

# Examiners' Report January 2013

## GCSE History 5HB02 2A

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## Introduction

With an entry of just over 100 candidates this report obviously reflects the work of only a few examination centres. The entry did however cover the full range of ability expected for this examination. There were some highly focused responses, with specific details to support explanations for Q1 to Q4, Q5a and Q6a, as well as high-quality analyses, with precise support and sustained judgements, for Q5b and Q6b. It was noticeable, particularly on the high tariff Q5b and Q6b questions (20 marks, including SPaG), that the highest scoring candidates almost always made a rough plan before beginning their response. This means that a particular line of argument is invariably put forward at the outset and is then coherent and sustained throughout the response.

It was noticeable that some candidates were producing learnt responses to previously set questions on the same area of content, but without marshalling their knowledge to the actual set question in this particular examination. Such answers are almost always awarded low to mid Level 2 as they are not focused on the set question. There were also candidates who had very weak knowledge and very little understanding of Britain in the first half of the 19th century. However, there were almost no blank pages, suggesting candidates are being well prepared by covering the entire specification.

## **Question 1**

At Level 2 the most common valid and supported inferences were about the grandeur and extravagance of the Great Exhibition, based on the impressive building and the obvious presence of wealthy visitors. Level 1 comments were often only descriptions of the source itself or unsupported inferences. Unfortunately some candidates made no reference to the source at all and wrote detailed descriptions of the Great Exhibition. These responses were often very accurate and explained key features of the Exhibition, such as its overall purpose in promoting the British Empire, the role of Prince Albert, the visiting arrangements for different social classes or its actual construction, but could not be rewarded. For Q1 candidates' responses can only be credited if AO3a (comprehension and inference from the source) is met.

## **Question 2**

At Level 3, candidates clearly focused on the importance of either Shaftesbury's work in improving mining conditions or Owen's contribution to improving the lives of factory workers. At this level, responses on Shaftesbury mentioned specific details, such as the appointment of inspectors for mines and the 1842 Mines and Collieries Act. Some candidates explained some of the limitations and shortcomings of these developments and this was rewarded. Level 3 responses on Owen explained the significance of his work in New Lanark, his role in the Ten Hour movement, as well as the establishment and aims of the GNCTU. Level 2 responses often had very similar content but were either narrative accounts of the individual chosen or descriptions of mining or factory conditions. These responses did not make any explicit reference to the importance or contribution made by either Owen or Shaftesbury to working conditions. Level 1 answers could normally be applied to almost any social reformer at any time or place in history, with comments such as more pay, better houses and fewer working hours. Centres might find it useful to stress to candidates the value in focusing on the thrust of the set question, which appears above the two option boxes. In this examination paper the focus was on 'the importance of his work'. It is evident that many candidates respond to the option box itself and so invariably wrote 'all I know about this person' rather than explaining the actual importance of the individual's work.

## **Question 3**

There were some excellent Level 3 responses that gave specific and accurate details about a range of methods used by the Chartists to try to achieve their aims. The different methods advocated by the 'moral force' and 'physical force' Chartists, and the movement's divided leadership leading to different methods, were well known. These responses often explained the use of petitions and newspapers, as well as specific events such as the Newport Rising, the Plug Plots and the rally at Kennington Common. There was also the occasional comment on the Chartist's aims to make education available to the working class. Level 2 responses generally gave a narrative account of the Chartist movement, with implicit comments about the methods used to try to achieve their aims. There were also some candidates who were clearly addressing previous questions on why people joined the Chartists or the problems created by its divided leadership. Level 1 responses were similar to those on Q2 and could be applied to almost any protest movement in history such as they marched, wrote letters, produced newspapers or held meetings.

## **Question 4**

The differences in the lives of the rich and poor in the first half of 19th century Britain is clearly mentioned in the specification. This was the first time that a question has been specifically set on this area of content for this GCSE specification and was answered by slightly more candidates than Q3. Level 3 responses gave specific details on differences in the lives of the rich and the poor. As well as explaining the varied lives in terms of housing, education, life expectancy and diet, many high-level responses explained the extent to which the wealthy influenced and controlled political life. Level 2 answers tended to be more general descriptions of the varied lifestyles and often became long accounts of the dangerous working conditions and the living conditions faced by the poor, compared to the luxuries and comforts enjoyed by the aristocracy. Level 1 answers were unsupported general comments about larger houses, more money or the employment of servants.

## **Question 5 (a)**

Level 3 responses supported a range of ways in which the coming of the railways improved the quality of life for people in Britain in the context of the mid 19th century. Candidates considered a wide range of aspects such as the growth of specific seaside resorts, new employment opportunities, and the increased speed with which news could spread and fresh food could be distributed. Level 2 candidates described these changes without making explicit links to improvements to peoples' lives and often strayed from the set question and began describing opposition to or the construction of railways. Similar to other questions, Level 1 responses were very general unsupported comments about more travel, being able to get jobs or being able to visit places far from home. Weaker responses were often personal accounts on how the candidate themselves uses rail travel.

## **Question 5 (b)**

Level 4 answers had a clear argument from the very beginning about the extent to which the 1832 Reform Act was an improvement to Britain's electoral system and sustained this throughout. These answers weighed up some of the more obvious improvements, such as the redistribution of parliamentary seats, the abolition of rotten boroughs and the enfranchisement of the middle class set against the continued use and abuse of open voting and the absence of voting rights for the working class and women. Level 3 answers explained the changes made by the 1832 Reform Act and gave an opinion as to whether it was an improvement or not to Britain's electoral system. In Level 2 many strayed from the question and either narrated the passing of the Act or gave explanations of how the Act's limitations led to the Chartist movement. This was clearly a response to a previously set question on the consequences of dissatisfaction with the 1832 Reform Act. There were a significant number of candidates who seemed to think that the 1832 Reform Act was responsible for the introduction of the secret ballot. This frequent misunderstanding has been mentioned in previous reports. Level 1 comments could be applied to any parliamentary reform act, such as more people could vote or the poor could still not vote, or they became opportunities for candidates to write their own personal views on voting systems.

### **Question 6 (a)**

Level 3 responses gave a range of reasons why some people wanted to change the systems of poor relief used in England before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Candidates identified problems with the existing varied methods of trying to alleviate poverty such as the Speenhamland and Roundsman systems, the consequences of a rapidly growing population and the increasing resentment at the rising costs of poor relief. Surprisingly there was no mention by any candidate of the Royal Commission or the role of the government in wanting to reform methods of poor relief. Level 2 responses described the systems of poor relief or problems of poverty in the early 19th century. Level 1 answers were unsupported comments such as it did not work, needed improving, or that the system should be the same throughout the country. Some saw this as an opportunity to voice their own opinions on welfare benefits and the reasons why they believe individuals live in poverty.

### **Question 6 (b)**

Level 4 answers had a clear argument from the very beginning about the extent to which navvies were the most important people involved in the construction of railways. These answers weighed up the role of navvies compared to that of other groups of people such as speculators, the government or engineers. Many persuasively argued that the role of navvies was crucial and that the aspirations of others could not have been met without their work. These responses also had detailed knowledge about individuals such as Hudson, Brunel and Stephenson. Level 3 answers argued for or against the role of navvies, without weighing up their contribution, compared to other groups or individuals. Level 2 answers were generally accounts about the lives and work of navvies and how they were often feared or gave accounts of the problems during the construction of railways, such as Chat Moss. Level 1 responses were normally unsupported comments, such as they built tunnels, they laid tracks or they used explosives.

## Summary

- Ensure that candidates are not producing a response to a previously set question.
- Remind candidates that the source provided must be referred to in Q1.
- Remind candidates to look at the focus of Q2.
- Encourage high-level candidates to spend some time on a plan, particularly for Q5b and Q6b.

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