



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

History A

(Specification 4040)

Unit 1A: Medicine through Time

Unit 1B: Media Through Time

Unit 4A: Medicine Through Time (Short Course)

Unit 4B: Media Through Time (Short Course)

Report on the Examination

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40401A and 40404A Medicine through Time

General points

This was the third year of the new specification. The examination discriminated well, with students of all ability levels having the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding. Written expression was good throughout and students used the question paper/answer booklet to effect, although many students did require additional writing pages. This in itself was testimony to the accessibility of the paper, but it also illustrated the need for some students to be more selective in their use of the knowledge they had at their disposal. They wanted to tell the story before using the knowledge to affect a response to the question set. This can impact on the highest grades awarded. A similar comment was made last year, but the important skill of selecting relevant information and applying it to the question set still needs some development. A minority of very able students may find the highest level difficult to achieve when so much of their effort is centred on a knowledgeable narrative, but one which lacks the evaluative analysis which is central to top level answers.

The visual sources for Question 1 (Public Health) were again effective in providing students with valuable stimulus and information. Source A, a reference to the Greek methods of handling public health proved effective. Source B had additional support and although the link between Cholera and Thames water may have been surprising to some students, the most able made a clear reference to miasmatic theory and used the date of the source to strong effect. Source C worked well in discussions on prevention of public health issues. Fewer students had time management issues, although some may have benefitted from greater experience of mock papers, especially if they practised 1(b) as a question about 'how' and 1(c) as a question focused on 'why'.

Students also need to focus answers in each section of the paper to the appropriate areas of study. In 2012 Section A centred on Public Health, Section B on Surgery and Anatomy and Section C on Disease and Infection, and any references to another section of the paper had to have a clearly defined linked impact to gain any reward.

Section A: Disease and Infection

This section of the paper was tackled well by all students. Schools clearly prepared students well for this topic as the source based question. Their skills in drawing inferences from visual sources and then interpreting the evidence continue to be well developed. This allowed students of all abilities to perform well. Students do look around the image for information and this is an important skill. This was especially noted in Sources A and B.

Question 1(a)

Students who had a working knowledge of public health in the times of the ancient Greeks did very well at this question. They showed a clear awareness of Greek *regimen* and applied this understanding to the question. Weaker students mixed up Greeks and Romans, and therefore suggested that the Greeks had strong central government alongside the Romans. Many linked the principals of Four Humours to a scientific approach which then included keeping fit. Large numbers of students were able to use a wide range of visual hints to discuss keeping fit, balancing humours, public health for the rich and that it was limited to men. This simple inference led to good Level 2 answers, which frequently discussed the lack of evidence of organised public health provision for women and the poor apart. The vast majority of students were within Level 2.

Question 1(b)

This question produced some of the best responses within Question 1. Some students continue to find it quite challenging to maintain their focus on 'how', with a few able students drifting into a 'why' response. Students occasionally failed to compare the two sources, having written in many cases about only one source, and therefore failed to make the important links between the two periods. The date of Source B, 1832, and the reference to the Thames and Cholera confused some students, who then assumed that Snow and Pasteur had already made their discoveries. As previously noted, those that knew their chronology made very strong references to miasmatic theory and therefore the question differentiated well. There were some strong responses which debated a lack of government commitment to public health and *laissez faire*. Although some explained that the Greeks were better organised they did not all fall into the trap of assuming strong Greek government. Many simply suggested that the Greeks had a stronger commitment, and the wealth, to stay healthy. Many students also explained their answer in terms of the differences between a pre and post-industrial society and how it may have been easier for the Greeks to acquire clean water than those living in London.

Question 1(c)

Question 1(b) required students to identify the differences in public health provision with Question 1(c) focusing on the 'why'. Weaker students did tend to repeat some elements of their answers to 1(b) before tackling the question set, although there was some improvement on last year. This same comment applied in previous series, therefore it would be useful for schools to practise the technique for answering this style of 'why' question. Students made more use of Source C than previously. The reference in the question to 'these times' was well interpreted. Many stayed within the 1600 BC to 1832 time frame, but others interpreted it to mean the whole of the 19th century and therefore brought into their responses the public health acts and Chadwick. Both approaches were equally rewarded. Some found the time-gap a leap and felt it was necessary to bridge the gap by references to Roman Public Health. Where this time gap was linked to regression and *laissez faire* attitude this was also rewarded. There was some use of Source C in this question, which was not a requirement and therefore, not rewarded.

Question 1(d)

Source C proved more useful this year; many students saw it as a government working on the preventative approaches of public health rather than public health physical infrastructure or government reaction to medical crisis. One concern was the number of students who centred their response totally on the impact of government. The question clearly refers to 'compared with other factors', but this instruction was ignored by some students. However, those who were able to make reference to the role of the church, warfare, the individual, scientific and technological developments alongside the role of Government did do well. If students linked government and individuals such as Snow, Rowntree, Booth, and even Florey and Chain, to government they were rewarded. Many students were well prepared for this question, although fewer students than might be expected evaluated the relative importance of the factors.

In the main, students tackled 1(a), (b), (c), and (d) well. There was clear evidence that the use of visual sources in Question 1 continues to provide a good grounding for students to produce responses which reflect their abilities. Knowing in advance which topic is the compulsory source based question means that schools can prepare students for this approach and the appropriate content areas. However, students do need to ensure they revise for the two other sections of the paper too, and thus cover the full range of specification content.

Section B: Public Health

It would be helpful to students if teachers remind them that the focus of this section is on Surgery and Anatomy and not on the development of Disease and Infection, which was the allocated focus for Question 4 and Question 5.

Question 2(a)

This question was tackled well by most students. The most popular choice was to write about the nineteenth century developments in surgery or sixteenth century developments in anatomy. Fewer students than expected were able to write about the broader context of the developments by putting them in their place within the chronological developments of surgery and anatomy, or by noting that there were more significant developments in certain areas for example, the breakthrough of Vesalius in anatomical studies and its impact on the beliefs in the work of Galen, or the opportunities for future practical anatomical studies.

Question 2(b)

Where students had less historical knowledge they tended to focus solely on the period they had used to answer Question 2(a). This had the impact of limiting them to a top Level 2 answer, which although still a higher grade response had a limiting effect on those targeting an A or A* grade. This was similar to previous years.

However, those with a good knowledge of both periods did produce some excellent answers and spent time comparing surgery and anatomy across both periods. With weaker knowledge some students failed to explain and evaluate both periods contribution to surgery and anatomy; this is needed to reach the highest level.

Question 3(a)

This question was a very popular choice as it allowed students to focus on factors well known to them. As in the choice of Question 2, it was still important that they had knowledge of both areas of study. Examiners noted the confidence with which students approached this question with a wide range of knowledge used to support their answers including references to plastic surgery, blood groups and transfusions, penicillin and portable x-ray machines in answers; centred on warfare. Some weaker students tended to spend large periods of time and effort re-telling the story of Paré or suggesting that warfare was good as it provided plenty of opportunities to practice. This led to many Level 1 responses, which failed to see the wider context of the development they described. Those who focused on science and technology seemed a little uncertain as to what advancements could be developed from these factors. Others referred to microscopes, life support machines, x-rays, and laboratory discoveries such as penicillin and subsequent mass production technology.

Question 3(b)

Overall, this question was well done with students more secure on the role of warfare. Many were able to write effectively on the roles of Paré, McIndoe and Rontgen among others. Students were more secure on the role of warfare and often were more generalised when discussing microscopes and swan-necked vessels and technology. Some students disadvantaged themselves, as in 3(a), by not focusing on surgery and anatomy. A number of students produced narratives about Pasteur and Koch's work, and that of Fleming, Florey and Chain, without linking it to the impact on developments in surgery and anatomy, which would have been seen as a relevant response. It would be very helpful to remind students that examiners do not see the response to 3(a), and should therefore confirm this knowledge and understanding in some part of their response.

Section C: Surgery and Anatomy

Both questions proved equally popular with the students as they covered main stream periods and individuals. Question 5 was only marginally more popular. Responses to Question 5 tended to be of a higher quality, although the vast majority of students were able to produce Level 2 or Level 3 responses to both questions. As with Questions 2 and 3, it is important that students have knowledge of both periods and both individuals in order to answer Questions 4(b) and 5(b) to greatest effect.

Question 4(a)

This question was answered well; however, a small number of students returned to answers, which were centred on Greek public health, reflecting a lack of preparation or knowledge rather than the nature of the question set. To achieve a response which looked at the broader context it was anticipated that students would look at the positive and the negative influences within their chosen period. Students responding to the Middle Ages option tended to focus on the Black Death and linked it to the Four Humours and supernatural cures. Responses were comparable to 3(a) and 2(a).

Question 4(b)

This proved to be the most challenging question on the paper. Some students were confused by the option to write about two periods (Greeks and Egyptians) in comparison to one (Middle Ages). Others failed to see that the question had a focus on prevention of the spread of disease and infection, rather than a cure.

When knowledge of the Middle Ages was weak, weaker responses were the outcome. There were few who referred to the developments within the Arab world, which was a little disappointing.

Question 5(a)

This was the strongest question on the examination paper as many students did have excellent knowledge on these individuals. This is also encouraging as it suggests that students were well-equipped to tackle each question in the appropriate time allocation, and there was little evidence of students 'hurrying'.

Teachers appear to teach much of this specification through the medium of the role of the individual. Pasteur and Koch were also well known individuals and quite central to the developments within the topic centred on disease and infection. This strong subject knowledge not only supported their choice of individual, but also helped them in their responses to Question 5(b) where they were able to make very close links between the two individuals, their work and their rivalry.

Students had an excellent knowledge of both Koch and Pasteur and were capable of explaining and showing their understanding of the broader context of their work.

Question 5(b)

Performance on Question 5(b) tended to reflect performance on Question 5(a). Students were able to make clear comparisons and links between Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur. Knowledge of both pioneers was very extensive. In their responses there was a tendency to state that the role of Pasteur was the most significant, but many students also suggested that they were dependent on each other, and the political rivalry was a positive factor in the development.

Short course Medicine through Time

A small number of students took the short course version of GCSE History A. This involved the completion of Question 1 and one other question. Time to complete the paper was adjusted accordingly. As with the full GCSE paper there was no evidence that students were short of time, although there was a number of rubric infringements. It may well have been students from the same school, but a significant minority did answer three questions rather than two. Performance on these questions was poorer as a result. Schools should make sure that students spend an appropriate amount of time on the second question. There is no gain from attempting two questions and having them both marked.

Students performed well on Question 1 and clearly had developed the skills needed in handling visual sources to answer the questions set.

40401B and 40404B Media through Time

General points

The quality of students appeared to be significantly higher in the full GCSE course in comparison to the entry for the short course. Most of the full course students showed that they had been well taught and that the students had a secure historical knowledge of the topics studied. This is despite there being no set text for this option, which is commendable.

Questions 2 and 4 were the most popular of the optional questions in the full GCSE course. In Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 students do need to make sure they have developed knowledge and an understanding of both alternative choices in the Questions 2(a), 3(a), 4(a) and 5(a). Where this was apparent, they performed well.

There was a small but steady entry for the short course alternative to Medicine. As with the medical short course, there were a significant number of rubric infringements on the short course. It may well have been students from the same school but a significant minority did answer three questions rather than two. Performance on these questions was poorer as a result. Schools should make sure that students spend an appropriate amount of time on the second question. There is no gain from attempting two questions and having them both marked.

Question 1: The Social and Political Impact of the Mass Media

This was centred on the three visual sources and as such provided a strong stimulus to support responses to this entire question. Students performed especially well on Questions 1(a) and 1(b).

Students scored highly on Question 1(a). There were many examples of good knowledge of broadsides and the majority could place them within the context of the political impact of them on society. Answers to Question 1(b) were supported by good use of the caption, strong analysis of the nature of the image and high quality interpretation of the text through references to ‘made specially to prevent sore throats’ and even ‘ladies handbag size’ was well interpreted. The influence of American advertising style was also well explained. Question 1(c) was well answered by the majority of students, who identified a range of differences including technological change, the role of women in society, and differing purposes of the two media. Question 1(d) was also well answered by the students, although most responses were dominated by the impact of technology as it was the named factor, but also supported by Source C which centred on Facebook and Twitter, two technological developments which all students were well aware of. This had the impact of reducing the top marks, as fewer students gained the top level as they failed to evaluate the relative importance of other factors apart from technology.

Question 2 and 3: The Development of the Media

Question 2 was more popular than Question 3. Students need to make sure that they can write effectively about both periods so that they can perform equally well with both parts and in Question 2 they did this. There was an excellent knowledge of the popular press and frequently this was supported by a sound knowledge of written communication in the Ancient and Medieval worlds.

This was not the case with Question 3 where they tended to have a good knowledge of the development radio, but fell back on a general knowledge of the development of cinema. In Question 3(a) there was a wide knowledge of radio including its use during the General Strike, during World War Two and even pirate radio and the emergence of digital radio. Knowledge on cinema tended to focus on the move from black and white to Technicolor and from silent movies to sound.

In Question 3(b) the higher quality responses were from students who did have a more solid knowledge of the development of the cinema and also discussed the move from ‘shorts’ to blockbusters, total freedom in cinema to ratings, and the growing impact of technology including special effects and 3D.

Question 4 and 5: Controlling the Mass Media

Question 4 was selected by more students, although those tackling Question 5 tended to perform equally well.

In Question 4(a) students demonstrated a higher level of knowledge of the work of Mary Whitehouse. Much of what was said about Josef Goebbels was of a general nature and reflected knowledge of the Nazis rather than specifically of the role of Goebbels. With a greater knowledge of Mary Whitehouse they tended to suggest that she had the greatest influence over the mass media. This was usually well-explained, and therefore a valid response to Question 4(b).

In Questions 5(a) and 5(b) it was apparent that students had a good knowledge of both periods. They were therefore able to write at length about their chosen period as they had a genuine choice. Answers to Question 5(b) were equally divided as to which period the governments were more successful in controlling the media, and some students even made a differentiation between Tudor and Stuart Britain. Question 5(b) was one of the most successful questions on the paper.

Schools need to be commended on how they prepared students for the full GCSE, although those entered for the short course need to be directed in such a way as to avoid rubric infringements.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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