

AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

Paper 0409/01
Making of a Nation

Key messages

To gain full marks in part **(a)** questions, candidates should provide a description containing relevant factual material with reference to the date range and focus of the question. Broad generalisations can only be rewarded in the lowest level of the mark scheme.

Part **(b)** questions require that candidates **explain** their ideas in some depth; therefore, they need to go beyond describing events or issues that relate to the question. They should make a pertinent point, explain how it links to the question and support it with carefully chosen evidence.

High marks for part **(c)** responses are gained by providing balanced ('for' and 'against') and developed arguments. Candidates should form an argument in relation to the question, while thinking about whether they agree with the statement or assertion in the question and building a balanced base of evidence. Comments should be supported with a reasonable range of detailed material.

Candidates must observe the examination rubric. There are two sections and all the questions should be taken from one section, i.e. **Section A** or **Section B**. The rubric states that candidates must '*Answer three questions from one section. 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 followed 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 twelve questions. There were also many candidates who answered questions across **Section A** and **Section B** which was not allowed within the examination.

General comments

An increasing number of scripts showed that candidates were well prepared for the examination and could use factual knowledge with some precision. In the part **(a)** questions, some candidates received high marks as they firmly addressed the wording of the question, including the dates, events or figures. Strong candidates showed excellent knowledge of the required ideas.

With part **(b)** questions, some candidates were aware of the need to explain rather than just describe; this was shown in the way their answers were structured into reasons/factors/causes and used language such as 'this showed that' or 'this meant that'. Many responses did not gain marks in the part **(b)** questions because they did not link their comments to the question and did not focus on giving an explanation. Some responses offered just a simple description with some relevant knowledge. To prepare for the examination, candidates need to concentrate on building knowledge that is relevant to the syllabus.

There were some candidates who offered balanced comments in response to part **(c)** questions. Some good answers showed clear exposition, structure, organisation and a good range of supporting material before arriving at a consistent judgement within a conclusion. Such answers invariably started with a clear introduction before moving on to a 'point per paragraph' approach. The balance in such answers 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...' This style was seen with increased frequency. However, answers which approached the questions in this way were still in the minority and many candidates struggled to display the knowledge and skills required for these questions. Regarding writing style, it is acceptable, especially with part **(c)** answers, for candidates to write in the first person (i.e. informally) but slang and colloquialism should be kept to a minimum.

Candidates should pay close attention to the dates stated within questions, including figures or events. Where questions offer a date range, candidates should look at trends and events over the full period. For

example, in **Question 2(c)**, the extension of the borders of the United States between 1754 and 1853, most candidates did not fully use the date range and many entirely ignored the dates and included material from outside the period. This suggests that candidates need more practice in looking at questions which span large sections of a theme and more substantial knowledge of many of the topics.

The best overall responses showed a strong approach to learning specific historical material and were well prepared for the examination questions; they offered effective organisation and structure with clear explanation and specific detail. However, several responses were over-generalised and not well-informed.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Emergence of a Nation 1754–1890

Question 1

- (a) Several responses offered a sound chronology of the creation of the US constitution in the period with the best using precise terminology and dates to describe the events, e.g. the meeting of the Constitutional Convention in May 1787. Weaker responses often struggled to relay a basic chronology of how the Constitution was created, some being awarded marks for mentioning the 'founding fathers' or 'the weakness of the Articles of Confederation'.
- (b) Many candidates gave broad descriptive references to the problems which existed between the British and the colonists in the period such as disagreements over taxation and quartering. The best answers explained how specific events led to increased tension, e.g. the 1765 Quartering Act led to the governments of New York and Massachusetts refusing to provide supplies which increased the tension and led to the New York assembly being suspended by the British. These clear explanatory links helped some candidates reach the top level in this question but many continued to describe rather than explain.
- (c) Some candidates explained how the Bill of Rights made the United States more democratic by using specific examples from the first ten amendments and explaining their impact. The best answers contrasted this with another instance of political development in the period given, e.g. Jacksonian Democracy, and compared the impact; few candidates managed this successfully, though some candidates had the knowledge to make an attempt. There were some candidates who offered only a general comment and so did not achieve high marks.

Question 2

- (a) Most answers displayed some knowledge of foreign nations supporting the colonists during the revolutionary war but this was often limited to naming countries, e.g. France and general ideas about their support. The best answers gave specific details, i.e. the French assistance at the Battle of Yorktown which helped to defeat the British.
- (b) The best answers to this question gave a clear explanation of the causes of the War of 1812, including the trade disputes with Great Britain and the role of 'War Hawks' in the United States. Many candidates struggled with this question because they did not have adequate knowledge of the events or thought that the question was asking about the causes of the Revolutionary War. Candidates should be reminded to look carefully at the dates which are often provided in the question.
- (c) Better responses selected relevant examples of the influence of Spain on the expansion of the United States, e.g. the acquisition of Florida in 1819, and contrasted these with interactions with other countries in the period, e.g. the Louisiana Purchase and France. Many responses offered some relevant knowledge but found it difficult to explain how this linked to the question, or did not form an argument to support either side.

Question 3

- (a) Some candidates gave relevant details about Tecumseh's Confederacy and their responses tended to score highly. However, many candidates lacked the required knowledge for this question, offering very general comments and, therefore, struggling to gain marks.

- (b) The best answers to this question used specific examples of conflicts between Native Americans and the United States to explain how this changed the relationship between them, e.g. the conflict over natural resources in the Black Hills of Dakota. These candidates clearly explained and built an answer to the question. However, these answers were in the minority and many candidates struggled to use specific knowledge or could not move beyond simple description. When studying this section of the syllabus, candidates should have a working knowledge of different conflicts and the impact they had upon tribes, settlers and the U.S. government.
- (c) Many responses displayed a general knowledge of the Indian Removal Act and the consequent Trail of Tears; the best responses used this to build an argument about whether this was the most damaging government policy for Native Americans. The issue for many candidates seemed to be a lack of understanding of chronology, e.g. some linked the Trail of Tears in the early 1830s with American Schools in the 1880s without showing an understanding of the time that had passed between them.

Question 4

- (a) This question generally produced strong responses from many candidates who had a good working knowledge of the different terms of the 1850 compromise. There were a minority of candidates who confused it with the Missouri Compromise but this was unusual.
- (b) A few responses described the different movements that joined together in the North in this period and then explained how events such as Kansas Nebraska and the Lincoln-Douglas debates meant that support increased. Many responses offered only a basic description of anti-slavery feeling and did not refer to the growth of the Republican Party in the 1850s.
- (c) The best answers to this question provided specific knowledge, within the time frame, that was relevant to the question on Reconstruction. There were some strong answers here with candidates being able to discuss the differences that freed slaves felt in political freedoms and every day economic struggles. Some candidates struggled to restrict their answers to the period of Reconstruction and moved a long way out of the timeframe into the twentieth century but generally this question was well attempted.

Question 5

- (a) There were some candidates who displayed knowledge of the work of the Knights of Labor, but this was often quite general. Other candidates lacked the required knowledge of this section of the syllabus and this was often a question where candidates struggled.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this question often had a general knowledge of the poor working conditions which some people campaigned against in the second half of the nineteenth century, but they struggled to be specific. Although some candidates knew generally about the movement surrounding the length of the working day, they often could not use specific knowledge to explain why this became more popular. Most responses struggled to reach the top levels in this question.
- (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, though few, used precise knowledge of groups such as the Farmers' Alliance and the Populists to build an argument about the focus of political groups in the period. Many candidates did not show the required knowledge of politics after 1860 to answer the question successfully.

Question 6

- (a) Some responses showed an awareness of the "Know Nothing" movement and the surrounding anti-immigration campaigns. Many candidates did not know about the campaign and so struggled to gain marks on this question.
- (b) There were some good answers to this question which showed an awareness of groups moving to the United States including Germans and Russian. The best answers explained the push and pull factors surrounding these groups moving to the United States. Some candidates did not read the question closely and included groups that were not from Europe which did not gain credit.

- (c) Many candidates struggled with this question as they did not have the required knowledge of immigration after 1860. This meant that their answers remained general and did not successfully build an argument in relation to the question. The best answers looked at the influence of immigration in some parts of the United States, e.g. Mexicans in the South-West or Italians in New York to explain how this made a change to the country. Others also looked at places where not much change was made, e.g. mainly white communities in the Deep South.

Section B: Consolidating the Nation 1890–2000

Question 7

- (a) There were some clear and well-informed responses with a good knowledge of ‘yellow dog contracts’ and how they were used in the early twentieth century. There was a significant minority of candidates who did not know enough about the topic to comment historically.
- (b) There were some good responses to this question which showed a sound knowledge of factory working conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Many could describe the work of Upton Sinclair and his finding in his book *The Jungle*. The best answers used this knowledge to explain how this had an impact on public opinion and government actions, e.g. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. It is important that candidates remember that the point of this question is to explain rather than just reproduce a lot of knowledge.
- (c) Better responses used their knowledge of Progressive policies to form an argument about how much of an impact they had; for example, some candidates discussed the importance of the direct election of senators that was campaigned for by Progressive politicians. Many responses struggled to access enough knowledge to directly address the question and instead gave only simple descriptions of the period.

Question 8

- (a) Most candidates described some Republican economic policies from the 1920s or gave some detail of the work of different presidents. In this way, the question was generally answered quite well. There was a minority of candidates who did not understand the word ‘economic’ and gave general answers that were not creditworthy.
- (b) Many candidates gave solid descriptions of the growth of the motor industry during the 1920s using some details of the assembly line and increased advertising. Candidates who offered the best answers used their knowledge to form an explanation of why these issues came together to create a massive increase in the industry. Some candidates needed to become more adept at moving from description to explanation.
- (c) This question provoked some thoughtful and considered answers where candidates used clear knowledge to test the assertion, including many who successfully argued both for and against the assertion. These answers included specific historical knowledge and explanation 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 address the question.

Question 9

- (a) Most candidates gave a good response to this question and showed clear knowledge of the “alphabet agencies” set up by President Roosevelt in his first 100 days. Many were able to use the ideas of relief, recovery and reform to show different ways in which the early New Deal policies tried to help Americans.
- (b) The best answers used specific knowledge of Roosevelt’s Second New Deal to explain why it was passed. Some answers considered the lack of progress in unemployment that the New Deal of 1932 had made, while others linked the Second New Deal to Roosevelt’s desire to win the 1936 election. However, many candidates did not have sufficient knowledge of the Second New Deal, or the context surrounding it, to answer the question successfully.

- (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 used precise knowledge of the causes of the Wall Street Crash and Depression to write balanced answers which argued either for or against the assertion. Some candidates gave generic answers which described some problems to do with the stock exchange without linking them to the question. To achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme, candidates must explain their ideas and link them to the question.

Question 10

- (a) Some responses showed an awareness of the Atlanta Compromise and offered some description of the ideas of Booker T Washington. Many candidates struggled with this question as they did not have the required knowledge of the earlier period of the Civil Rights movement.
- (b) The best answers to this question had a good working knowledge of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the context it was passed in. They then used this knowledge to explain why President Johnson was able to pass the act; this included explanations of the feelings in Washington after the assassination of Kennedy and the work of Johnson in being able to push the law through Congress. However, there were a significant number of responses that struggled with this question because they were not familiar enough with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Candidates should remember that this section of the syllabus goes beyond the study of Martin Luther King.
- (c) Some candidates were able to use precise knowledge of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to look at how far there had been an impact on people's lives by the end of the 1960s. Some candidates highlighted the legal steps which had been taken in tackling segregation and the best responses were able to contrast this with the ongoing economic issues, especially seen in Northern cities such as Chicago. However, this kind of clarity was rare and responses often relied on large sections of description which were not linked clearly to the question.

Question 11

- (a) Many candidates made a good attempt at this question and gave some useful descriptions of Stalin's blockade of West Berlin and the subsequent airlift made by the Americans to keep citizens supplied. However, there was a significant minority of candidates who included ideas about the Berlin Wall in their answers which was not creditworthy as this was not built until 1961. Candidates should look carefully at the chronology of a question when answering it.
- (b) Most candidates struggled when attempting to answer this question as they did not know enough about President Reagan and his efforts to end the Cold War during the 1980s. Some responses made simple descriptions about his meetings with the Soviet leader Gorbachev but struggled to use this to explain his actions. Many responses could offer little more than general comment when attempting this question.
- (c) There were many good attempts at answering this question and the best responses gave a balanced account of both the successes and failures of Containment to reach a judgement regarding the question. Several candidates wrote a lot of accurate description without linking it to the question or using it to form an explanation, therefore limiting the credit they could gain. Candidates should remember that part (c) questions are focused on building an explanation and an argument.

Question 12

- (a) This question was not very popular but the candidates who chose to answer it had a sound knowledge of the oil crisis which allowed them to describe the impact in the United States and some of the causes.
- (b) Some candidates were able to use their knowledge of post-war America to describe life in the suburbs and the changing face of America. Many candidates found it difficult to give specific knowledge about the changing economy. Candidates should be encouraged to study specific ideas when looking at this section of the syllabus.

- (c) Candidates often struggled to show the required knowledge to answer this question. The best responses understood that the question referred to, among other programmes, Johnson's Great Society and described some features of this, sometimes making tentative explanations about its success. Several responses lacked the relevant knowledge required.



AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

Paper 0409/02
Depth Study

Key messages

- 1 In previous years, it has been stressed that the basis of each answer should be the content of the source(s). This remains the case. A higher proportion of candidates attempted to do this than has been so in previous years. This is imperative if candidates are to access the higher marks. Further, candidates should be encouraged to make explicit use of the content by referring to the specific details in the source, preferably by direct quotation of it. Many candidates are inclined to reference merely the source and loosely allude to the content.
- 2 The final question of the five questions set on each topic is important. It carries one third of the total marks available. Candidates should be made aware of the need to construct an argument for and against the statement posed in the question. However, many answers were one-sided. Before starting their response, it would be sensible for candidates to group the sources into those that support the interpretation and those that provide a counterargument. (Some sources may be ambivalent and can be used either way.) Candidates should then present the case for the view, followed by their counterargument, providing evaluation and knowledge as they deal with the content of specific sources.
- 3 Similarly, when applying knowledge to their answer, it is preferable that candidates provide specific facts and details about the matter in hand rather than make general comments about the context. Knowledge should also be seen as a key way to evaluate a source.
- 4 Evaluation is necessary to access the highest levels on the mark scheme, except when answering the first question of those set on each topic. To do so, candidates should be encouraged to comment on the provenance (a word used repeatedly in the mark schemes). In other words, candidates should consider the authorship, the date of the source, the quality of the language, the audience and so on. Alternatively, candidates can evaluate the source by confirming its accuracy or otherwise by the application of knowledge. Some candidates regarded the question as a prompt to express a personal opinion about the issue in question. For example, **Question 5**, which focused on law and order, was taken by some candidates as an opportunity to express their views on the current debate about the right to hold arms. Answers need to be based on the evidence presented in the sources and relevant supporting knowledge, not opinion.
- 5 Judgements about the utility, reliability and relevance of the evidence should be provided by candidates. Interim judgements are welcome but a conclusion at the end of an answer is desirable. No set answer is expected (the examples offered in the mark scheme are suggestions about how a question might be interpreted).

Comments on specific questions

Depth Study A: Manifest Destiny and Early Expansion 1830-1880

Question 1

Although many problems were illustrated in Source A, candidates did not have to identify all of them to access top level marks. To do so, candidates needed to show genuine understanding of the problems faced by farmers in the West by linking details from the source directly to good supporting knowledge. In many cases, knowledge was too general. For example, Native Americans were unhappy but an explanation of the reason for this, such as the loss of traditional hunting grounds, provided a more developed answer.

Question 2

The utility of Source B lay in the details it provided about the living conditions of homesteaders. Answers that were confined to the content could have gained as many as four marks. Similarly, an answer that considered the provenance, to some degree, might also have gained reasonable marks. However, to access the higher marks, some recognition of the limitations of the source was required. For example, the source did not provide any information about the particular diseases that homesteaders were exposed to or the fact that medical assistance was largely inaccessible and rudimentary at best.

Question 3

Some comment about the provenance and/or knowledge was needed to achieve any sense of the reliability of this source. If candidates based their answer on the internal content of the source alone with implicit understanding of its reliability then three marks were possible. In assessing the content, many answers emphasised the possible exaggeration of the account, evident in the colourful language. However, it could equally be claimed that the description was realistic given the nature of swarms of grasshoppers. Indeed, better answers showed awareness of how the source could be considered reliable in some respects but unreliable in others.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to highlight the differences between the two sources by arguing that Source D gave a positive picture of the ways law and order was enforced in the courts, and Source E gave a negative impression of law enforcement to the extent that individuals felt compelled to take the initiative. Many answers were limited to the content of the sources which restricted the credit which could be gained. For reasonable marks, candidates at least needed to consider the provenance, and the perspective of the authors was helpful in this regard. Contextual knowledge about the situation in Montana (the mid-West) at this time was required for the highest marks.

Question 5

Better answers made it clear in their introduction how the sources might be grouped. Having done so, they then considered both sides of the argument in turn. Most candidates interpreted Sources A and G as evidence for both sides of the argument. However, candidates had different views about Native Americans. While most saw them as part of the concern about law and order, a considerable number viewed them as a separate concern. Those who took this position saw both Sources A and F as evidence for the counter-argument. As stated in the last of the key messages above, no set answer to the view in the question was expected, so all answers were assessed on the quality of the treatment of the content, the evaluation of the provenance and the knowledge added.

Depth Study B: The Women's Suffrage Movement 1866-1920

Question 6

Most candidates understood the message but not all stated it clearly. Candidates should be encouraged to present the message unambiguously at the start of their answer and then explain how the content of the source makes the message. Some answers identified a sub-message (for example, women's responsibilities were in the home), but the main message was that women should not vote. Some candidates misunderstood the circular picture to the right as representing women as prostitutes when the poster within the circle made it clear that the woman was campaigning.

Question 7

As with **Question 2**, to access higher marks, some recognition of the limitations of the source was required. Although Source B was useful in expressing one reason for opposition to women suffrage, it was narrow in its focus and ignored the many other reasons for opposition to votes for women. The author may have represented the views of many men, perhaps the majority, but many men supported female suffrage and many actively worked for it as cross-reference to Source E testified.

Question 8

Most candidates acknowledged that the accuracy of Source C lay in the fact that the arguments presented were typical of many women who opposed the vote for women. Better answers set the poster in the context of the war to explain the reference to men making 'The World Safe for Democracy' and that the US Army in 1917 was comprised of men only. However, in some respects Source C was inaccurate as many women did want the vote and, indeed, in some states already had it. In evaluating the provenance, many candidates recognised the propaganda nature of the poster.

Question 9

Candidates found Source D easier to understand, partly, perhaps, because the points made were mainstream and well-rehearsed. By contrast, some struggled to appreciate the position adopted by Source E as the two numbered statements appeared to suggest opposition to women suffrage. The majority of those who appreciated that Source E supported votes for women merely summarised the content of each source in turn. This was unsurprising given the different dimensions of the sources. In evaluating the provenance, very few made the point that southern Democrats largely opposed women suffrage, though Massachusetts was more liberal.

Question 10

Better answers grouped the sources at the start. Some candidates complicated matters by stressing the male authorship of Sources B, D and E and arguing, as a result, that they did not reflect the views of women so much as men. This was unfortunate given that Source B and E were attributed to men who supported women's organisations. The views expressed by the author of Source D mirrored those outlined in Source C (produced by a women's organisation) and so could be argued to represent not just the views of men, but also women opposed to female suffrage. This is an example of how cross-referencing can be helpful in assessing a source. Indeed, in doing so, the corroboration of sources might make it possible to confirm the utility or reliability of a source. There was a mix of answers, some simply presenting a one-sided response.

Depth Study C: The United States and the World 1880-1917

Question 11

In describing the reaction in the US to the sinking of the Lusitania, words such as 'anger', 'fear' and 'revenge' were used. Better answers used the content of the source to explain the choice of such language, though some did not develop such comments in this way. Again, as a source-based question, it is important for candidates to show how their remarks are based on the content. Many made the error of reading the reference to '400 Americans' as the death toll of US citizens when, in fact, only 128 of the 400 died. The best way of adding supporting knowledge to this answer was to expand on the mention of the sinking of the Maine. Those that did, knew when and where this happened, but only a minority were able to make the analogy with the Lusitania and explain that the former led to war with Spain, and that the latter might have the same outcome with regard to Germany.

Question 12

Two reasons for the entry of the US in the war were given in Source B: unrestricted submarine warfare and the scheme to agitate Mexico into an alliance with Germany. The points were linked, in that the latter was regarded as applicable only, it was implied, if the former aggravated the US into abandoning her neutrality. The final sentence in Source B appeared detached, but better answers argued that the Germans recognised that the threat to England from unrestricted submarine warfare was such that the US might be inclined to intervene to prevent England from making peace. Many candidates struggled to unpick the content coherently. Although the source was useful in explaining German strategy, better answers made it clear that there were other reasons for the US entry into the war. Candidates who evaluated the provenance made much of the seniority of the author and the timing of the telegram.

Question 13

Many answers recognised the ways that Source C could be considered reliable but also unreliable. Answers to questions on the reliability of a source should aim to do this. Its reliability lay in the fact that war would, inevitably, lead to deaths and more widespread suffering and expense, both human and financial. Some answers argued it was reliable, too, in anticipating that some people (stock gamblers) would prosper. However, most answers argued that the comment, 'the great mass' would not benefit from war was too extreme given the economic gains already made from supplying the Allies. Further, in evaluating the provenance, most candidates accepted that the views expressed might be sincerely held (and reliable), but the context of a debate in Congress and the language used rendered the source less reliable, as it was a device to persuade others to the author's point of view.

Question 14

Most answers identified the difference between the sources: in Source D, Wilson presented the case for neutrality and, in Source E, he explained why the US had to intervene. The rationale behind both positions was understood by most candidates, though some answers lacked sufficient attention to the detail in the content. In evaluating the contrast, most answers highlighted the difference in the dates of the sources and some attempt was made to provide knowledge about the state of the war in 1914 with that of 1916. Comment about the changed political position of Wilson in 1916 compared with 1914 would also have been helpful, but very few answers explored this angle.

Question 15

Strictly speaking Sources A, B, D and E might have been considered as evidence for a counterargument, in that they are dated before 1 February 1917 when unrestricted submarine warfare started. However, the majority of candidates, understandably, interpreted the question as one about submarine warfare in the broadest sense. In judging whether unrestricted submarine warfare was the main reason for the US entering the war, most candidates argued it was and, in fact, the weight of the evidence pointed that way. Better responses realised the potential of Source F. Not only did it contain the point that 'wars rarely have a single cause', it also provided a reason very different from those contained elsewhere, though a link with Source C might have been made with the reference to speculators gaining from war. In the use of Source C, some candidates lost sight of the question and explained how it presented a case against war when the question was looking for reasons for war. As such, the point in Source C, made above, about 'stock gamblers' might have been emphasised.

Depth Study D: American Society and Popular Culture c1920-1970

Question 16

The message of Source A is that religion was the foundation stone on which all else depended. The cartoon stated clearly that the constitution, home, church, school and liberty (in the form of the Statue of Liberty) were supported by 'The Word of God'. Reference to the threats posed by air and sea (emphasised by the storm clouds in the background) highlighted the dangers faced, but that was not the message. Rather, the threats served to underline the point that religion was the foundation stone which needed to be upheld, otherwise all else would collapse. Some answers provided knowledge about the revivalism of the period and some of the threats to help develop the response.

Question 17

The content of Source B allowed considerable scope for candidates to comment on the utility of the source. Further, many used the information in the attribution to develop their answer by assessing the fact that Graham's tour spanned the US and was over a four-month period. The limitations of the source were less well developed. The demagogic style of the speech offered opportunities to comment on its limitations. In addition, the source did not provide any information about the effects of such rallies beyond the enthusiasm of the moment and revealed nothing about the support for religion beyond the evangelical movement. When assessing the utility of a source, candidates should be encouraged to comment on the omissions of a source, as well as the nature of the content and the provenance.

Question 18

Better answers used knowledge to explain the reliability of Source C. Some candidates linked the source directly to McCarthyism, but even those whose knowledge of this was limited related the source to the general hostility to communism. In querying the reliability of the source, most candidates opted to evaluate the authorship questioning the subjective nature of the comments made by Miller about his friend. There was scope for candidates to weigh the quality of the evidence provided in the source and most concluded that, despite the one-sidedness of it, the content was consistent with the events and mood of the period.

Question 19

Most candidates discerned the clear difference. Whereas Source D targeted 'enemies within' (government), Source E regarded McCarthyism as the threat facing the US. Many candidates explained the difference: in that, not least, because in 1950 McCarthy was at the height of his influence and, anyway, was hardly likely to regard himself as a threat. Similarly, Truman was writing after he had stood down as President and had good reason to divert attention from himself, as he did little to criticise McCarthyism when he was in office. Indeed, some candidates remarked that the two sources were similar not just in motive but also in identifying the threat as internal, albeit with different targets.

Question 20

This question proved to be a challenge for some; in part, because the words 'conformity' and 'contentment' were not understood by all but, more, as there were two strands to the question. Some candidates found it difficult to structure an answer. One approach candidates adopted was to consider each strand in turn, looking at the case for and against on each. Less sophisticated answers were inclined to regard the two terms as synonymous and those who did attempted to provide an argument in two parts: for and against. Whatever the approach, candidates had some difficulty in applying the sources to the question and some, like Source F, were under-used.

AMERICAN HISTORY (US)

Paper 0409/03
Personal Study

Key messages

The key to providing candidates with the opportunity for success lies in the task that is set and the materials provided for candidates.

Topics work best where there are a number of lines of enquiry available with appropriate source material. For example, the subject might have affected different aspects of local life – social, economic, or it might have affected different groups of people at the time such as locals and those who came as a result.

The source material provided must have historical sources at its core. Historians' works should be avoided, particularly where they focus on answering the question that the candidates have been given. The task set must be in the form of an enquiry question inviting candidates to assess the historical significance (not importance or impact) of an event, person, site or object that is local to the centre.

Centres new to the syllabus and those changing their coursework question are advised to use the Cambridge International advisory service to ensure that the task set meets the requirements of the syllabus.

General comments

The best responses were characterised by a good understanding of the how to judge the historical significance of a local event, site, person or object and by the ability to use historical sources critically. The former involves starting with the subject of the enquiry and working outwards from it to judge how it changed lives and historical trends. The latter involves going beyond utilising sources to find information, recognising that historical sources need to be interrogated and that the evidence they contain needs to be 'weighed' to establish what can be learned from it about the issue. These responses were also well-organised and showed that candidates had been allowed the freedom to devise their own structure for the paper.

Weaker responses tend to demonstrate a number of flaws in their approach and understanding. In AO2 (testing understanding of historical significance), weaker candidates confuse impact or consequence with significance. By looking only at results they fail to recognise that they should be assessing the extent to which the subject of the enquiry made a difference to what was happening.

In AO4, weaker responses used sources to find information. They accepted what they read or saw unquestioningly and in assessing the value of the sources referred to information they had been unable to locate. They were confusing the utility of the source with its reliability.

Weaker answers are also characterised by poor organisation of material. Even where candidates are provided with a scaffold, they show that they are carrying out a sequence of tasks with no clear grasp of how this provides a structure to their work.

It was encouraging to see that many candidates had enjoyed discovering that the place where they lived had a claim to fame. Tourism can make an important contribution to an area's economy and what seems ordinary to people who live there can be of interest to visitors. Many of the candidates had discovered why tourists came to their town and why a site was of interest.

Sources that worked best were those that did not directly answer the question set. These sources force candidates to interrogate them to identify useful evidence, to work out what they can infer and to consider how much weight to give the evidence in view of the intended audience, the purpose of the source and so on. A good strategy is to provide learners with contradictory sources since this forces them to consider the relative value of each source if they are to use them effectively.

It is very important to carefully follow the rules of administration. It saves time later in the process if the regulations are followed precisely with regard to the scripts included in the sample, forms attached to individual scripts with the final marks explained, and the accurate transfer of marks from the scripts to other forms.

