

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

History

Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1D: Britain, c1785–c1870: democracy,
protest and reform

Wednesday 17 May 2017 – Afternoon

Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference

8HI0/1D

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Extracts for use with Section C.

Extract 1: From Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, published 1944.

Tremendous industrial expansion in Britain was the force that the slave owners had to face. Caribbean planters and British industrialists had opposing economic interests. In the run-up to abolition in 1807 the arguments of industrialists became more powerful.

The attack on the West Indian system was more than an attack on slavery, it was an attack on an economic monopoly by supporters of the free market. The abolitionists were humanitarians but also industrial capitalists – businessmen. British industrialists thought that slavery was cruel, but also that it was an inefficient and increasingly unprofitable method of production. Free labour was more productive, they thought, than the labour of slaves. 5 10

These businessmen who had built their wealth on the backs of the slaves now turned and destroyed the slave trading system in the name of the free market. The abolitionists highlighted the cruelty of slavery and attacked it at its weakest and most indefensible spot, the cruelty of the slave trade. But it was the slave owners' vast economic power that they hated. 15

Extract 2: From Boyd Hilton, *Why Britain Outlawed Her Slave Trade*, published 2010.

The argument that slavery was incompatible with the free market is flawed. First, the British West Indies was far more valuable to Britain in the decade or so leading up to 1807 than at any time before. Second, the property value of the slave colonies had doubled since 1789. Third, Britain's share of this increasingly profitable slave trade peaked just before abolition, as did the share of Britain's money that went into the trade. Fourth, Britain's slave system had reached nowhere near its 'maximum economic potential'. Fifth, in the years leading up to abolition, Britain's trade with Europe had been very badly hit by the war with France. All this made the slave trade central to British commercial prosperity. Slavery was, according to the historian, Seymour Drescher, 'a dynamic system' that was 'aborted in its prime'. 20 25

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