

Edexcel – AS GCE Unit 1: Historical Themes in Breadth Option D	D7 Politics, Presidency and Society in the USA, 1968–2001	Essay Question
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Examiner's Specific Advice

Unit 1 essays require a series of skills. These include focusing on the specific requirements of the question, selecting appropriate and detailed historical knowledge, and analysis and evaluation.

It is important to understand what the question is asking. For example, does the question implicitly or explicitly refer to a specific time period? You should also consider the topic that the question is addressing and the 'key concept' raised by the question. The key concept could be causation, consequence, continuity, change or significance.

You will then need to make a series of points supported by detailed historical knowledge. It is important that this knowledge is relevant to the question.

In your essay, you must avoid telling the story of the events you are covering. A better approach is to break down, or analyse, the events. This could be done by arranging your information thematically rather than chronologically.

Finally, it is important to deal correctly with the 'key concept'. For example, in a question addressing causation, you must explain explicitly how the factors you have discussed caused the event in question; whereas in a question regarding significance, you must weigh the different factors and reach an overall judgement.

Exemplar Question

How far do you agree that sport improved opportunities for black Americans in the USA in the period 1968-2001?

(30 marks)

Planning Your Response

In this question, the topic is sport and race relations, and the 'key concept' is change, specifically improvement over time.

In order to evaluate the extent to which sport improved opportunities for black Americans, it is necessary to consider a range of factors. Some of these factors will clearly show that sport did help to improve opportunities. However, other factors will provide evidence that success in sport hampered progress towards equality. It is important that your essay addresses both sides of the argument. You should also have a clear conclusion in which you evaluate the extent to which sport really did lead to an improvement in opportunities for black Americans.

One possible way of structuring an answer to this question would be:

- Introduction: list the factors you are going to discuss and provide a brief answer to the question
- Black athletes as role models
- The influence of black athletes as champions of racial justice
- Success in sport reinforced popular stereotypes of black Americans
- Sport's influence on young black Americans led to some neglect of academic achievement
- Conclusion

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 1

In the 1950s and 1960s there was lots of discrimination in America. However, between 1968 and 2001 there have been lots of new opportunities for black Americans because of sport and sporting personalities such as O.J. Simpson and Maurice Greene (1).

O.J. Simpson was a football star who later became a TV presenter and a film star (2). In 1994 he was accused of murdering his ex-wife and her new boyfriend. The one-time footballer went on the run, an act that was televised and watched by 100 million TV viewers in the USA. At his trial, which lasted nine months, a jury of nine black people, two whites and one Hispanic American were told that O.J. was the victim of a racist justice system. O.J. was found not guilty. A poll showed that most black people thought that the one-time footballer was innocent, while most whites thought he was guilty.

Sport also helped to desegregate football and basketball teams in America's colleges and universities. The will to win forced some teams in the south to integrate to get the best players. But even so, white coaches would treat black players differently (3).

Some black sports stars didn't want to use their position to make political points. Michael Jordan didn't campaign on social issues. Tiger Woods did in one advertising campaign and then he stopped (4).

Muhammad Ali did use his celebrity status to fight for black rights. For example, in 1967 he refused to fight for America in the Vietnam War. He said that he had no reason to fight the Vietnamese because they had never called him 'a nigger'. He encouraged other black people to boycott the war and in so doing pointed out that black people should be fighting racism in America not communism in Asia.

(1) This introduction helps to show that the student has a general idea that opportunities did improve between 1950 and 2001. However, the introduction could be improved by presenting an answer which looks at both sides of the question.

(2) O.J. Simpson was a football player, but this paragraph has very little to do with sport and therefore doesn't really answer the question.

(3) This paragraph is much more focused on the question, but it is very vague. It could be improved with specific detail.

(4) This is true, but the essay does not discuss the significance, and therefore it is not clear how this point answers the question.

Tiger Woods and Maurice Greene both won large numbers of titles. Greene won three gold medals at the 1999 World Championships, and he won two Olympic gold medals between 1997 and 2001. He was also the 'fastest man on earth' as he ran the 100 metres in 9.79 seconds. Woods became the world's top golfer in 2001 when he won the 'Tiger Slam' which included the four most prestigious golf championships (5).

Overall, sport provided many opportunities for black Americans such as O.J. Simpson, Muhammad Ali, Tiger Woods and Maurice Greene (6).

Examiner's Assessment

This answer would achieve a low Level 3 mark. Although much of the information is relevant to the question, this relevance is not always made explicit. In addition, the answer is unbalanced, with very little consideration of ways in which sport hampered the progress towards equality. For this reason, the answer cannot achieve Level 4, which requires explicit focus on the question. The answer is placed low within Level 3 as the quality of the examples is weak.

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 2

Sport has certainly led to some improvements in the opportunities for black Americans. Indeed, black sports personalities have used their position to fight for racial justice, while others have become role models for black young people due to their success and wealth. Nonetheless, others argue that success in sport has reinforced traditional stereotypes and also drawn attention away from other possible career paths and in so doing has improved opportunities in some areas at the expense of others (7).

First, many black athletes were excellent role models for young black Americans, and in this sense sport did help to improve opportunities for black people. During the 1990s, Florence Griffith-Joyner, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods all reached the top of their professions and in so doing became multimillionaires. Jordan, for example, earned over \$21 million from advertising endorsements, personal appearances and royalties. Indeed, in just one year, \$130 million dollars' worth of Nike shoes were sold which were branded 'Air Jordan'. Tiger Woods has enjoyed similar success since his 2001 'Tiger Slam' in which he won all four of the top golf championships and became the most successful

(5) Again, these two paragraphs are generally relevant and contain some detail, but the impact this has on improved opportunities for black Americans is not made clear.

(6) This conclusion only addresses improvements and therefore does not consider the extent of the improvements. A better conclusion would focus on extent and in so doing would answer the question.

(7) This is a focused introduction which answers the question and sets out the four different themes it will go on to deal with. It also acknowledges that there are two sides to the debate.

(8) This paragraph directly answers the question and contains a great deal of relevant detail, such as the names of specific black American sports stars, how much money they made and who their sponsorship deals were with. The paragraph also

golfer of all time. Evidently, sports stars showed that it was possible to be black and extremely successful. Consequently, many young black people aspired to be like them (8).

Second, black athletes were influential as champions of racial justice. For example, Muhammad Ali was both heavyweight champion of the world (a title he won in 1964 and regained a decade later) and a prominent member of the Nation of Islam, a group that campaigned for black pride. His sporting success brought him national attention and he used the publicity he gained to fight for black people's welfare and to challenge the stereotype of blacks as low achievers. Tommie Smith and John Carlos, Gold and Bronze medallists in the 200 metres at the 1968 Olympics, are two other good examples. They gave the black power salute during the awarding ceremony to draw attention to the inferior position of black people in the USA. In this way, Ali, Smith and Carlos used their success in sport as a platform from which to argue and protest for greater opportunities for black Americans (9).

However, in some ways the success in sport reinforced existing stereotypes about black people and in this sense it did not improve opportunities except in a small area (10). By the mid-1980s black athletes dominated football and baseball. In 1986, for example, 63% of football players and 75% of basketball players were black. Nonetheless, some white sports commentators used this success to argue that black people were only good at physical activities and were inferior to whites in terms of their intellectual ability. This stereotype was reflected in the management of sport, for while the majority of athletes were black, black managers and coaches were extremely rare. Indeed, between 1957 and 1999 there were only nine black managers in Major League Baseball. These facts lead John Hoberman to argue that whites view black people as natural athletes. In this sense black success in sport also has a down side as it has limited black opportunities outside of sport by reinforcing the traditional view that black people are not intellectual (11).

Hoberman argues that black success in sport has had other negative consequences which have restricted opportunities for black Americans rather than improving them. He suggests that the focus on black sporting success has led many black young people to turn away from academic studies or other career options. Hoberman states that the media needs to give equal focus to 'black nerds' if there are to be improved opportunities for black Americans in all areas of

references 2001 and therefore deals with the final date in the essay.

(9) This paragraph too is focused and detailed. It deals with events in 1968, and therefore this essay addresses the period specified in the question.

(10) This paragraph begins very well. The 'However' signals that the essay is now turning to the ways in which sport did not help to advance opportunities for black Americans.

(11) Significantly, all of the examples discussed are within the time period specified by the question.

(12) This paragraph has a little less support than the earlier paragraphs. Nonetheless, it does help to extend the range of themes that the essay discusses.

American life (12).

In conclusion, sport has led to the improvement of opportunities for black Americans in the USA due to the fact that it has created black role models and allowed black sports personalities to use the media attention they have received to argue for racial justice. However, these successes have not brought improvement of opportunities in all areas. As Hoberman argues, success in sport has reinforced traditional stereotypes and has only led to advancement in sport. What is more, even in sport, opportunities for black Americans were only improved for athletes as, even as late as 2001, black people still faced major barriers to success in sports coaching and management (13).

Examiner's Assessment

This answer would achieve a Level 5 mark. The general points are supported with detailed examples, and focus on the question is explicit. In addition, the answer is well balanced, with equal consideration of both sides of the argument. The conclusion is sophisticated, reaching a judgment that explains 'how far' opportunities improved for black Americans.

(13) The conclusion is very good. It presents a focused summary of the argument of the essay and it weighs up the extent to which the evidence shows that sport improved opportunities for black Americans.

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<p>Edexcel – AS GCE Unit 1: Historical Themes in Breadth Option D</p>	<p>D7 Politics, Presidency and Society in the USA, 1968–2001</p>	<p>Mark Scheme</p>
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How far do you agree that sport improved opportunities for black Americans in the USA in the period 1968-2001?

(30 marks)

<p>Level 1</p>	<p>Candidates will produce mostly simple statements. These will be supported by limited factual material which has some accuracy and relevance, although not directed at the focus of the question. The material will be mostly generalised. There will be few, if any, links between the simple statements.</p> <p><i>The qualities of Level 1 are securely displayed; material is convincing in range and depth consistent with Level 1. The writing may have limited coherence and will be generally comprehensible, but passages will lack both clarity and organisation. The skills needed to produce effective writing will not normally be present. Frequent syntactical and/or spelling errors are likely to be present.</i></p> <p>Low Level 1: 1–2 marks The qualities of Level 1 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth and the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>Mid Level 1: 3–4 marks The qualities of Level 1 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth or the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>High Level 1: 5–6 marks The qualities of Level 1 are securely displayed.</p>	<p>(1–6)</p>
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<p>Level 2</p>	<p>Candidates will produce a series of simple statements supported by some mostly accurate and relevant factual material. The analytical focus will be mostly implicit and there are likely to be only limited links between the simple statements. Material is unlikely to be developed very far.</p> <p><i>The writing will have some coherence and will be generally comprehensible, but passages will lack both clarity and organisation. Some of the skills needed to produce effective writing will be present. Frequent syntactical and/or spelling errors are likely to be present.</i></p> <p>Low Level 2: 7–8 marks The qualities of Level 2 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth and the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>Mid Level 2: 9–10 marks The qualities of Level 2 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth or the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>High Level 2: 11–12 marks The qualities of Level 2 are securely displayed.</p>	<p>(7–12)</p>
<p>Level 3</p>	<p>Candidates' answers will attempt analysis and will show some understanding of the focus of the question. They will, however, include material which is either descriptive, and thus only implicitly relevant to the question's focus, or which strays from that focus. Factual material will be accurate but it may lack depth and/or relevance in places.</p> <p><i>The writing will be coherent in places but there are likely to be passages which lack clarity and/or proper organisation. Only some of the skills needed to produce convincing extended writing are likely to be present. Syntactical and/or spelling errors are likely to be present.</i></p> <p>Low Level 3: 13–14 marks The qualities of Level 3 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth and the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>Mid Level 3: 15–16 marks The qualities of Level 3 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth or the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>High Level 3: 17–18 marks The qualities of Level 3 are securely displayed.</p>	<p>(13–18)</p>

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<p>Level 4</p>	<p>Candidates offer an analytical response which relates well to the focus of the question and which shows some understanding of the key issues contained in it. The analysis will be supported by accurate factual material which will be mostly relevant to the question asked. The selection of material may lack balance in places.</p> <p><i>The answer will show some degree of direction and control but these attributes may not be sustained throughout the answer. The candidate will demonstrate the skills needed to produce convincing extended writing but there may be passages which lack clarity or coherence. The answer is likely to include some syntactical and/or spelling errors.</i></p> <p>Low Level 4: 19–20 marks The qualities of Level 4 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth and the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>Mid Level 4: 21–22 marks The qualities of Level 4 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth or the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>High Level 4: 23–24 marks The qualities of Level 4 are securely displayed.</p>	<p>(19–24)</p>
<p>Level 5</p>	<p>Candidates offer an analytical response which directly addresses the focus of the question and which demonstrates explicit understanding of the key issues contained in it. It will be broadly balanced in its treatment of these key issues. The analysis will be supported by accurate, relevant and appropriately selected factual material which demonstrates some range and depth.</p> <p><i>The exposition will be controlled and the deployment logical. Some syntactical and/or spelling errors may be found but the writing will be coherent overall. The skills required to produce convincing extended writing will be in place.</i></p> <p>Low Level 5: 25–26 marks The qualities of Level 5 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth and the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>Mid Level 5: 27–28 marks The qualities of Level 5 are displayed, but material is less convincing in its range/depth or the quality of written communication does not conform.</p> <p>High Level 5: 29–30 marks The qualities of Level 5 are securely displayed.</p>	<p>(25–30)</p>

Edexcel – AS GCE Unit 1: Historical Themes in Breadth Option D	D7 Politics, Presidency and Society in the USA, 1968–2001	Chronology
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Chronology: Key Events in *Politics, Presidency and Society in the USA, 1968-2001*

Year	Month	Event
1968	January–February	Communists' Tet Offensive in Vietnam
	March	President Johnson says he will not stand for re-election
	April	Martin Luther King assassinated
	June	Bobby Kennedy assassinated
	August	Democratic National Convention in Chicago
	September	Miss America Beauty Pageant disrupted
	October	Black Power protests at Mexico Olympics
	November	Nixon beats Humphrey in the presidential election
1969	January	Nixon becomes President
		Nixon sets up the Middle America Committee
	October–November	Moratorium protests
1970	May	Kent State students killed
1971	April	Supreme Court rules pro-busing to further desegregation in North
	August	Nixon's New Economic Policy
1972		Nixon visits Communist China
		SALT Treaty with USSR
		Nixon ends draft
	June	Watergate break-in burglars apprehended Nixon and Haldeman discuss using CIA to halt FBI investigations into break-in
	November	Kissinger announces 'peace is at hand' Nixon re-elected, defeating McGovern in a landslide
1973	January	Watergate burglars convicted
	February	Senate establishes Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities
	April	Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean resign
	May–August	Senate investigates Watergate
	July	Existence of White House taping system revealed
	September	The Battle of the Sexes in tennis
	November	Seven White House tapes surrendered
1974	March	Seven Nixon aides indicted
	July	Supreme Court says tapes must be released; tapes prove Nixon ordered cover-up

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	August	Nixon resigns Ford becomes President
	September	President Ford pardons Nixon
		Acute racial tensions over desegregation of Boston schools
1976		Ford defeated by Carter in the presidential election
1977		Miners' strike
1978		Carter's energy legislation Supreme Court supports affirmative action but not quotas
1979		Three Mile Island partial nuclear meltdown
1980		Billygate
		Race riots
	November	Reagan defeats Carter in presidential election
	December	Budget director Stockman admits administration's economic plan does not add up
		Congress passes Reagan's budget, cutting taxes and domestic expenditure
		Oakland Raiders move to Los Angeles
1981		President Reagan praises sport
1982		Equal Rights Amendment defeated
1983		Social Security Reform Act
1984	November	Reagan re-elected by near-record margin
1985	December	Congress enforces spending cuts
1986		Major tax reform
	November	Iran-Contra scandal exposed
1987	February	Tower Commission criticises Reagan's delegatory management style
		Reagan's nomination of Robert Bork as Supreme Court justice fails
1988		Carl Lewis tests positive for drugs three times at the US Olympic Trials, but still competes
		Civil Rights Restoration Act
		George Bush elected President
1989		US intervenes in Panama
		Governor Clinton becomes chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council
1990		Clean Air Act
1990-91		Kuwait liberated in Gulf War
1990-92		Recession
1991		Magic Johnson tests positive for HIV
1992		Race riots in Los Angeles
		'Shoe war' at the Olympics
		Clinton defeats George Bush in presidential election
1993		Clinton's budget narrowly passed by Congress
		NAFTA approved
1994		The First Lady's universal health care plan rejected by Congress
		California introduces 'three strikes and you're out'
		Republicans take control of both houses of Congress
1994-95		The O.J. Simpson affair

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1995		Federal government shutdown after dispute between President and Congress over budget
		Newt Gingrich's <i>The Contract with America</i>
1996		Ebonics taught in Oakland
		Clinton re-elected President
1998		Monica Lewinsky sex scandal
1999		Attempted impeachment of Clinton
2000		Hispanic Americans overtake African Americans as the largest ethnic minority
		Vice-President Gore defeated by George W. Bush in presidential election

Teaching Activities

1. Peer marking

Give students the following sample exam question: Why were the Republicans more successful than the Democrats in Presidential elections in the period 1968-2001? Together, produce a plan for an answer to this question. Students should then write two sample paragraphs: one that they believe would achieve a high mark, and one that would pass but with a low mark. On a separate piece of paper, they should list three features of the good answer which would impress the examiner and score highly, and three ways in which their less-good answer needs to improve.

Once they have written these paragraphs, they should pass them to another student. This student should:

- read both paragraphs and decide which is the good answer and which is the less-good answer
- make their own list of three ways in which the good answer would score highly, and three ways in which the less-good answer needs to improve.

Following this, the students should compare their lists, assessing how far they agree on the features of good and less-good answers. A whole-class list of features of a good answer, and pitfalls to avoid, could then be collated.

2. Class essay

Give students the following sample exam question: Why did moral issues achieve such political prominence in the period 1968-2001? Together, produce a plan for an answer to this question. Divide the class into small groups. There should be the same number of groups as paragraphs in the main body of the essay plan. Each group should be allocated one paragraph of the essay. Together, they should research and write this paragraph following the 'Point, Example, Explanation' structure that is rewarded by the mark scheme. The paragraph should be copied onto a large sheet of paper.

Place the large sheets of paper around the room. Students should read the paragraphs belonging to other groups and peer mark them using the following template:

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	Mark out of 5
How well does the first sentence of the paragraph address the question?	
How relevant are the specific examples?	
How detailed are the specific examples?	
How effectively do(es) the final sentence(s) explain how the factor addresses the question?	
Total:	

The peer-mark sheets should be collected in and distributed to the relevant groups. Each group should read the sheets for their paragraph and rewrite the paragraph to address the issues raised by the scoring.

Additional Sample Questions

1. Why did Richard Nixon resign from the Presidency in 1974?
2. How far were President Ford's economic policies the major reason why he served such a short time as President?
3. Why was Ronald Reagan able to win the 1984 presidential election by such a large majority?
4. How far did the Reagan administration bring about social change in America?
5. How accurate is it to say that popular culture created divisions in American society in the period 1968-2001?
6. How far had black Americans achieved equality by 2001?
7. How far did the divisions between Republicans and Democrats widen in the period 1968-2001?
8. Why did Republican candidates achieve such success in presidential elections in the period 1968-2001?

Resources

Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* (Penguin, 2001. 2nd revised edition)

Michael Schaller and George Rising, *The Republican Ascendancy: American Politics 1968–2001* (Harlan Davidson, 2002)

John Traynor, *Mastering Modern United States History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001)

Gil Troy, *The Reagan Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2009)