



A-level HISTORY 7042/2Q

Component 2Q The American Dream: reality and illusion, 1945–1980

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)

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Supporting Marking Guidance

A separate Supporting Marking Guidance document has been created for use in this series and any future series.

It has been written by the senior examining team. It applies to all A-level History options. The purpose of the guidance is to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across all options. The guidance does not reflect a change in the standard applied, but clarification and amplification of the standard. We hope that the guidance document will aid you in your understanding of how the standard should be applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work. The Supporting Marking Guidance should always be used in conjunction with the mark scheme, and any relevant examiner standardising and teacher training material.

Examiners can find the Supporting Marking Guidance on the associate extranet.

Teachers can find the Supporting Marking Guidance alongside the current mark scheme on Centre Services on results day. It will also be published with any future assessment materials on the public website.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying responses to the campaign for African-American Civil Rights in the years 1945 to 1950.

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- Source A is valuable because Truman was the first President to address the NAACP, marking a clear change in federal engagement with civil rights
- the context of the speech is valuable because it falls in the period where the President's Committee on Civil Rights was gathering information; the Committee itself shows value as it had been created by Truman in December 1946 and published its report in December 1947
- the emphasis is valuable as it highlights the American promise of equality of opportunity, and Truman's interpretation of this as including education and equality before the law, areas where there were clear problems for African-Americans
- the tone is upbeat and invokes the American Dream. However, this tone does not fully extend to Truman's party, which was split on the issue of civil rights.

Content and argument

- the primary value of the source is that it demonstrates that Truman is making it clear that he will use his Presidency to support the NAACP's aims
- he argues that all Americans have the right to pursue opportunities and be rewarded on the grounds of their ability, industry and character, implying that race should play no role in inhibiting opportunity
- the experience of African-American soldiers in the Second World War had been an enlightening one, many were from the South and were treated far better in Britain and France than they were treated at home and they were conscious that they were fighting to defeat an enemy whose ideology was rooted in racial superiority
- Truman had been perturbed by incidents such as the 1946 attack on the demobilised African-American soldier, Isaac Woodard, who was pulled off a bus in South Carolina and beaten so badly that he lost the use of his eyes.

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the author is valuable as General Eisenhower was a Five Star General, the highest rank in the US army, and so would have the 'ear' of the military and represent their attitudes towards civil rights
- Eisenhower was testifying before a Senate Committee, which shows value, as they were considering the prospect of desegregating the military. Eisenhower's tone is patrician and cautionary; it is couched in considerate language but is plainly against desegregation which valuably highlights more negative responses to civil rights
- the date is marginally before the 26 July 1948 decision by Truman to desegregate the army which he enforced through Executive Order 9981. This is valuable as it shows some degree of urgency on the part of Eisenhower
- a limitation may be that, as a Texan who was known to use racist language, he is speaking from a more personal stance and working to undermine Truman.

Content and argument

- Eisenhower is making the argument that African-Americans were inferior to white soldiers in education terms and that they would struggle to compete on a level playing field for promotion. It is feasible that this argument in a public hearing was used to mask prejudice on Eisenhower's part
- Truman's use of an Executive Order, rather than passing legislation to desegregate the army, shows that he was aware of this type of attitude that was not just the preserve of Southern Democratic politicians. Truman was also aware that the Dixiecrats would attempt to block or filibuster any legislation viewed at changing the status quo of segregation
- although Eisenhower's argument about educational ability is clearly flawed, students might observe that his argument that 'if we attempt merely by passing a lot of laws to force someone to like someone else, we are just going to get into trouble' has some validity that was borne out by later events
- Eisenhower's argument about the abilities of African-American soldiers is undermined by the strenuous efforts of many of the 125 000 African-Americans who served overseas, including the Tuskegee Airmen and 761st Tank Battalion. It is highly likely that Eisenhower would have known of their achievements and others like them given his rank and level of involvement
- the source highlights the difficulties facing the campaign for African-American Civil Rights in the period from 1945 to 1950 which faced institutional opposition at the highest level in many areas, including the armed forces where African-American soldiers had served with distinction during the Second World War.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the source is valuable as it is taken from the final decision handed down by the Supreme Court in the case of *McLaurin v Oklahoma State Regents*, a key case in ending the 'Separate but Equal' doctrine established by *Plessy v Ferguson* in 1896
- the tone is authoritative and legalistic and the language is formal. This is valuable as it is telling Southern states in particular that they cannot defy Federal law
- the emphasis of the ruling is that the state of Oklahoma, and by extension no other state, cannot enforce segregation of individuals from a group even if others in the group want to be separate. However, a limitation here is that this ruling was only centred on education – Southern states still enacted segregation in other areas of society.
- the ruling is valuable because it came on the same day as two other significant decisions for civil rights campaigners, *Sweatt v Painter* and *Henderson v US*, which shows a federal commitment to upholding the law. However, this was not always carried through by states.

Content and argument

- Vinson makes the Supreme Court's argument that there is a 'Constitutional difference' between 'restrictions imposed by the state which prohibit the intellectual mixing of students, and the refusal of individuals to mix'. This echoes Eisenhower's idea in Source B about forcing 'someone to like someone else' but argues that that 'We think this is irrelevant'
- this stance which is echoed in all three decisions made on this day suggests that the campaign for African-American Civil Rights in the years 1945 to 1950 had the full support of the highest court in the land
- however, the fact that the Supreme Court was ruling on this case, suggests that the campaign for African-American Civil Rights in the years 1945 to 1950 still faced opposition in the lower courts
- the success of this case and the others that preceded it vindicated the NAACP's policy of taking cases to the Supreme Court to chip away at segregationist policies in areas such as education, the decision also demonstrated the skill of Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP team which led to increased membership of the NAACP.

Section B

0 2 How successful was Eisenhower's handling of the Cold War?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Eisenhower's handling of the Cold War was successful might include:

- Eisenhower achieved an armistice in the Korean War, successfully persuading the Chinese to withdraw and return to the status quo. This shows that Eisenhower was willing to be pragmatic rather than jingoistic in his handling of international incidents
- Eisenhower did not intervene in Hungary in 1956 despite the appeals of Nagy's government and the implications of the Truman Doctrine, suggesting that he was willing to tolerate the Soviet sphere of influence in return for stability in Europe
- Eisenhower sought to develop SEATO in SE Asia and CENTO in the Middle East as complements to NATO and devices to ensure that communist aggression was not worth the risk
- Eisenhower warned in his Farewell Address about the dangers of the Military-Industrial Complex suggesting that he favoured reducing conventional forces. He was more willing to use the CIA and economic support for non-aligned countries to avoid confrontation. These were successful in preventing left-wing governments in Iran, the Dominican Republic and elsewhere
- Eisenhower sought to build better relations with the USSR, despatching Nixon to visit Moscow and hosting Khrushchev in the US in 1959.

Arguments challenging the view that Eisenhower's handling of the Cold War was successful might include:

- Eisenhower's two terms saw a dramatic increase in the production of nuclear warheads, forcing the Soviet Union to respond and creating long-term tensions between the two sides
- Eisenhower increased Cold War tensions in 1960 after the U2 spy plane incident and his refusal to apologise to Khrushchev. This resulted in the cancellation of planned summit meetings.
- Eisenhower's two terms saw the Soviets strengthen their position in Eastern Europe, the loss of influence in Cuba after Castro's 1959 revolution and the growing influence of China in SE Asia
- Eisenhower issued the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 which explicitly confronted the growing influence of 'international communism' in the Middle East, turning the area into a geopolitical theatre and raising the stakes established in the Truman Doctrine with considerably more bellicose rhetoric
- Eisenhower consistently provoked China over the issue of Taiwan, increasing the US naval presence in 1954, despatching fighter jets, visiting the island in 1960 and supporting the Taiwanese claim to the islands which were within 10km of the Chinese mainland.

Students may conclude that Eisenhower successfully handled the Cold War, by resisting the temptation to deploy troops on a large scale. Although this tactic wasn't always successful, as with his plans over Cuba and in Suez, it did prevent all-out conflict. However, students may argue that his use of spy-planes, such as U2, escalated tension and therefore he was not successful.

0 3 'Nixon's victory in the 1968 Presidential election was a result of divisions within the Democratic Party.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

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- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Nixon's victory in the 1968 Presidential election was a result of divisions within the Democratic Party might include:

- the chaos of the 1968 Democratic Party's National Convention, where student protesters were attacked by police with dogs and tear-gas, shocked ordinary Americans and made the Democrats seem unelectable
- the choice of Johnson's Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, as the Democratic Party candidate was a mistake given that Humphrey was tainted by association with Johnson and the failing Vietnam War effort
- George Wallace's independent campaign took over 9 million votes and five states that would traditionally have gone to the Democrats. Humphrey was only 0.7% behind Nixon's numbers in the popular vote so the presence of Wallace cost the Democrats the White House
- the assassination of Robert Kennedy in early June removed the Democrat most likely to be able to defeat Nixon
- Walter Cronkite's broadcast from Vietnam in February 1968, which concluded that the US could no longer win the war, fatally undermined the tactics of Johnson and, by association, the Democrats making it likely that, while the war continued, no Democrat could win.

Arguments challenging the view that Nixon's victory in the 1968 Presidential election was a result of divisions within the Democratic Party might include:

- Nixon ran a 'law and order' campaign which appealed to many rural and suburban voters horrified by the violent riots of 1968
- there was a widespread backlash against the war on poverty. In polls in 1961, 59% said the government should make sure everyone had a job and adequate income, by 1969, this was down to 31%. A White House study found that three quarters of white Bostonians thought most welfare cases were fraudulent
- Nixon's promise to end the draft was cleverly calculated to undermine the anti-Vietnam war protests. Nixon believed that once the possibility of students being called up to fight was over, their protests would become less vociferous
- Nixon's 'Southern Strategy' sought to appeal to white Southern state conservatives who were opposed to Democrat support for the civil rights movement
- Nixon calculated that the progressive agenda of the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies had alienated a large group of voters, later referred to as the 'silent majority' who had more traditional conservative values and felt threatened by a pro-active Supreme Court.

Students might conclude that Johnson's domestic policies did cause divisions within the Democrat Party and also within the 'silent majority', who turned their vote over to Nixon. Students may also conclude that it was Nixon's skilful combination of a 'southern strategy' and exploitation of the mess in Vietnam, coupled with the Democrat vote being split by Wallace, that allowed Nixon to win.

0 4 'In the years 1974 to 1980 the USA was a united country.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

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Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that in the years 1974 to 1980 the USA was a united country might include:

- Reagan's victory in the 1980 presidential election was a landslide in the electoral college, suggesting that the US was politically united in supporting Reagan's manifesto
- the homogenisation was well underway, Americans watched the same TV shows and films nationwide as well as driving similar cars, eating at similar fast-food restaurants and shopping at similar stores in similar malls. Millions lived in similar sprawling suburbs on the Levittown model
- racial unity was getting closer, by 1980, over 50% of African-Americans had graduated from high school and 8% had graduated from college, more than double the numbers of 1960. In 1980 there were 18 African-American members of Congress compared to 1 in 1945
- the country was united in supporting a strong anti-communist foreign policy. One of the principal reasons behind Carter's defeat was a feeling that he had not been tough enough in his dealings with communist influence overseas.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1974 to 1980 the USA was a united country might include:

- second-wave feminism had highlighted the prejudice against women in the land of the free but representation of women in Congress was below that of African-Americans and the ERA had not been passed. The growing alliance between the Republican Party and the religious right meant that women's rights were on the back burner in 1980
- the nation was geographically divided. By 1980, the population of the Sun Belt had exceeded that of the Rust Belt which had lost industrial production to cheaper overseas factories and had little population growth through immigration
- by 1980, immigration to the USA from Latin American and Asian countries had more than doubled since 1960, much of this immigration was to Southern states further exacerbating the differences between North and South
- there was a growing difference between young, college educated liberals and the Nixonian 'Silent Majority' who supported Reagan in huge numbers. Student Members of the SDS and Civil Rights Movement were moving into politics, while intellectuals like Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky were speaking out about US foreign policy and the treatment of minority groups.

Students might conclude there were significant signs of unity within America during this period, for example over foreign policy, along with increasing cultural and economic homogeneity. However, students may also argue that there were considerable divisions across the country in terms of education, politics, and continued discrimination against Native Americans, Latin Americans and, despite improvements, African-Americans.