



A-level HISTORY 7042/1K

Component 1K The making of a Superpower: USA, 1865–1975

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** Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to American society in the years 1953 to 1975.

[30 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:** Shows a very good understanding of the interpretations put forward in all three extracts and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. Evaluation of the arguments will be well-supported and convincing. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of the interpretations given in all three extracts and combines this with knowledge of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. The evaluation of the arguments will be mostly well-supported, and convincing, but may have minor limitations of depth and breadth. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Provides some supported comment on the interpretations given in all three extracts and comments on the strength of these arguments in relation to their historical context. There is some analysis and evaluation but there may be an imbalance in the degree and depth of comments offered on the strength of the arguments. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** Provides some accurate comment on the interpretations given in at least two of the extracts, with reference to the historical context. The answer may contain some analysis, but there is little, if any, evaluation. Some of the comments on the strength of the arguments may contain some generalisation, inaccuracy or irrelevance. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** **Either** shows an accurate understanding of the interpretation given in one extract only **or** addresses two/three extracts, but in a generalist way, showing limited accurate understanding of the arguments they contain, although there may be some general awareness of the historical context. Any comments on the strength of the arguments are likely to be generalist and contain some inaccuracy and/or irrelevance. 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 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:

- in the early 1970s, America was hit by shock, disillusionment and a pessimistic mood, caused by the Watergate Affair of 1973–1974, ‘issues of race and gender and economic distress’
- the extract assesses many people’s fears for the future of the American Dream even though the US remained both powerful and affluent
- the core argument concerns how Americans ‘chose to forget’ the blights of the 1950s – racial segregation, the Red Scare (McCarthyism), religious intolerance and discrimination against women.

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

- in evaluating the impact of issues of race and gender, answers may refer to the murderous violence of white supremacists in the South in the 1950s and/or the passionate, periodically violent events from 1968 that caused street battles between students and police, and led to later outbreaks of Black radicalism
- in explaining the impact of ‘economic distress’, answers may provide specific examples of economic crisis, particularly the OPEC oil-price shock of 1973, and how it was a sudden, painful ending to the long post-war economic boom; or they may argue it was a short-lived, temporary interruption to a long success story
- in assessing the loss of the ‘cherished American Dream’ answers may either argue that the dream had a strong grip on most Americans from the 1950s and through the 1960s; even after 1968 it was reflected in the ‘silent majority’ who resented rebellious youth and yearned for continuity
- alternatively, answers may base a sceptical assessment on such issues as the poisonous legacy of McCarthyism in the 1960s, violence and assassinations in the 1960s; or the national crises resulting from Vietnam and Watergate.

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

- the story of American society in the years 1953 to 1975 was one of prosperity and success; of achievements brought about by energy and idealism, mixing strength of purpose, courage and persistence
- this success was not easy or automatic. It was achieved in the face of ‘failures and tragedies’ by the sustained collective efforts of a ‘problem-solving people’ confident in their democratic skills and their values
- examples of success, optimism and great achievements throughout the period, included the strong belief in the ‘American Way of Life’ in the Eisenhower 1950s and the successes of Johnson’s Great Society.

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

- many answers will agree with the view of great achievements by a ‘problem-solving people’ who attacked the ills of their society with courage and persistence. Such positive assessments may refer to the strength of the traditional elements in society, widespread acceptance of the ‘American Way of Life’ or Johnson’s ‘war on poverty’
- positive evaluation of the extract may be reinforced by examples from own knowledge, such as the passing of key civil rights legislation in the 1960s, rising living standards, or the view that the Watergate Affair actually resulted in a strengthening of democracy
- other answers may regard the extract as having little value because of its overblown rhetoric, its lack of balance, and its under-estimation of the ‘disappointments, failures and tragedies’ and unsolved problems
- answers may support their negative or balanced assessments with examples from own knowledge, such as the divisiveness of McCarthyism, the disturbances of 1968 and the ‘youth revolution’, the continuing discrimination against women, or the polarisation of the nation that grew out of protests against the Vietnam War and Watergate.

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

- though making many judgements asserting a balanced view of America from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, the core argument is positive, especially about the US economy. The post-war boom ‘surpassed all expectations’
- there is particular emphasis on rising living standards and the sense of security and well-being fostered by consumerism and the affluent society. Although exceptions are noted, the ‘war on poverty’ is applauded, especially the federal interventions of Johnson’s Great Society
- there is emphasis on continuity, noting that from 1969 Nixon consolidated policies launched by Lyndon Johnson, especially in welfare and housing.

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

- answers may argue that the economy was indeed all-important for national well-being and that any broad overview of the US economy in these years would accept it was a time of economic growth and rising living standards
- it might be argued there were successes other than prosperity: that the damage of Watergate was temporary; that withdrawal from Vietnam opened the way for reconciliation, or that Gerald Ford quickly defused the impact of Nixon’s fall
- answers challenging the overall positive assessments may develop specific examples of deep problems beyond the economy. Arguing that issues such as ‘the Vietnam War, disillusionment and protest’ are skipped over in favour of a rosy view of the economy and the war on poverty
- answers may also point out that, after 1970, the US economy encountered a major downturn that was to last through most of the 1970s.

Section B

- 0 2** To what extent was the failure to establish full civil rights for African-Americans in the years 1865 to 1890 due to the weaknesses of the Federal Government?

[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 the failure to establish full civil rights for African-Americans in the years 1865 to 1890 was due to the weaknesses of the Federal Government might include:

- there was no presidential leadership. Lincoln was removed by assassination. Andrew Johnson was a weak president, mired in controversy and ambivalent about equality for African-Americans. Grant was undermined by scandals
- the US presidency had very limited powers in the years 1865 to 1877. States' rights were strong. Communication with the regions was slow and ineffective
- Congress was divided and difficult to handle, as was shown by the struggle to pass the 14th Amendment. Not only hostile Democrats but also anxious moderate Republicans blocked any hopes of radical progress on civil rights
- the electoral deadlock of 1876 caused almost total paralysis of presidential authority. Reconstruction moved from difficult to impossible.

Arguments challenging the view that the failure to establish full civil rights for African-Americans in the years 1865 to 1890 was due to the weaknesses of the Federal Government might include:

- the Federal Government did act strongly to advance civil rights, as in the battles to pass the 13th & 14th Amendments; and the work of the Freedmen's Bureau
- enforcing full civil rights would have required long-term military occupation of the South by Northern armies. This was neither politically nor practically possible
- a huge barrier preventing racial equality was uncontrollable Southern violence and powerful emotional attachment to the old South: the KKK, lynch mobs, organised mass rioting such as New Orleans in 1871. The Federal Government was powerless to prevent this violence
- another barrier was economic. Abolishing slavery was clear-cut but finding a new economic future for African-Americans was not. Sharecropping was the only way forward for most African-Americans, making it easy for Southern state governments dominated by segregationist Democrats to hold sway.

Many answers will argue Federal Government was weak, especially without Lincoln. Opposing views may set out the powerful emotional and political forces behind Southern obstructionism. The Southern States had all the tools they needed (including violence) to dominate local situations and defy Washington.

0 3 'In the years 1890 to 1917, the United States turned away from isolationism.'

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.

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 in the years 1890 to 1917, the United States turned away from isolationism might include:

- US policy in the 1890s was led by the ideas of Alfred Thayer Mahan. US expansionism in the Pacific in the Spanish-American War was shaped by Mahan's ideas on sea power; later US actions over Panama and the Canal showed burgeoning US aims to be a 'two-ocean' power
- Theodore Roosevelt's role in mediating the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth showed US desire to be seen as a serious player in world affairs, especially in Asia
- US participation in the international force protecting Western interests in China during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion and the Pacific tour of the Great White Fleet in 1909 both showed American desire for prestige and recognition as a world power
- Woodrow Wilson's stance on US neutrality in the First World War was that of a world statesman. Wilson aimed to dominate the peace process to end the war, making Wilsonian Idealism the template for a new world order.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1890 to 1917, the United States turned away from isolationism might include:

- the Monroe Doctrine still dominated US policy. US actions toward Cuba and Spain were based on traditional concerns over foreign influence in Latin America
- the grip of isolationism on US foreign policy was spelled out in the 1904 Roosevelt Corollary
- US neutrality in the First World War was based on a national consensus. For harmony among its diverse citizens, the US had to stay out of an 'alien' European conflict
- throughout the war, isolationist feeling remained powerful in Congress. Senators like Henry Cabot Lodge and William Borah wielded huge influence. Even after US entry into the war there was a backlash against the dangers of 'Wilsonism'.

Many answers will argue that US isolationism (and the mystique of the Monroe Doctrine) kept dominating foreign policy right up to American entry into the war in 1917. Answers supporting the view that the US turned away from isolationism much earlier may focus on the expansionist aims of Theodore Roosevelt. More nuanced answers may see only a gradual and partial retreat from isolationism, with the outbreak of the First World War as a turning point.

- 0 4** 'The Democrats' dominance of the US presidency, in the years 1932 to 1952, was due to Franklin Roosevelt and his legacy.'

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.

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 the Democrats' dominance of the US presidency, in the years 1932 to 1952, was due to Franklin Roosevelt and his legacy might include:

- Roosevelt's campaigning skills and ability to generate feelings of optimism were key to the election victory of 1932 and the subsequent mood of expectancy and excitement aroused by the Hundred Days following Roosevelt's inauguration
- Roosevelt's New Deals were transformative, changing the national narrative and strengthening the Democrats' grip on the (much-expanded) Federal Government and also boosting Democrat politicians at state and local level
- FDR was a great war leader who used the powers of the Federal Government to achieve a 'double miracle': total military victory combined with full employment and a domestic consumer boom
- Roosevelt's legacy persisted after his death. Truman continued his policies at home and rode FDR's legacy to victory in the 1948 election.

Arguments challenging the view that the Democrats' dominance of the US presidency, in the years 1932 to 1952, was due to Franklin Roosevelt and his legacy might include:

- the extreme unpopularity of Hoover was the main reason for Republican defeat in 1932; far more than support for FDR.
- FDR's re-elections in 1936 and 1940 were mostly due to the weakness of his Republican opponents, Landon and Willkie
- the strength of the Democrats from 1941 was not due to FDR or his New Deals; it was based on full employment and consumer affluence due to the war economy. Re-election in 1944 was a formality because of the state of the war
- continuing Democrat dominance after 1945 owed much to Harry Truman. An active Vice President and skilled political operator, Truman was key to effective government and party unity during and after the war. Truman's against-the-odds 1948 re-election was a personal triumph that owed little or nothing to FDR's legacy.

Many answers will argue that FDR and his New Deals utterly changed the economy and politics in the US, leading to a lasting consensus. Opposing arguments may refute the notion of personality politics, seeing the explanation in other factors relating to economic forces and Republican failings.