



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**History A 4040**

**40402B      Britain, 1815–1851**

***Report on the Examination***

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# 40402B Britain, 1815–1851

## General Issues

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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 Britain 1815-51 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 no preference for Question 2 about the Vote over Question 3 on Population and Emigration.

## Section A

### Question 1(a)

The majority of candidates successfully comprehended the sources and drew inferences about the railways from these sources. Knowledge of the railways was not called for here but many candidates chose to use their own knowledge in this question. The majority of candidates reached a high level 2, being able to draw more than one valid inference about railways. At level 2 candidates were able typically to make comments that referred to dangers and unsafe nature of the railways. It was stated that there was overcrowding and pollution as a future danger. Some answers noted the disorganised nature of the railways. Many candidates pointed out that the railways seemed to be the preserve of the wealthy. The vast majority of candidates showed that they understood the sarcasm or 'fun' aspect of both sources. Able candidates emphasised the pollution and developed the idea to include the ruination of the landscape. 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 impression of the railways shown in the Sources C and D to that posed in Sources A and B. Candidates found the sources easy to deal with in terms of their ideas and language. Candidates were able to reach level 3 through correctly identifying contrasting impressions 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 railways and for this the response gained reward at level 2. Many candidates assumed that the contrast between the sources was self-evident and so reference to Sources A and B were implicit. 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 impression of the railways was one of chaos whereas in C/D it was one of good organisation. Candidates noted the differing speeds suggested in B and D. Some candidates saw the upper class users of rail travel (in A) in contrast with the mixture of classes (in C) and concluded that rail brought social classes together. The congestion and pollution of A was juxtaposed with the apparent cleanliness and space of C. One candidate identified the black, choking smoke of A and contrasted the impression with a reference to the 'flying white breath' of D. Able candidates mentioned that the magical, awesome quality of the railways in D that contrasted with the dangerous and faulty impression in A/B; one candidate summarised Kemble's impression of the railway as 'a thing of beauty'. It was observed by some able candidates that Sources A/B gave the impression of 'mocking' the railways whereas Sources C/D 'worshipped' the railways. 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 number of candidates ignored the provenance of the sources and merely described **how** the impression of the railways differed. This approach received level 1 marks (1-2). A common feature of answers at level 2 was to explain differences between the sources as rooted in the fact that times had changed between the production of the sources and at the time of C/D the railways were very popular. The development of the time differences in detail and context usually brought level 3 marks to the candidate (6-7 marks). Many candidates at this level concentrated on the development of Railway Mania to explain the enthusiasm of C/D and the idea that to a large extent the authors of A/B were speculating without hard evidence about the future of the railways. Level 4 answers usually involved discussion of the purpose of satirical magazines, the presence of George Stephenson as a companion to Frances Kemble and the intention of the artist, William Frith.

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

Candidates found the source straightforward and it was easy for them to discuss its utility. The size and use of colour helped candidates discuss the details of this source. Most candidates knew that a successful answer to this question involved discussion of both content and provenance. While in some previous years candidates have struggled with the latter, on this examination paper the fact that Source E was from a children's' educational magazine and the artist had plainly done research gave most candidates the pointer they needed to make relevant comments on its utility.

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 work of the navvies was hard and dangerous. The navvies' reputation and tendency for violence was the other dominant theme fixed on in many answers.

Candidates who used the content and commented on provenance were rewarded with level 3 marks (5-6). It was pleasing to see so many candidates reflecting so well on the source's provenance. The value of the source was frequently considered to be in the work of the artist who had researched his facts in order to present an accurate picture for children to learn from. Some able candidates pointed out that the specific events referred to in the source could be further researched and the facts verified. Several candidates valued the picture because it demonstrated the skill and ambition of the navvies and railway builders in taking on such a formidable engineering challenge.

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

There were some good answers to this question and the question proved to be a good discriminator. The question worked well because it differentiated those candidates who could outline the results of the introduction of the railways from those who were able to evaluate the importance of them. Candidates who knew some simple details about the railways were rewarded at level 1 or 2 depending on whether the knowledge was related directly to the importance of the railway system for Britain. Many candidates made simple but sometimes vague reference to how travel speeds and times improved, people could get about, see more of the country and that life was 'better'. At level 3 the majority of candidates concentrated on changes in diet, the rise of day tripping and the ability of people to visit relatives. It was common to see answers that recognised the growth of railway towns and seaside resorts. The better answers at level 3 and level 4 explained the broader impact of railways on the national economy, for example the economic impact that the transporting of coal, iron and textiles more quickly and cheaply had on the wealth of the nation. Perceptive comments were made about the impact of the quantity of raw materials demanded for the building of the railways system itself. The impact of the railways on financial capital formation was seen as significant. The change in emphasis from national to local delivery for horse-drawn haulage was also noted. Whilst the social effects of the railways were referred to at all levels, the political impact was poorly appreciated and understood.

## **Section B**

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

Many candidates answered this question. The mark scheme at level 2 was looking for candidates to display an understanding of the broader context of the electoral franchise. It was answered well on the whole with most candidates scoring level 2 marks. Most candidates reached level 2 by showing knowledge of the franchise and were rewarded for responses that explained the unfairness of the system or the fact that it was rooted in land ownership or established forms of authority. Candidates who gave factual details of the franchise scored marks at level 1.

### **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' and were able to list how elections were organised and conducted. The absence of a secret ballot was the most common point made by

candidates. The most frequent other points made were firstly about the prevalence of bribery, though few answers used the word 'treating' and most often referred to 'parties'. Secondly there was mention of violence and intimidation; for this latter point some candidates took the presence of staves or sticks in the bottom right hand corner of the painting as a hint. A few candidates mention the 'organisation' of the election and characterised it as 'shambles'. Those candidates who examined Source F closely were easily able to 'mine' an answer worth 3 to 5 marks. Although mentioned, candidates often failed to provide the specific detail on these features of elections that would have merited level 3. At level 3 a broader perspective on elections was seen with candidates noting the size and distribution of constituencies and the seven-year electoral cycle. Candidates who discussed and explained these aspects in detail were usually rewarded at level 3.

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

This question discriminated well and was popular with candidates. The question did elicit some detailed and thoughtful answers. Most candidates focussed on the key factor given in the question. They knew the French Revolution well which 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 recognised the fear that those with power felt about the prospect of a similar event to that which happened in France in 1789 happening in Britain. Candidates were well versed in the events before 1832 which seemed to threaten revolution. Such answers resulted in high marks within level 2. There were some common misunderstandings that appeared in many answers. Some candidates were of the opinion that the Chartists had most of their influence and activity before 1832 and were involved in passing the Reform Act. A few candidates' answers gave the impression that the Reform Act was inevitable. Some candidates displayed extensive knowledge of the Reform Act and gave a detailed narrative of its passing. The responses of candidates at level 3 were distinguished by their ability to explain reasons in detail. Factors identified were the absence of a national police force, the impact of newspapers, the social and economic impacts of Cholera and the economic slump. The candidates who reached level 4 mentioned the economic, social and other political reasons for Electoral Reform.

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

This was a popular and straightforward question. Candidates were clearly aware that the population grew and made reference to the changes in birth and death rates. At level 2 candidates were confident at mentioning in detail the migration patterns from countryside to town and the reasons for this as well as emigration abroad.

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

This question gave a great deal of help in the picture provided. Source G was quite rightly used by many candidates to comment on overcrowding and the food on board (for those who spotted the cabbages attached to the side netting). Candidates had lots of points to make about the problems of illness during the voyage, the weather and high seas which could damage the boat, as well as the sheer length of the journey. Higher marks were often gained by candidates who explained the emotional side of the journey - leaving loved ones behind and being anxious about how one might survive in the new land. A few candidates noted that the couple in the picture had a small child with them, protected from the weather beneath the woman's outer garments. This gave an added family dimension to migrants' thoughts about their future prospects.

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

The question was straightforward and some candidates enjoyed the opportunity to display their understanding. At level 1 candidates just had a few points to make usually about the life abroad. The most usual way that the majority of candidates tackled the question was to consider the lure of a better life in terms of work and food. At level 2 some candidates had a plan marked out for themselves through their learning of 'push' and 'pull' factors involved with emigration at this time. These candidates often had a good knowledge and understanding about a number of factors especially the Irish famine, and the Highland Clearances. Unfortunately weaker candidates who lacked such a structure simply latched onto the idea of a better life in this question and wrote about that with only a few precise and detailed references. At level 3 it was pleasing to see a number of candidates referring to the enabling factors of better transport and communication, advertising, and the role of government in subsidising the costs of travel. The top answers at level 3 and 4 did appreciate the impact of the bigger economic forces attendant on the Industrial Revolution that drove emigration, as well as the desire for political and religious freedoms that sometimes lay behind the move abroad. There were a few candidates who composed excellent answers with a summary judgement about the relative importance of the factors involved.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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