



AS HISTORY 7041/1K

The making of a Superpower: USA, 1865–1975

Component 1K From Civil War to World War, 1865–1920

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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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 extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of US isolationism by 1920?

[25 marks]*Target: AO3*

Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a good understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. They will evaluate the extracts thoroughly in order to provide a well-substantiated judgement on which offers the more convincing interpretation. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be sufficient comment to provide a supported conclusion as to which offers the more convincing interpretation. However, not all comments will be well-substantiated, and judgements may be limited. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show a reasonable understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. Comments as to which offers the more convincing interpretation will be partial and/or thinly supported. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will show some partial understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be some undeveloped comment in relation to the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **6–10**
- L1:** The answer will show a little understanding of the interpretations given in the extracts. There will be only unsupported, vague or generalist comment in relation to the question. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **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.

Students must assess the extent to which the interpretations are convincing by drawing on contextual knowledge to corroborate and challenge the interpretations/arguments/views.

In their identification of the argument in Extract A, students may refer to the following:

- the end of expansion across continental America led the United States to expand west across the Pacific
- as the US expanded beyond its geographical borders it shook off the isolationist instinct and began to take on the role of defending the western hemisphere. The developments were stronger than any isolationist instinct
- the entry into the First World War quickened the transformation of the USA into a world power, ending isolationism.

In their assessment of the extent to which the arguments are convincing, students may refer to the following:

- the US had become more involved in foreign affairs beyond its borders with the Spanish-American War involving large gains in territory and interventions in the Boxer Rebellion and peace-making between Russia and Japan all taking place in this era
- US involvement in the First World War might be seen as consolidating the movement from isolationism. Wilson played a leading role in the Paris Peace Conference with his 14 Points
- however, most Americans were opposed to US intervention in Europe's affairs, Washington's dictum about avoiding foreign entanglements and Wilson's 1916 election promise to keep the US out of the war both suggested Wilson had misjudged the extent of America's desire for isolation
- Wilson's engagement in the Paris Peace Conference was challenged in the USA and the Senate failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the USA did not join the League of Nations.

In their identification of the argument in Extract B, students may refer to the following:

- the Great War had transformed US foreign policy and the US was now a major player in world politics, moving it away from the isolationist attitudes that had prevailed since 1890
- Americans began to recognise their new international role but were unwilling to take on the sort of commitments Wilson asked of them because they didn't feel threatened by events in Europe
- however, despite their reluctance, Americans had become much more aware of foreign affairs during the previous eight years than they had been in most of the previous century.

In their assessment of the extent to which the arguments are convincing, students may refer to the following:

- the extent to which isolationist attitudes had prevailed since 1890 could be challenged by the interventions of previous presidents, such as Roosevelt
- the huge US commitment of troops in the First World War, nearly one in a hundred Americans participated, had certainly increased awareness of foreign affairs but this didn't equate to an enthusiasm for greater participation
- the results of the 1920 presidential election confirmed the fact that most Americans were unwilling to take on the commitments Wilson asked of them, however, it is probably more realistic to say that they rejected these commitments outright

- the US, however, was certainly by 1920 a major force in world politics and economics. European powers owed vast sums to the US banks, businesses and government and no major power could afford to ignore the US when making foreign policy.

In arriving at a judgement as to which extract provides the more convincing interpretation, students might conclude that Extract A is convincing in demonstrating how the USA's engagement in international affairs clearly changed from 1890 and that isolationism was no longer so strong. Students may, however, argue that Extract B is the more convincing as the bulk of the American population rejected involvement in world affairs, as evidenced by the 1920 election, and were isolationist.

Section B

- 0 2** 'In the years 1865 to 1890, the development of the American economy was due to the rise of corporations.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with 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.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. They 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 leading to substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** 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. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will be 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 in the years 1865 to 1890, the development of the American economy was due to the rise of corporations might include:

- corporations and trusts enabled the rapid growth of industries and consolidation that created economies of scale in the railroads and oil
- corporations lobbied government for low corporate taxes, high tariffs and minimal labour regulations enabling them to maximise profits
- corporations invested in new technologies and business practices, enabling them to keep prices low and export successfully
- banking organisations, such as JP Morgan, provided a supply of capital for investment and expansion.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1865 to 1890, the development of the American economy was due to the rise of corporations might include:

- westward expansion stimulated the economy creating a market for manufactured goods through the expansion of farming and growth of the railways
- massive immigration followed the end of the Civil War bringing in new consumers and producers, the population rose from 30 million in 1865 to 62 million by 1890
- government action also helped create a climate conducive to economic growth, high tariffs prevented foreign competition and a laissez-faire approach to business prevailed
- the regular discovery and exploitation of valuable raw materials such as oil, coal and gold all contributed to economic growth.

Students are likely to conclude that corporations were vital to the growth of the US economy in the period but they succeeded in part because of the advantages brought by other factors, such as westward expansion and the growth in immigration.

0 3 'American society was transformed in the years 1890 to 1914.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with 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.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. They 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 leading to substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** 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. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer will be 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 American society was transformed in the years 1890 to 1914 might include:

- immigration continued to alter the complexion of US cities and society, especially with the growth of the Irish population in Chicago, Chinese in San Francisco and Italians in New York. Cities grew dramatically as a result and more Americans lived in cities
- many of the new immigrants did not share the religious and cultural background of those from earlier generations
- urbanisation led to new working-class movements such as socialism, Trade Unionism and Anarchism
- the rise of big business accelerated social change creating wider divisions in society.

Arguments challenging the view that American society was transformed in the years 1890 to 1914 might include:

- prejudice against African-Americans continued and was entrenched by the Plessy v Ferguson decision in 1896 and Native Americans, immigrants, Catholics and Jews all still faced considerable prejudice as before
- the poor remained poor and were largely ignored, no welfare system was established. Muckraking journalists brought more awareness but little change occurred
- women's rights groups were established but their campaigns for suffrage and prohibition didn't make headway before the First World War broke out
- the declaration of the end of the Frontier in 1890 led to the emergence of a distinct mid-western sensibility which was conservative and religious and developed its own political party in the Populists, seeking to maintain past traditions.

Students may conclude that there was some significant change which could be argued to be transformative and was caused by increases in immigration, wealth and the expansion of the cities. However, an argument could be sustained that nothing that could be deemed to be a transformation occurred; so many of the long-established social issues that had emerged after the Civil War remained unchanged by 1914.