

## Candidates' Performance

### General comments and recommendations

On the whole, candidates seem to have been well prepared for the examination. Most answers displayed knowledge relevant to the issues and topics covered by the curriculum. However, the performance was not always commensurate with the effort made. To achieve good results in History examinations, candidates need the following skills: identifying the key term(s)/phrase(s) in a question in order to grasp the gist of that question; using relevant historical information to support any arguments made; and presenting logical, coherent and clear answers.

It is imperative that candidates read the questions carefully if they want to produce relevant answers. Candidates too often jumped into answering a question without paying close attention to what it required. This explains why some candidates produced irrelevant answers when answering data-based questions: when the question required the use of sources only, they drew on their own knowledge; in contrast, when the question required the use of both sources and their own knowledge, they used one but not both. Similarly for essay-type questions, candidates should make sure that they grasp the gist of a question before producing the answer. Candidates are advised to read *A Manual of Question Words Used in History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007; online version [http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Subject\\_Information/hist/HIST-QuWords-E.pdf](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Subject_Information/hist/HIST-QuWords-E.pdf)), 2011 in order to familiarise themselves with various command words and other commonly used words that appear in HKDSE History questions.

It is also important that candidates choose relevant historical information to substantiate their arguments. Some of the scripts were marred by irrelevancies resulting from the indiscriminate use of historical information. Writing down 'model answers' prepared in advance should be avoided.

Last but not least, candidates should pay special attention to logic, coherence and clarity of presentation. They should learn to organise answers and use facts appropriately in their answers, and make clear arguments. Language and presentation skills are also areas in need of improvement.

### Question Choice Pattern

Question Number	Popularity
<b>Paper 1</b>	
1	Compulsory
2	
3	
4	
<b>Paper 2</b>	
1	11%
2	31%
3	54%
4	51%
5	35%
6	1%
7	17%

**Paper 1 (Data-based questions)**

- Q.1 (a) Performance was good. This question required candidates to identify the main message of the cartoon in Source A and explain their answers with reference to Source A. Many candidates succeeded in answering the question as required. Some candidates misinterpreted the cartoon as one that primarily addressed hygiene problems of Hong Kong, which had earned them no marks.
- (b) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to identify the attitude of the author of Source B towards the Royal Hong Kong Police. According to Source B, the author had a mixed attitude to the Royal Hong Kong Police. Whereas most candidates succeeded in identifying part of this mixed attitude, only a minority of candidates presented all of it. Some candidates misread the Source, thinking that the author praised the Royal Hong Kong Police for upholding a stand of political neutrality. In fact, the ensuing lines clearly revealed that the author was not happy about this.
- (c) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss whether the colonial government of Hong Kong demonstrated an ability to improve its governance in the period 1967-97. Some weak candidates did not compare the governance at different times in the period 1967-97; rather, they merely mentioned the work the Hong Kong government did in the period. Only some able candidates showed the changes of governance of the Hong Kong government in the required period, with supporting evidence from both Sources and the candidates' own knowledge.
- Q.2 (a) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to identify, with reference to Source C, what impact reform would have on the Qing Dynasty. While some candidates were able to give logical answers, as required by the question, many displayed one or more of the following flaws: copying indiscriminately from the Source without due explanation; identifying problems faced by the Chinese government at that time without focusing on the impact brought by reform; succeeding in identifying the positive impact brought by reform but without due explanation; wrongly interpreting the Source as one that discussed negative impacts of reform (such as the demise of the Qing Dynasty).
- (b) Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to explain why the author of Source D thought that revolutionaries were admirable. Many candidates cited relevant clues from the Source, with relevant explanations. The weak candidates copied indiscriminately from the Source without explanation, or gave explanations that were not relevant to the clues cited.
- (c) Performance was fair. This question invited candidates to imagine that they were Chinese scholars in 1911 and explain, with reference to the two Sources and their own knowledge, whether they would prefer to be a reformer or a revolutionary. Only the best candidates gave a logical discussion, as required by the question. Many answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: confusing 'reformer' with 'revolutionary' in the context of Late Qing history; being weak in using their own knowledge; basing their answers on personal feelings instead of historical evidence; discussing the limitations of reform rather than the merits of revolution when choosing to be a revolutionary; discussing events that took place after the success of the 1911 Revolution.
- Q.3 (a) Performance was good. This question required candidates to conclude from Source E about the nature of scouting in 1908. Most candidates were able to draw conclusions about the nature of scouting, with a relevant explanation.
- (b) Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to identify from Source F the common concern of both sides when debating the necessity of the Triple Entente. Many candidates made use of the Source to answer the question as required.

The weak answers either merely copied indiscriminately from the Source without inferring any common concern, or distorted the arguments of the affirmative side.

- (c) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss whether widespread nationalism across Europe necessarily led to the outbreak of a general war. Only the best candidates were able to engage in a logical discussion and use both Sources and their own knowledge effectively. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: copying indiscriminately from the Sources without addressing the gist of the question; describing the Alliance System without showing awareness that it had been mentioned in Source F; producing irrelevancies such as causes of the Second World War; using wrong examples for illustration (such as mistaking the Balkan Crises and Sarajevo Assassination as examples of colonial rivalries). Some candidates, while upholding the view that nationalism did not necessarily lead to the outbreak of a general war, chose to discuss 'national interest' as an essential and totally independent factor, not being aware that 'national interest' and 'nationalism' are interrelated.
- Q.4 (a) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to infer from Source G two characteristics of international politics after the Second World War. The able candidates made appropriate inferences with reference to the Source. The weak candidates processed the data without making them relevant to international politics after the Second World War. The weakest ones merely copied indiscriminately from the Source without making any inferences.
- (b) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to identify from Source H one structural problem of the United Nations. The able candidates gave appropriate discussion as required. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: regarding veto as a structural problem of the United Nations as they mistakenly used Source G rather than Source H; misunderstanding the Non-Aligned Movement; mistakenly regarding democratisation rather than the lack of it as a structural problem.
- (c) Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss, with reference to Sources G and H and using their own knowledge, whether national interest always hindered international cooperation. Whereas the able candidates demonstrated understanding of the relevant knowledge in their answers, some weak answers misunderstood the Sources and ineffectively used their own knowledge, thus losing marks.

#### Paper 2 (Essay-type questions)

- Q.1 Performance was poor. This question required candidates to discuss whether in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong was an international city with a strong Chinese identity and an increasing Hong Kong identity. Only the best candidates grasped the gist of the question and produced a substantiated and balanced discussion about these two identities in Hong Kong people. Quite a lot of candidates did not pay enough attention to the identities required, that is, 1980-2000, using historical evidence from the period 1950-70 as well, and therefore losing marks. Some weak answers merely gave a general historical account of Hong Kong without any discussion of identities.
- Q.2 Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss whether Sun Yat-sen (Sun Yixian) or Mao Zedong was a greater Chinese leader. Only a handful of best candidates clearly examined the relative greatness of the two leaders with reference to historical evidence of different aspects. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: producing an unbalanced discussion, mostly focusing on Mao Zedong; providing minimal historical evidence to support their arguments; presenting separate historical accounts of the two leaders instead of comparing them as required by the question.

- Q.3 Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to discuss whether Japan's development in the period after the Second World War up to the end of the 1960s was primarily due to the US factor. Most candidates were well prepared for this topic, and were familiar with the historical examples that illustrated the US factor and other factors, and were them attempted to make comparisons of the US factor and other factors. Many of them were able to highlight and explain their relative importance. Some weak candidates did not treat the SCAP as part of the US factor, which considerably undermined their analysis. Only the best candidates were able to give well-substantiated analysis as required by the question.
- Q.4 Performance was satisfactory. This question required candidates to assess the effectiveness of international peace-keeping efforts in Europe in the period 1919-39. Most candidates were well prepared for this topic. However, only the best candidates adopted a direct approach to the question as required. Many candidates paid disproportionate attention to the shortcomings of such international peace-keeping efforts and ignored their achievements in the period. The weakest scripts presented a general account of various international agreements and conferences without assessing their effectiveness as peace-keeping efforts.
- Q.5 Performance was fair. This question required candidates to assess how cold the Cold War was. Candidates were expected to base their analysis on a proper understanding of 'cold' in the oxymoronic term 'Cold War', which describes the lack of large-scale fighting directly between the two confronting blocs led by the US and the USSR. Many candidates employed 'hot' and 'cold' as conceptual tools; they produced relevant historical facts about relations between the two blocs, though their ability varied in assessing how cold the Cold War was. Some weak candidates regarded 'cold war' as a manifestation of poor relations rather than a contrast to 'hot war'. Some others misunderstood 'hot' as meaning 'good relations'. The weakest candidates produced a chronological narration of facts about the Cold War without any analysis. Only the best answers adopted a direct approach, as required by the question.
- Q.7 Performance was fair. This question required candidates to discuss, with reference to the development of one country/region, whether development in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterised more by change than continuity. Candidates were expected to analyse different aspects of change and continuity in the selected country/region and explain why they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The weak answers tended to produce narrative accounts of the developments in the selected country/region without focusing on change and continuity, and/or discussed development in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was not required by the question. Excellent scripts that handled both changes and continuity in a substantiated and balanced manner were rare.