

Candidates' Performance

General comments and recommendations

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for the examination. Most answers displayed knowledge relevant to the issues/topics covered by the syllabus. However, performance was not always commensurate with the efforts made. To achieve good results in History examinations, candidates should improve the following skills: identifying the key term(s)/phrase(s) of 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; on the other hand, when the question required the use of both sources and own knowledge, they used either or the other and not both. For essay-type questions, candidates should similarly 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 2011), in order to familiarize 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 gross irrelevancies resulting from the indiscriminate use of historical information. Regurgitating 'model answers' prepared in advance is unrewarding and must be avoided.

Last but not least, candidates should pay special attention to logic, coherence and clarity in presentation. They should learn not to muddle through their answers or cram facts into their answers without making their arguments clear. All in all, they should improve their language and presentation skills.

Question Choice Pattern

Question Number	Popularity
Paper 1	
1	Compulsory
2	
3	
4	
Paper 2	
1	31%
2	21%
3	28%
4	73%
5	18%
6	4%
7	25%

Paper 1 (Data-based questions)

- Q.1 (a) Performance was good. Most candidates were able to make two suggestions about what a strong country should do according to Yoshino Sakuzo. Some candidates were weak in using clues from Source A, hence losing marks.
- (b) Performance was mediocre. Many candidates could point out that the Cherry Blossom Society had a hostile attitude towards the party politicians of Japan; however, they tended to ignore the key word 'language' in the question, hence failed to use the relevant clues from Source B to explain their answers.
- (c) Performance was fair. Although most candidates could follow the question's instruction to use both Sources and their own knowledge to tackle the question, many of them did not grasp the gist of the key phrase 'more responsible for', which required candidates to compare party politicians and the military before making a conclusion. They tended to focus on either the party politicians or the military; few of them could discuss both, not to mention putting forward sound arguments with well-substantiated personal viewpoints.
- Q.2 (a) Performance was satisfactory. Many candidates could make use of Source C to infer about the situation of Europe in 1938. The weak candidates merely copied indiscriminately from the Source without making any inference.
- (b) Performance was fair. The able candidates could first state what constituted 'bias', and then applied this to discuss the cartoon and duly presented their conclusion. The weak candidates described the cartoon and/or narrated on facts from their own knowledge without focusing on the key word 'bias'.
- (c) Performance was fair. Candidates should first sum up accusations from the two Sources and then respond to them from the Nazi perspective. Only the best candidates could successfully perform the above two tasks. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: copying extensively from the Sources without summing up any accusations; attempting to respond to the accusations but not from the Nazi perspective; narrating on Nazi expansion without focusing on the Sources.
- Q.3 (a) Performance was fair. Candidates should pay due attention to both the background and foreground of the poster in order to infer its purpose. However, some weak candidates merely focused on the background (many Red Guards holding copies of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*) and ignored the foreground (a Red Guard holding a hammer and about to hit the beast under his foot, representing Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping), therefore they made wrong inferences.
- (b) Performance was fair. Candidates should make use of Source E and their own knowledge to discuss the short-term and long-term impact of the Cultural Revolution on China. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: being unable to differentiate short-term from long-term impact of the Cultural Revolution; mistaking 'impact' for 'result', therefore the answers were irrelevant; handling the Source and own knowledge in an unbalanced manner. Excellent answers were rare.
- Q.4 (a) Performance was average. Most candidates were able to point out Margaret Thatcher's worry about the prospect of Europe, and explain their answers with clues from Source F. The weak candidates copied indiscriminately from the Source and could not identify Margaret Thatcher's worry.
- (b) Performance was average. Most candidates were able to demonstrate that in Source G Jacques Delors did not share Margaret Thatcher's worry. Some candidates misread the Source and did not score any marks.
- (c) Performance was poor. Many candidates demonstrated knowledge on European economic cooperation in the period in question, but they could not apply such knowledge to their answers; they merely narrated on the facts without relating to the key question whether they justified Margaret Thatcher's worry or not. Only a handful of candidates succeeded in answering the question as instructed.

Paper 2 (Essay-type questions)

- Q.1 Performance was mediocre. The question invited candidates to comment whether there was increasing political participation on the part of the Chinese in Hong Kong in the period 1960-97. The key phrase 'increasing political participation' implied that candidates should divide the period 1960-97 into several stages and compare these stages in the light of the question. Many candidates could base their answers on relevant facts such as the evolution of the Legislative Council, Executive Council and District Council, and the rise of political parties. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: failing to focus on the period set in the question and instead discussing the whole 20th century or the second half of it; failing to divide the period into different stages and merely narrating facts in chronological order; failing to grasp the gist of 'political participation' and narrating on Hong Kong' political development in general. Quite a number of candidates were not familiar with the relevant historical developments; their answers were weak.
- Q.2 Performance was unsatisfactory. The question invited candidates to compare the 1911 Revolution and the May Fourth Movement in terms of their impact on China's historical development. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: presenting separate accounts of the two events without any comparisons; comparing China's situation in different aspects instead of comparing the impact of the two events on China's historical development; mistaking 'impact on China's historical development' generally for 'effect', and making only vague points. Answers that demonstrated good comparison skills and focused properly on 'impact on China's historical development' were rare.
- Q.3 Performance was satisfactory. Many candidates could evaluate the extent to which Japan was modernized by the late 1920s, though their answers were not always presented in a balanced manner. Some weak candidates could not clearly explain the view they held; some did not pay enough attention to the time span set in the question, and discussed in length developments in the 1930s.
- Q.4 Performance was mediocre. The question invited candidates to comment on the quotation 'The Paris Peace Settlement (1919-23) was meant to preserve peace; unfortunately, it became an important factor that caused another world war.' Candidates should note that the Paris Peace Settlement was the subject of this question; they should discuss its purpose and result in terms of its intended function as a device of preserving peace. However, only a handful of candidates could properly focus on its purpose and result. Many answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: paying little or even no attention to the first part; confining discussion to the Treaty of Versailles only in the first part and ignoring other treaties in the Settlement; distorting the question as one asking for the relationship between the Paris Peace Settlement and the rise of totalitarianism without exploring other impact of the Settlement, such as creating a number of new nation states; mistaking the question as one asking for the extent to which the Paris Peace Settlement had led to the outbreak of the Second World War, and conducted necessarily lengthy discussion of 'other factors'.
- Q.5 Performance was fair. The question invited candidates to trace and explain the process of European economic integration in the period 1948-2000. Generally speaking, candidates were well-prepared for this question, and could provide relevant historical details. However, answers tended to be narrative; many answers were weak in dividing the period 1948-2000 into several stages when tracing the development; they were also weak in explaining changes in the process of European economic integration. Quite a lot of answers paid disproportionate attention to Western Europe; little was mentioned about Eastern Europe. Excellent scripts which handled both the tracing and explanation tasks in a balanced manner were rare.
- Q.6 Performance was poor. The question invited candidates to assess the importance of Nelson Mandela relative to other factors in leading to the end of the apartheid in South Africa. Many candidates only produced a very sketchy description of Nelson Mandela or even totally ignored him, and jumped too quickly to 'other factors'. Only a handful of candidates could tackle the key phrase 'relative importance' properly by comparing Nelson Mandela and other factors in terms of their importance in lead to the end of the apartheid in South Africa.
- Q.7 Performance was unsatisfactory. The question invited candidates to select a country and discuss why it could be regarded as a 'power' in the second half of the 20th century. Candidates should first define what constitutes a 'power', and explain why the country they selected is qualified as a power in the time span set in the question. The weak answers displayed one or more of the following flaws: deriving a very general definition of 'power', which in turn resulted a narrative answer for the second part of the question; mistaking the question as one asking for history of modernization, hence producing irrelevant answers by digressing to the domestic developments of the selected country without paying any attention to its external influence; discussing a time span different to that specified in the question. Many answers did not have a good grasp of the concept of 'power', and resulted in narrative accounts of the developments of the selected country. Well-argued answers were rare.

Acknowledgements

School-based Assessment

HKDSE History School-based Assessment (SBA) requires students to complete a two-task assignment related to their selected elective. The two tasks are namely presentation of study outline and study report.

In the 2012 HKDSE History Examination, participating schools have to submit SBA marks for inclusion in the subject result. We are happy to report that 57.3% of schools fall into the 'within the expected range' category, while the marks of 23.6% of schools are higher than expected, and 19.1% lower than expected. However, among the schools with marks higher or lower than expected, the majority only deviate slightly from the expected range. This showed that the majority of the teachers do have a good understanding about SBA implementation, and hence the marking standards are generally appropriate.

The implementation of SBA in 2012 HKDSE History was generally satisfactory. SBA District Coordinators (DCs) were appointed to support schools in implementing SBA. Messages were conveyed to subject teachers through post-mortem seminars, SBA conferences and briefing sessions. Teachers, subject heads and School Coordinators (SCs) were informed of the mark submission arrangement and the format of submitting students' sample works to the HKEAA. Effective communication among DCs, SCs, supervisor and subject manager was maintained via emails and phone calls.

Generally speaking, students' performance on Comparative Studies was better than that on the other two electives. Most students opting for Comparative Studies were able to set appropriate titles with two or more comparable items. As for Issue-based Studies, many titles did not contain any controversy, and therefore did not fit the requirement of the elective. The appropriateness of works on Local Heritage Studies depended on whether the items students had chosen were heritage-related.

While students should draft appropriate titles for their chosen electives, they should also match the titles appropriately with the chosen electives. Quite many mismatches were identified: for example, a title that was claimed to be for Issue-based Studies might have a phrasing that was obviously for Comparatively Studies.

In 2012 HKDSE History, one case of plagiarism was identified by the HKEAA during sample inspection. The study report of the candidate in question was a conglomerate of materials copied from several internet sources without the candidate's own words and analysis and without an acknowledgment of sources the candidate has used. This resulted in subject disqualification. To avoid SBA malpractice, HKDSE History candidates should properly cite sources they have used and quoted (refer to the Appendix H, SBA Teacher's Handbook: <http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/SBA/HKDSE/SBAhandbook-2013-HIST-E-301210.pdf>), and should make analysis and presentation in their own words as far as possible.

Material from the following publications has been used in question papers in this volume:

Chelsea House Publishers	Robert Rhodes James (ed.), <i>Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches (1897-1963) (vol. VI)</i> , 1974
http://www.punchcartoons.com/	<i>Punch</i> , 12 April 1939
Lynne Rienner Publishers	Brent F. Nelsen and Alexander Stubb (ed.), <i>The European Union: Readings on the Theory and Practice of European Integration</i> , 2003
Prestel	Stefan R. Landsberger, Marien Van Der Heijen & Kuiyi Shen, <i>Chinese Posters: The Iish-Landsberger Collections</i> , 2009
Routledge	Junji Banno (Translated by Andrew Fraser), <i>Democracy in Pre-War Japan, Concepts of Government, 1871 – 1937: Collected Essays</i> , 2001
Westview Press, Inc.	Mikiso Hane, <i>Modern Japan: A Historical Survey</i> , 1992

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