes to the land. At level 2 candidates were able typically to make comments that referred to the spiritual attitude of the Indians to the land. It was stated that the Indians cared for the land, considered it sacred, worshipped it or as one candidate expressed their attitude, 'the land was something to be treasured'. Able candidates emphasised the concept of the land being held in a trust for the future and that the Great Spirit owned the land and its ownership was not for men. There were a small minority of level 1 responses that simply paraphrased Source B.

### Question 1(b)

The majority of candidates showed comprehension and drew inferences about the different attitudes to the land shown in Sources C and D to those in Sources A and B. Candidates found the sources easy to deal with in terms of their ideas and language. Most candidates were able to reach level 3 through correctly identifying contrasting attitudes in the two sets of sources. Weaker answers often made a simple comparison between the sources based on what they said or suggested about the land and for this their responses gained reward at level 2. Many

candidates assumed that the contrast between the sources was self-evident and so references to Sources A and B were implicit. There was confusion for some candidates who contrasted the Indians' attitude to the land in Sources A/B with Greeley's perception of the Indians in Source D rather than his own view of the land. Candidates would be well advised in their answers to focus sharply on the differing ideas in Sources C and D and express them in their own words.

Candidates made observations about the fact that in A/B the attitude was one of caring for the land whereas in C/D it was one of exploitation. Commonly this was expressed in fluent and perceptive answers which compared the Indian approach of working *with* the land with that of white settlers working *against* the land. Able candidates mentioned that the destructive approach in C/D contrasted with the caring, harmonious attitude of the first two sources. It was observed by a few candidates that the sources both referred to a higher being and that being's wishes for the use of the land in A/B differed from that expressed in C/D. Some examiners noted once again that many candidates mixed up how and why sources differed in their responses to this question, thus they began answering Question 1(c) during their answer to Question 1(b).

### **Question 1(c)**

In this question candidates had a clear target to explain why there were differences between Sources A/B and C/D. Candidates showed understanding of the skill being tested here and most used the differences between the authors or the time of writing to underpin their answers. The general level of thinking in answers to this question was good and led in the main to level 2 and level 3 marks.

Although this question elicited a full range of responses, at a basic level a number of candidates wanted to explain how the sources were different. A significant number of candidates ignored the provenance of the sources and merely described (often at great length) how Indian and white attitudes differed, not just towards land but on a whole range of issues. This was often due to candidates believing that Sources A and B were by Indians, and failing to recognise that Source A was, in fact, painted by a cowboy. These responses received level 1 marks (1-2). A common feature of answers at level 2 was to explain differences between the sources as founded, with varying degrees of precision, in the cultural differences and experiences of the authors. Many candidates concentrated on the personal experience of the Indians gained by Seltzer as against the cynical and self-serving nature of magazines/newspapers and their contributors as evidenced in Sources C/D. The development of the time differences in detail and context usually brought level 3 marks to the candidate (6-7 marks). Level 4 answers usually involved the concept of Manifest Destiny as the linkage between Sources C and D.

### **Question 1(d)**

Candidates found the source straightforward and it was easy for them to discuss its utility. Its size and use of colour helped candidates discuss the details of this source. Most candidates knew that a successful answer to this question involved both content and provenance. While in some previous years candidates have struggled with the latter, on this exam paper the fact that Source E was from an East Coast newspaper gave most candidates the pointer they needed to make relevant comments on its utility.

There were, however, a few misinterpretations of the source. Some candidates wrote at length about the practice of scalping, explaining and justifying it. A few responses wrote about the Indians' attitudes to white people or the attitude of the dead soldier in the source.

Examiners noted that many candidates based their answers around the content of the source. These answers were rewarded at level 2 (3-4 marks). It was common for answers to discuss how the Indian was portrayed. The Indian looked barbaric and savage. The look on his face seemed triumphant, proud or pleased. The clothes of the Indian were scanty and primitive and thus uncivilised; they contrasted with the uniform and authority of a soldier. The Indian's weapon was also primitive and contrasted with the more advanced technology of the soldier's rifle. A few candidates pointed out the fact that the soldier lay on his front, exposing his back which suggested that he had been attacked from behind and this implied a treacherous, sneaky attack that may have been an ambush. For such an attack the Indian's clothes would provide an excellent camouflage. All of these points reflected white attitudes about the Indians.

It was pleasing to see so many candidates reflecting on the source's provenance. The value of the source was frequently considered to lie in the fact that it was for a newspaper and focussed on the intention of the publishers. Many candidates noted that it reinforced stereotypes about savage Indians. The intention was to make the observer angry and hateful towards the Indians. A perceptive minority of responses, usually at level 4, noted the date and concluded that as the Indian 'problem' had largely been solved by 1892, this picture in some way justified what the white man had done to the Indians. Candidates who used the content and commented on provenance were rewarded with level 3 marks (5-6). At level 4 there were some very sophisticated answers using the candidates' own knowledge to integrate content and provenance in a very impressive manner, for example in explaining the different religious attitudes to the dead and the act of scalping. It was gratifying to see that the vast majority of candidates kept to the focus of the question (i.e. white attitudes) and did assess the usefulness of the source somewhere in their answer.

### **Question 1(e)**

There were some good answers to this question and the question proved to be a good discriminator. However too many candidates used the question as an opportunity to provide a long description of the Indians' lifestyle without relating it to the idea of a successful existence on the Plains; this was particularly true of tribal roles and aspects of Indian life such as the abandonment of older tribal members, and polygamy. The majority of candidates were able to explain the importance of the buffalo, the tipi, the horse, family life, the Indians' organisation, religion, warfare and values. Most candidates' responses demonstrated the use of the sources selectively and appropriately in their answer. Some candidates reversed the question and explained why the Great Plains suited the Indians but these were very much a minority and for most candidates this was a question which allowed them to show what they knew and understood about the Plains Indians' lifestyle.

There were some candidates who wrote at length about why the coming of the white settlers stopped the Indians from leading their traditional lifestyle. When answers consisted of a few simple points or general statements about the Indians they were limited to level 1 marks. Many candidates offered some more developed comments from their own knowledge about the reasons for the Indians living successfully on the Plains, often identifying the role of the buffalo. These answers usually received 3 to 5 marks at level 2. Examiners were surprised that more candidates did not mention the importance of the horse, or taking a cue from Source A, the horse and travois being so important to the successful nomadic lifestyle enjoyed by the Plains Indians. For candidates who were able to give factual support and details about several factors 6 to 8 marks were available. At level 4 candidates tended to evaluate different factors and give some weight to their relative importance.

## **Section B**

### **Question 2(a)**

This question was answered well on the whole with many candidates scoring level 2 marks. Most candidates reached level 2 by showing knowledge of the part played by Texas in the development of cattle ranching. Candidates who tended to explain the significance of Texas as the starting point for the Long Drives or as the source for the herds of Long Horns which were taken on the Long Drives scored marks at level 2. Really good answers described the natural advantages of Texas, the outcome of the American Civil War and how low prices in Texas compared to the North led to the start of the cattle trails.

### **Question 2(b)**

This question drew many good answers from the majority of candidates who tackled it. Many candidates relied on Source F as a `starter` but were able to list other dangers facing cowboys – the weather, the terrain, Indian attacks, and the long hours worked being the most common. Although mentioned, candidates often lacked the specific detail on these dangers that would have merited level 3. Those candidates who examined Source F closely were able to `mine` an answer worth 3 to 5 marks. Candidates referred to the black storm and lightning which spooked the cattle into stampede. The pock-marked terrain was seen as responsible for unhorsing the cowboy, and some steers in the picture had been tripped too. The consequences for the cowboy in the picture were certain. There was too much discussion in some answers of marginal relevance to do with their working lives but rather to do with boredom, and poor pay, as well as their leisure pursuits with reference to prostitution and violent cow towns. At level 3 flooded rivers, quicksand, Indian attacks, rustlers, illness, and wild animals were some of the dangers that brought reward. Candidates who discussed and explained these aspects in detail were usually rewarded at level 3.

### **Question 2(c)**

This question discriminated well. Although less popular than Question 3, this question did elicit some detailed and thoughtful answers. Many candidates knew a great deal about the cattle industry and this enabled them to access level 2 marks as did those candidates who provided several factors that were simply expressed. Examiners frequently saw candidates who were well versed in the lives and contribution of Charles Goodnight and John Liff, and who often added McCoy into the mix of significant individuals resulting in high marks within level 2. The responses of candidates at level 3 were distinguished by their ability to explain reasons in detail. Some of the better answers focussed on the railroad as was the most common `other factor` that was assessed as being significant to the development of the cattle industry. In addition there was often added the effects of the American Civil War. Examiners were looking for the emergence of some evaluation of the relative importance of factors at level 3 and beyond. The candidates who reached level 4 often mentioned, for example, the role of barbed wire or the winters of 1886-7 in bringing about the end of the open range. Many candidates found it difficult to go much beyond the early factors and there was a tendency to describe later developments (if they were mentioned at all) rather than explain the factors which brought them about.

### **Question 3(a)**

Candidates clearly knew some details about the Mountain Men. There was a good combination of information about their lifestyle (e.g. fur trapping, relations with the Indians) and their importance as publicists for, and guides to, the far West.

### **Question 3(b)**

This question gave a great deal of help in the picture provided. Source G was quite rightly 'mined' by many candidates who used it to comment on Indian attacks, crossing rivers, and the surrounding terrain (from the mountains in the background). Higher marks were gained by candidates who explained why the problems of the journey would lead to difficulty and were dangerous. In this way candidates needed to explain that the adverse weather would lead to delay, the terrain might damage the wagons or animals, and the uniqueness of the journey would lead to problems of navigation. Few candidates noted that the wagons were pulled by oxen. However the better answers were able to show some impressive knowledge of the difficulties and dangers faced by, not only the ubiquitous Donner Party, but also the Goulds and Sagars as they struggled west.

### **Question 3(c)**

The question was straightforward and some candidates enjoyed the opportunity to display their understanding. This was more popular than Question 2(c). At level 1 candidates just had a few points to make usually about the railroad. Most candidates had knowledge and understanding about a number of factors especially the railroad or the defeat of the Indians, Law and Order or the Homesteaders. Those answers that tended to mention several factors briefly were rewarded at level 2. Some candidates at level 2 were very knowledgeable about the railroad. The railroad, when given prominence, was often linked with other relevant factors such as, for example, Law and Order, the removal of the Indians, or new farming technology. At level 3 the Government was also seen as being highly important in the development of the West, particularly through the various Land Acts passed but also through its promotion of the West, encouragement of Law and Order, and removal of the Plains Indians. The better answers at level 3 and 4 did appreciate the role of Manifest Destiny as a unifying idea that justified and drove on the development of the West by white people.

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