

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE O Level

GCE O Level History (7263)

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GCE ORDINARY LEVEL HISTORY:7263

The examination seemed to work well for those candidates who had prepared thoroughly. As in previous years, it was noticeable that most candidates preferred the questions in Sections C and D and generally scored better.

Most candidates offer at least one of the documentary questions and although there is evidence of a slight improvement, many are still not comfortable with evidence skills. Sub-question (a) will always be concerned with comprehension of and, perhaps, also some inference, from a source. Candidates are being asked to say what they can tell from a source. Developed statements will be awarded with the maximum 3 marks. Question (b) may well ask candidates to cross-reference the two sources, again for a maximum of 3 marks such as 1(b). They must show evidence of direct comparison between the two sources and explain similarities and/or differences.

Question (c) will often ask about the reliability or usefulness of a source. These questions will attract four marks. In answering these questions, candidates will be expected to make use both of the information given about the source and also the information given in the source. For example in question 17 candidates were asked to evaluate the reliability of Photograph B. It is of reliable because of its contents - in other words it shows a typical example of white racist reaction to a civil rights sit-in. It is also reliable because of its provenance, being taken at the height of civil rights sit in activities in the early 1960s. However it is also limited because of its provenance - it may well have been taken as an extreme example of white reactions to sit-ins in order to win more support for the civil rights movement.

Questions (d) will always require candidates to make use only of their own knowledge in answering a question which relates directly to the subject matter of the sources. It will always be the highest weighted question at 10 marks. The focus is often description and evaluation (question 17). In the latter case, candidates should attempt to give more or less equal weight to the two parts of the question.

In terms of the essay questions candidates can improve in several areas. There will always be an element of evaluation in every question. Candidates need to focus on this aspect and avoid pure description. Too many candidates lack precise information, especially about chronology, and do not always address the main theme of the question.

Finally, in general terms, comments on examination technique. A number of candidates failed to answer five questions due to timing and/or lack of breadth of revision. Some show inconsistency in their choice of questions and occasionally opted for topics for which they had little knowledge and understanding. Again, more comprehensive preparation and revision is essential. A few showed a serious imbalance in the length of their answers. The first two essays well developed and the next three far too brief. Remember successful candidates produce five consistently written answers. The quality of the last answer can be crucial in determining the grade achieved by the candidate.

Section A

This section was not popular with questions answered by generally weaker candidates. However, one centre answered a range of questions on Africa. For question 1 there were reasonable inferences and cross referencing for parts a and b and often very detailed accounts of Nkrumah's career for Part d although few balanced evaluations for part c. Question 6 was also popular and well answered with very good descriptions of the career of all three leaders. There were few answers to the rest of the questions in this section.

Section B

This section was not popular with the exception of questions 9 and 10, both on China. There were generally sound answers to 9(a), (b), (c) and (d). Question 10 sound answers to (a) and (b), although expected more detail for (b) but often brief and generalised responses to (c). Surprisingly few answers to 11, 12 and 16.

Section C

A very popular section with, as usual, questions 18, 19 and 21 attracting many takers and well answered. There were few or no responses to question 22 and 23.

Question 17, the starred question, performed very well on (a), (b) and (c) but there were occasionally generalised answers to (d). with focus on either 1950s or 1960s and little reference to Black Power. Questions 18 and 19 were popular and high scoring. Candidates wrote at length for all three parts of question 18 revealing in depth knowledge about the USA in the 1920s. Many candidates achieved almost full marks on three parts. Again many high scoring answers to 19 with some strong and balanced evaluations of Roosevelt's achievements.

Question 20 proved quite popular than expected especially HUAC, Hiss, Rosenbergs and McCarthy, although answers on Korean War were not always focused on the question. Some very strong answers to 21 with excellent details of the crisis itself and its effects. A handful of generally weak responses to 24.

Section D

Another popular section especially questions 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29, 30 and 31,. There were only a handful of responses to questions 29 and 32.

A number of strong answers to 25 although for (d) some candidates wrote at length about collectivisation rather than Five Year Plans. Question 26 was popular and generally well answered especially parts (b) and (c). Some candidates made only passing reference to the Depression for (a). Some excellent and well focused answers to all parts of 27, with Abyssinia and Manchuria especially popular.

Question 28 was quite popular although there was often an imbalance between domestic and foreign and/or a failure to assess Mussolini's policies. Few takers for question 29 with generally weak responses to all sections. Often strong responses to question with part (c) surprisingly well answered. Question 31 was quite popular with candidates displaying sound knowledge of the problems facing the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's attempts to reform.

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Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	62	50	38	33	25
% Candidates		47.4	64.5	79.5	84.6	90.2

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