

# AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

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Paper 0409/01  
The Making of a Nation 1754-2000

## Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide description containing relevant factual material with reference to the date range and focus of the question. Broad generalisations limit the success of answers.
- Part **(b)** questions demand that candidates **explain** their ideas in some depth. This necessarily goes beyond describing events or issues that relate to the question. Candidates should be able to make a pertinent point, develop it and support it with carefully chosen evidence.
- Part **(c)** responses require balanced ('for' and 'against') answers and developed arguments. Comments should be supported with a reasonable range of detailed material; otherwise candidates will produce mere assertion.
- Candidates should be reminded to observe the examination rubric. This states that candidates must 'Answer **three** questions, each from a **different** section. Each question has several parts. For each question you *choose, answer every part, (a), (b) and (c).*' These instructions are stated at the beginning of the paper, and while some candidates adhered to them, many did not. Some candidates answered only one part **(a)**, **(b)**, and **(c)**, each taken from three different questions. Others answered only one question and a minority answered all eight questions.

## General comments

Some scripts showed that candidates were well prepared for the examination and could use useful factual knowledge with some precision. This was shown particularly in the part **(a)** questions where some candidates produced particularly strong answers.

With part **(b)** questions some candidates were aware of the need to explain rather than just describe and this was shown in the way answers were structured into reasons/factors/causes and used language such as "this showed that" or "this meant that". However, many answers to the part **(b)** questions could not be fully credited because they did not show the requisite knowledge to link general comments to the particular question and did not focus on explaining. Many answers did not move beyond simply describing some relevant knowledge.

There were some candidates who were aware of the need to offer balanced comments in response to part **(c)** questions. Some good answers revealed clear exposition, structure, organisation and a good range of supporting material before arriving at a consistent judgement in a conclusion. Such responses invariably started with a clear introduction before moving on to a 'point per paragraph' approach. The balance in such responses was often sign-posted by the second half of the answer starting with "However..." or "Although I agree to some extent with the statement I am not totally convinced by it for the following reasons...". However, answers which approached the questions in this way were in the minority and many candidates struggled to display the knowledge and skills required for these questions.

Many responses would have benefitted from closer attention being paid to the dates of the question and the particular figures or events included. Where questions offer a date range this invites the candidates to look at trends and events over the full time period. It was rare for the date ranges in these questions to be fully used by candidates and many entirely ignored the dates offered to include material from outside the period. This suggests that many candidates need more practice in looking at questions which span large sections of a theme and more substantial knowledge of many of the topics.

Stronger responses showed a keen sense of period and contextual knowledge but basic chronological errors or confusion were still common. The best overall responses, although rare, showed a strong approach to learning specific historical material and were well prepared for the sort of questions they might expect to see in the exam. They moved beyond the over-generalised and poorly informed responses to show awareness of organisation, structure, explanation and specific detail.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Section A: Government of the People 1754–2000***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) A number of responses were able to offer some relevant knowledge of Populist movements and some could provide more precise details of the Farmers Alliance and their policies. However, there were many candidates who had no firm idea of the political developments in this period and gave general knowledge either of social movements or strayed from the date range altogether.
- (b) Many candidates were able to make broad descriptive references to the changes implemented during reconstruction including laws and amendments passed. However, a majority of candidates struggled to tie this knowledge to the particular period of Johnson's presidency and the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. This meant that much of the material was irrelevant or failed to directly answer the question as set.
- (c) A number of candidates were able to take a stance on this question and could discuss the successes and challenges of reuniting the country in the period. Some candidates were able to move beyond description to explain their ideas and form an argument about the level of success that Reconstruction had.

##### **Question 2**

- (a) Most answers struggled to successfully discuss the 'constitution' part of the question and rather focussed on general ideas about the New Deal. This meant that many responses were limited in the credit they could be awarded, although a few better answers were able to provide descriptions of the 'packing' of the Supreme Court.
- (b) The best answers to this question were able to consider aspects of federal control i.e. the War Powers Act or the internment on Japanese Americans, to explain the growing influence of government during the Second World War. However, many responses had only very generic knowledge of the period and so were unable to link any ideas successfully to the question.
- (c) Better responses were able to select relevant examples from the time period given to test how authoritarian the federal government was in the period. Many used ideas about the New Deal in the 1930s although few used the later period in their answers. A significant minority of candidates struggled with the use of the word 'authoritarian', although this is one of the focus points in the specification, and so were unable to successfully build an argument which related to the question.

#### ***Section B: Who are Americans 1754–2000?***

##### **Question 3**

- (a) Most candidates had some awareness of the Battle of Wounded Knee and were able to provide some descriptive details although this often remained quite general. Although the date (1890) was provided, a number of candidates had difficulty placing this in the wider chronology of Native American relations and so were confused about the importance of Wounded Knee as the end of the Native American wars.
- (b) The best answers to this question were able to use specific knowledge of the Reservation system to comment on the social challenges that Native Americans faced, i.e. Americanization and Schooling. Many responses though, remained very general and confused the precise period which the question was focused on, meaning that they were limited to the lower mark bands.

- (c) Many answers displayed a general knowledge of the Indian Wars and other factors such as the social and economic challenges which faced Native Americans. However, only a few responses were able to use specific knowledge to address the question despite a number of conflicts which are part of the Indian Wars being included in the specified content. As a result candidates struggled to build an argument which explained their ideas and so did not gain access to the higher levels of response.

#### Question 4

- (a) Many candidates found this question challenging as they did not have the required knowledge of the film 'The Birth of the Nation'. This meant that responses were often confused or very generic. Those that produced stronger responses were able to describe the contents of the film and the response to it across the nation.
- (b) Many candidates were able to provide some descriptive knowledge of Civil Rights cases in the 1950s which contributed to Jim Crow laws being abolished. For example, Brown vs. Board of Education or the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Some candidates were able to use these to explain wider trends which led to the abolition of Jim Crow laws, i.e. legal challenges and popular protest. Once again there was a significant minority of candidates who struggled to write within the time frame or merely offered a description of what Jim Crow laws were which limited the credit they could be awarded.
- (c) The best responses to this question were able to provide specific knowledge of actions in the Civil Rights movement within the time frame which enabled them to build an argument for and against the statement given. This included clear knowledge of actions by the NAACP and other groups. However, many candidates struggled with this level of clarity and were only able to offer basic descriptions or narratives of the Civil Rights movement without any clear recognition of the differences between groups and leading figures. This produced answers which were not focused or structured.

#### Section C: Economic and Social Change 1754–2000

#### Question 5

- (a) There were few candidates who were able to display any substantial knowledge of the Panic of 1857 beyond vague comments about the economy and the differences between North and South. The best answers were able to describe the events of the panic and how it had a different impact on different regions.
- (b) Many answers were able to use some good knowledge of the North and South to describe differences and some candidates were able to go on to explain how and why these differences occurred. Some candidates struggled to focus on 'economic' differences and got drawn into the social aspects of slavery rather than explaining how different attitudes to slavery impacted on the contrasting economies.
- (c) This question was sometimes answered well with clear knowledge and explanation which enabled candidates to form an argument and test the validity of the assertion. The best answers were able to use precise knowledge of conflicts over slavery before 1850 to build arguments of high quality. A significant minority of answers were over generalised and confused about the period, using examples from after 1850 and offering a generalised narrative of the causes of the Civil War. These answers struggled to move beyond the lower levels in the mark scheme.

#### Question 6

- (a) Many answers showed some awareness of the policies of Reaganomics and could offer some details of the policies passed by President Reagan during the 1980s. The best responses offered precise historical knowledge, whilst those with a weaker understanding gave only general ideas.

- (b) There were some good answers to this question which showed an awareness of the type of technological change that happened between 1980 and 2000 and which were able to give specific examples. These often referred to the work of Apple or Microsoft in the 1980s but also to the beginning of widespread Internet use in the 1990s. Some answers remained very generic and referenced technology which has only become available in the last few years so was largely irrelevant to the question asked.
- (c) Many responses to this question used knowledge related to the economic impact of the Vietnam War, although this had varying degrees of success as some candidates struggled to link this knowledge to the question. The best answers combined some knowledge of domestic economic problems and addressed both sides of the question. Weaker answers could only offer generic assertions about economic challenges and so struggled to move out of the bottom level.

**Section D: The U.S.A. and the World 1754–2000**

**Question 7**

- (a) This question sometimes provoked clear and well informed responses with a good knowledge of the acquisition of Florida which led to good descriptions of the events surrounding it. However, many candidates were unsure of the narrative and characters involved and so were limited in the credit they could be awarded.
- (b) There were some good responses to this question which showed a sound recognition of how the Louisiana Purchase encouraged the growth of the United States both physically and psychologically. These candidates showed a good grasp of historical knowledge and were able to clearly explain their ideas. Weaker answers struggled to move beyond descriptions of the Louisiana Purchase and so could not access the top level marks.
- (c) Better responses were able to contrast the influence of Great Britain on defining borders with that of other countries by using specific examples across the broad period given by the question. These answers were able to build an argument across the answer which was focused on answering the question. Weaker answers struggled to display specific knowledge which meant that clear explanation was more difficult. These answers often remained largely descriptive.

**Question 8**

- (a) A number of answers were able to successfully describe the aims of the U.S.A at the Potsdam Conference using details of specific discussions between the 3 leaders at the conference. Weaker answers struggled to go beyond vague references to Communism or confused the Potsdam conference with those held in Paris at the end of the First World War.
- (b) There were some good responses to this question where candidates were able to explain in some detail the events surrounding the Berlin Airlift and relate this to the motivations of the U.S.A. However, many answers included irrelevant information about the Berlin Wall and were confused about the political status of the West and East of Berlin.
- (c) This question provoked some thoughtful and considered responses where candidates were able to use clear knowledge to test the assertion, including many who successfully argued both for and against the assertion. These answers included specific historical knowledge which was deployed and explained to build an argument in relation to the question. Many weaker answers lacked quality historical knowledge and relied on generic assertions or narrative overview which did not fully address the question asked.

# AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

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**Paper 0409/02**  
**Defining Moments**

## **Key messages**

- Candidates would benefit from further focus on using source material. This will allow them to appreciate how to evaluate the sources or the context from which the sources derive. The quality of the source and, specifically, its value in relation to the question, should be assessed. This can be done by consideration of the interests or motives of the author, the person or groups to whom the source is intended, the significance of the location and/or timing, the type of source, the language, the angle or weight of the content and so on. Candidates should comment on some of these criteria, not all necessarily.
- Candidates should not necessarily accept the evidence in the source(s) at face value and should be encouraged to evaluate it critically.
- Candidates should be reminded that knowledge is required as the command word in each question makes clear. However, it is secondary to the sources in terms of importance in the composition of the answer. Knowledge should support the analysis of the sources rather than drive the answer.

## **General comments**

As in previous years, the quality of the answers varied. However, there were fewer answers at the top end of the range of marks. More candidates opted for the topic on 'The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s' yet some of the better answers were on the topic, 'From Compromise to Conflict, 1850–1861'.

Most candidates showed some knowledge and understanding about the topics. Many responses were very subjective expressing personal opinions about the key issue in the question. The political and social views of the candidate are not relevant to the question and are no substitute for specific knowledge about the events of the periods being examined. As this is the sources paper, candidates are required to integrate their knowledge with detail from the sources rather than writing an essay on the topic with little reference to the source provided.

In using the sources too many candidates simply described or paraphrased what was in the source(s) rather than identifying specific points that were important to answer the question. Candidates should be encouraged to actually quote particular clauses or phrases directly from the sources (and to insert inverted commas around the quotation) to make it clear that they are trying to dissect the content rather than merely describe it.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

A number of answers ignored the content of the source. Candidates who knew the book often commented on the plot rather than the reasons for the book being written.

### **Question 2**

General comments about the Fugitive Slave Law were made and the reasons why slaves tried to escape from their owners. However, many candidates did not use the content of the source itself. Furthermore, a majority of candidates did not address the key issue of 'attitudes in the North to the Fugitive Slave Law'.

### Question 3

Most candidates made some use of the source and appreciated the ambivalence of Lincoln's views on the abolition of slavery. In doing so, the use of the content of the source was clearly evident. Some extended their answers to refer to the Emancipation Declaration which did not address the question. The best answers also included some additional knowledge.

### Question 4

In addressing the question candidates often stated the sources differed without specifically identifying the points of difference. The better answers tended to merely summarise, discretely, the content of each source. A few candidates were able to suggest similarities between the sources, but this was limited and often did not lead to a balanced response. As the sources focused on high profile events, candidates did have scope to expand on the content with supporting evidence; although few did.

### Question 5

Overall, the use of sources F and G was limited. However, a number of candidates recognised a counter argument was possible even if they were not able to develop this with reference to the content of the sources. Few answers that provided an argument were balanced. Many applied information from the previous sources, especially source C. However, evaluation of sources F and G was rarely attempted.

### Question 6

Many candidates demonstrated that they knew about 'sit-ins', but focused on the response of opponents rather than the content of the source. However, those who did use the source found several points to comment on. In some cases, candidates added knowledge about the involvement of civil rights groups in the 'sit-ins'.

### Question 7

Most candidates glossed over the content of the source and commented on the inequality of voting rights. Some candidates misunderstood the content and thought the source advocated that African Americans should kill white Americans. Some candidates added some knowledge about the campaign in Mississippi and the death of three civil rights activists.

### Question 8

Many candidates merely provided information about the Black Panthers and ignored the sources. Those who did refer to the source identified a point or two from the source but did not develop this to explain why such details appealed to African Americans. For example, the image of an African American breaking free from a chain was attractive to those conscious of the inequality of their position compared to whites.

### Question 9

The majority of responses were limited as they paraphrased the sources with a statement about how they differed. Most emphasised the difference in methods rather than hopes for the future. However, this was accepted as sufficient for Level 2. A considerable number were aware that there were similarities, especially in their desire for freedom. Very few candidates attempted to evaluate the sources though some commented on the March on Washington.

### Question 10

Some candidates produced confident answers to this question. The more modest responses were characterised by a tendency to express personal views about the tactics of the civil rights movement. In doing so, they largely ignored sources M and N. Candidates who were expressing their views rather than those in the sources did not present a balanced argument, so were often limited to Level 2. For the same reason, these answers usually offered no evaluation. A few drew on the evidence in sources H-L.

# AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

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Paper 0409/03  
History Around Us

## Key messages

Successful candidates:

- Focused on judgement and evaluation rather than narrative;
- Supported their evaluation with detailed reference to the sources

## General comments

The tasks for most Centres allow for clear differentiation and allow candidates to reach the highest marks. In a few cases there is over-reliance on historian's interpretations of the site. The aim should be to allow candidates to form their own judgements based on sources which do not address the key question directly. Doing so will enable candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the historical concept of evidence more effectively. For example they could show their understanding of the evaluation of individual sources more clearly, going beyond an assessment of the amount of information sources contain to show more than this very basic level of understanding.

Occasionally Centres do not provide sufficient sources for candidates to be able to judge the historical significance of a site over time as there is not enough evidence about the location before the site was developed.

The work of the candidates showed engagement with the topics chosen. Most candidates were able to select evidence from the sources to construct accounts of change over time, and this allowed teachers to differentiate between those who understood how to judge historical significance and those who simply claimed that every change was significant. In general, candidates did well when they had been encouraged to judge historical significance using terms such as turning point, trend, and change in direction. This helped them to differentiate the degree of change brought about and hence the significance of a site. For example, the irrigation systems in Yuma AZ brought gradual change in both flood prevention and providing water for irrigation. Candidates could be encouraged to consider which of the elements (the various dams and the siphon) was most significant in allowing the Yuma county to become the winter vegetable-growing capital of the U.S.A.

There was greater variation in the quality of the work regarding the use of sources and where marks were adjusted it was more often in relation to Assessment Objective 4. This was partly a result of the variation in the type of sources presented to candidates. There was often less annotation related to Assessment Objective 4 and it was more difficult to see how marks had been awarded. There was no problem in recognising where a range of sources had been used, although exact numbers of sources should not be a criterion for awarding a mark in a level. There were some instances where candidates would have benefited from more secure embedding of the use of historical sources before embarking on the coursework. Too many candidates were rewarded for evaluation of sources when all they had done was to identify missing information. For example when writing about Phoenix Indian School, candidates found that many of the first-hand accounts from Native Americans related to Indian Schools other than the one at Phoenix. Better candidates recognised that some historians had apparently been selective in quoting only those Native Americans who were critical of the Indian School system, despite there being examples of former students who had a more positive recollection of aspects of life at the Indian School.

For more detailed reports on the work of their Centres, teachers should refer to the Coursework Report available on CIE Direct.

Administration:

Most Centres provided the forms and information required. However, there were exceptions. Please refer to the instructions in the Syllabus to ensure that the correct forms are attached to each individual piece of coursework. In addition, it saves time if the sample of scripts conforms to the instructions that can be found on the CIE Website in the Cambridge Exams' Officers' Guide.

Annotation of scripts and comments on Individual Candidate Record Cards were of varying quality. These sheets serve as an explanation to moderators, whether internal or external, of how the previous marker decided on the mark to award. Unless the Individual Candidate Record Card indicates the qualities of the script that have been rewarded it is not possible to moderate the work effectively. The comments should be selected from the generic mark scheme and written under the appropriate Assessment Objective heading. Comments are also required on the scripts and these should indicate where the qualities identified on the Individual Candidate Record Card have been demonstrated.

Centres with more than one teacher all appeared to have undertaken internal moderation. The mark after internal moderation should be regarded as definitive. This is the mark that should be transferred to the MS1 form. In addition, it is essential to change the Individual Candidate Record Card to reflect the new mark and to adjust the marginal comments to show how the definitive mark has been decided. This information will be required if the work is the subject of external moderation.