



2004

Australian History GA 3: Written examination

## GENERAL COMMENTS

The responses to the 2004 Australian History examination generally reflected an interested engagement with the subject matter and themes of the course. There were some excellent papers which displayed a very thorough knowledge and a well developed ability to explore issues and support ideas with relevant historical evidence. Even papers in the middle and lower ranges often reflected a good knowledge of the course and a lively interest in many of the concepts and issues explored.

The main weakness, noted across all sections of the paper, was the inability of students to **use** the knowledge that they had acquired to address the particular questions and documents chosen and to write relevant answers. Many responses were only marginally relevant, yet this weakness seemed to stem from a failure to really **read and understand** the question, rather than an absence of knowledge. There was also some evidence that students were not familiar with the assessment criteria.

Teachers appear to be doing a very good job in terms of creating enthusiasm for this subject and they seem to have exposed their students to a wide body of historical information. Unfortunately, it appears that not enough time has been devoted to examination technique. Class time should be devoted to analysing questions, and to assisting students to recognise what is required in a particular question and also what is not relevant. Students who used the words and concepts of the question at the start, throughout the response, and at the end tended to be the ones that had little difficulty in addressing the various criteria.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

### Section A

Responses in this section generally reflected a sound knowledge of the material and concepts of this Area of Study. The most popular content areas for Question 1 were the two World Wars and the Depression. In Question 2, the Dismissal, the Vietnam War, the immigration debate and the struggle for Aboriginal rights were most frequently chosen.

Good responses dealt specifically with the questions asked and used material that was relevant and appropriate. Weaker responses tended towards the narrative, often including information that was not strictly relevant. There was a marked tendency for students to make sweeping generalisations about groups and reactions. Teachers are encouraged to engage in teaching strategies that will enable students to recognise the range and complexity that exists within large groups such as women, the unemployed and anti-war protesters.

#### Question 1

##### Criterion 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	3	11	30	37	16	3.4

##### Criterion 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	2	8	29	39	18	3.5

##### Criterion 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	2	11	34	35	14	3.4

In an extended response, answer one of the following questions based on 'Everyday life in the twentieth century: 1901-1945' (approximately 300-350 words).

a. How far were the responses of one or more groups shaped by their economic or social circumstances?

Answer with reference to the major event you have studied.

This reasonably popular question asked students to examine the responses of chosen groups to the particular event in the light of the particular economic and social circumstances of the group. There were some excellent responses which clearly addressed the key terms in the question. Students writing about the wars wrote about a variety of groups;



soldiers, women in charity work, women in the workforce or the services, farmers, men rejected from enlistment and trade unionists all featured. Those writing about the Depression also addressed a range; the unemployed, married women, single women and the wealthy.

The best responses reflected an understanding that economic and social circumstances were only part of the reason why groups responded in certain ways. These strong responses also recognised the fact that not all members of a group reacted in the same way. For example, for WW2 some suggested that the response to Americans was shaped not just by social class but also by ideas about morality and loyalty to Australian soldiers.

Middle range responses addressed the question without dealing with more than one or two groups or without recognising a range of reactions. Weaker answers spoke in very general terms and often ignored the question asked.

**b. To what extent did the major event that you have studied have a positive impact on lives of a group or groups who experienced it?**

This was the least popular question in this section, possibly because most students had focused on the negative consequences of the events chosen. Those who did address this question spoke of positives such as the benefits of sacrifice, independence, new skills gained, family loyalty and togetherness, charitable work, and lessons about thrift and resilience.

Because the question asked 'to what extent', students were able to challenge the notion of a positive impact. Many of the better responses did this. Others also addressed the ideas of short-term and long-term impact, suggesting that what seemed negative at the time may in the long run have been positive

Middle range responses dealt with the question in a narrative fashion or gave a limited range of examples. The weakest responses did not address the question and included limited information related to the topic.

**c. To what extent did the major event that you have studied lead to significant change in the patterns of life for one or more groups involved?**

This was the most popular question in this section and it generated some very strong responses. The best answers specifically addressed the two key concepts in the question 'significant change' and 'patterns of life'. Students wrote about personal change, social and economic change, workplace change, occupation change, even changes in attitudes and values in relation to loyalty, sacrifice and gender roles. Good responses also seized on the words 'to what extent' and argued that in many cases there was not **significant** change or that the change did not really affect **patterns** of life. Those who were able to make some comment about whether social patterns really altered (for example, work, dwelling arrangements, city/country movement, religious attendance, recreation, marriage and family) presented some of the best responses to this question.

Middle range responses dealt with change but did not relate it to patterns of life. The weakest responses dealt simplistically with one or two examples of change and provided little supporting evidence or information.

**Question 2**

**Criterion 4**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	5	16	32	29	12	3.1

**Criterion 5**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	3	11	30	34	17	3.4

**Criterion 6**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	4	14	34	31	12	3.2



**In an extended response, answer one of the following questions based on ‘Towards a changing society: 1945 – present’ (approximately 300-350 words).**

**a. Do debates and divisions always involve a clash of values?**

**Answer with reference to the debate or division that you have studied.**

This was a reasonably popular question, tackled mainly by students who had studied the Whitlam Dismissal, the Vietnam War, Aborigines or immigration. The term ‘values’ was fairly loosely interpreted, but students who wrote about values in relation to the various points of view in the debate usually scored well; for example, those who had studied the conscription debate referred to values of national loyalty and patriotism, sacrifice, equality, intergenerational clash and even gender rights (especially in relation to SOS).

The best answers dealt with the clash of values involved in the chosen debate, then went on to suggest that a clash of values was not the only element in the debate. In relation to immigration, for example, some very strong responses suggested that purely economic considerations were also important.

Middle range responses tended to give (often detailed) narrative accounts of the debates without coming to grips with the issue of values. The poorest responses gave sketchy accounts of the debate, making virtually no attempt to address the question.

**b. Do representations of one view of a debate always present the views of their opponents as dangerous or deluded?**

**Answer with reference to one or more representations of the debate or division that you have studied.**

This question was chosen by only a small percentage of students but it produced some excellent responses. Those who analysed one or two representations, especially two that presented opposing views, were able to tackle this question very well. Some chose cartoons about the Vietnam War, conscription, or the Whitlam debate; others wrote about written documents relating to Aborigines or immigration.

The best responses were able to show how writers and artists characterised views of their opponents. Some of the Vietnam cartoons, for example, used ridicule to undermine the positions of groups such as ‘Save our Sons’. Some of the strongest answers did not accept the word ‘always’, suggesting that some representations did represent opposing views as dangerous or deluded, but this was not always the case. The point was made that some representations simply put a one-sided view and do not even acknowledge that another view exists. Then there were those who suggested that writers and artists could also present the opposing views as ignorant, greedy or selfish, rather than dangerous or deluded. The very good answers were also able to support the points they made with specific reference to features and elements of the chosen representation(s).

Middle range answers often provided a good general discussion of the question, but did not relate it to specific representations. Alternatively, they did analyse a couple of representations but not in the light of the question asked. The weaker responses either ignored the question or offered simplistic accounts of the debate, making the odd passing reference to representations.

**c. Were there any winners in the debate or division that you have studied?**

This was the most popular question in this section and provided a wide range of interpretations of the word ‘winners’. Most responses were relevant to some degree. Most answers, regardless of the chosen content, tended to say that there were some winners but also many losers.

Most students who had studied the Dismissal identified Fraser and Kerr as winners and Whitlam as the loser. In more sophisticated responses, students referred to democracy or the Australian people as either winners or losers, depending on the way that they interpreted the debate. Students of the movement to ban communism suggested that Menzies was both a loser (the referendum) and a winner (his ability to create fear of communism). Students writing about Aboriginal rights or the immigration debate also talked about short-term winners but long-term losers, or the reverse.

Generally the best responses were those that remained focused on the question and provided detailed and relevant information to support the points made. As with the other questions in this section, the weaker answers tended to simply tell the story of the debate, or to address the question with little or no relevant information as support.



## Section B

Question Chosen	0	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
%	2	42	18	9	4	7	13	4	2

### Criterion 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	5	15	30	33	15	3.3

### Criterion 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	7	20	34	28	8	3.0

### Criterion 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	8	20	32	26	10	3.0

### Criterion 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	7	11	22	29	23	9	2.8

### Question 3

In 2003, the examiners noted that this section of the paper was generally well handled. Unfortunately, this was not the case in 2004. Although there were some excellent responses, there were also many students who did not address the specific questions or the criteria and therefore did not perform as well as possible on this question. The nature of this task should by now be very well understood by both students and teachers. The fact that the actual questions set on each document are the same from year to year means that students should know how to respond and should have practised appropriate responses. In many cases there was no indication that this had happened.

The students who did perform well in this section were those who knew and understood their particular content areas, who clearly and explicitly addressed the two specific questions and who supported their responses with relevant evidence.

#### A. Gold rushes

This was the most popular choice in this section and there were some very good responses. For the first part of the question, most students were able to analyse and comment on many aspects of the poem. The poem tapped into many of the common fears and prejudices about Chinese miners, including the suggestion that they were 'taking over' and the fear that Chinese miners were a threat to European women. Strong answers identified these and other features as typical of the attitudes of many gold miners. In response to this question (and criterion 8), some also referred to Thatcher and to the role of goldfields' entertainers in reflecting and shaping attitudes.

Responses to the second part of the question covered a wide variety of aspects of the gold rushes topic. Some provided further evidence to support the attitudes and values expressed in the representation. Others offered evidence that not all miners or authorities took such prejudiced attitudes to the Chinese (some students used the document from the 2000 examination as evidence of this).

Students also used this section to refer to aspects of the topic ignored by this particular representation. They dealt with success and failure, goldfields' unrest, women and other aspects of goldfields' life and administration. All of these approaches were acceptable, particularly if they related these different aspects back to the original document.

A significant number of responses analysed the representation but made no attempt to evaluate it in the context of the topic. Others simply used the representation as a springboard for a 'write all you know' response. These responses were disappointing because there was often evidence that the students had learnt a great deal of information but they lacked the skills to apply their knowledge to the specific criteria.



### **B. Cultural expressions of national identity**

This was a reasonably popular choice. Although it produced some excellent responses, many students seemed to miss the point of this cartoon. The best responses were able to recognise the irony of indigenous Australians being denied entry to an Australian Natives' Association function. They commented on elements such as the confident air of the European male; the shabby, European-style dress of the Aborigines; the humble (or depressed) demeanour of the woman; and the refusal of the Aboriginal male to be cowed. They used this to support the idea that white supremacy was an essential element in the Australian identity. Some students supported this with further evidence of discrimination against Aborigines; others referred to discriminatory attitudes towards Chinese or South Sea Islanders.

In the second section, the better responses set the belief in white superiority within the context of the overall concept of national identity in the late 19th Century. They referred to cultural expressions of the Australian bush identity through art and literature, and to some of the many examples of loyalty to the British Empire, which was an integral part of Australian consciousness at the time. The best responses picked up on some of the ironies and contradictions in Australian identity – egalitarianism/racism; Australian pride; and British loyalty for example.

Middle range and weaker answers glossed over the main elements in the cartoon and gave accounts of national identity in varying degrees of depth and detail.

### **C. Environmental impact of settlement**

This visual document depicted the environmental impact of the spread of small farms across the countryside. Students commented on the cutting down of trees for pasture and the building of houses, and on the impact this clearing had on indigenous plants and animals. Many noted the presence of bullocks and horses, and reflected on the damage that their hooves could do to the land. Some of the best responses set this in the context of the spread of settlement and displayed an understanding of land selection laws. There was also some reference to the very positive view of settlement reflected in this picture and its caption.

In the second part of the question, the strongest students wrote about other ways in which the environment was affected by settlement, and supported their points with evidence. There was some reference to the lack of respect for much of the Australian environment, the widespread planting of European trees and the introduction of European animals. Several students recognised the fact that not all settlers wanted to destroy the environment and that in some cases the impact was the result of ignorance rather than deliberate destruction.

Weaker answers tended to simply describe the picture and offer some general statements about environmental impact of settlement, without offering supporting evidence.

### **D. Capital and labour relations**

This was not a popular document but it produced some strong responses. Most students commented on the positive and optimistic tone of this extract, not only in relation to unionism but also to Australia's future. Some set the document in the context of 'new unionism' and explained some of the background. Others related the ideas in the document to the strikes of the 1890s and even to the establishment of the Labor Party.

In the second section, some students provided other evidence of this positive attitude and of progress for workers. Others challenged the optimistic tone, suggesting and supporting the notion that 'this great work' was not changing the lives of all workers and that among workers themselves this optimism was not universal.

Weaker answers simply wrote in general terms about unionism and the strikes, with little direct reference to the set document or the questions.

### **E. Urbanisation**

This was a reasonably popular choice and many students were able to analyse it well. In the first section they commented on the confident and positive tone of this article, making links to 'Marvellous Melbourne'. They also picked up on the egalitarian reference to 'workingmen as well as businessmen'. Some students set the piece in the general context of the development of Melbourne at the time, explaining the role of public transport in the spread of the city and the pattern of dormitory suburbs.

In the second section, the better responses provided further evidence and examples that supported the idea of Melbourne's positive growth. Others presented a challenge to the confident tone of the article by providing evidence of the less 'marvellous' side of Melbourne – for example slums, poor sanitation and disease.



Weaker responses focused on the document but provided little or no evaluation in the light of the broader topic of urbanisation.

## F. Federation

This was among the more popular choices for this section. Most students recognised this as an anti-federation article, appealing to NSW voters on economic, political and prestigious grounds to oppose federation. Good responses were able to explain the background of ambivalence about federation in NSW, with some also referring to Reid's 'Yes-No' speech and to other reasons why NSW voters may have opposed federation. Some students also commented on the fact that the article appeared in a mainstream Sydney newspaper, seeing this as an indication that these views were fairly widely accepted.

In the second section, students took several approaches. Some provided further evidence of the anti-federation attitudes of NSW. Others suggested that these views were not nation-wide and offered evidence from Victoria and also from voting figures to show that the *Daily Telegraph* article did not reflect the whole picture, even from NSW. There were some students who contrasted the views in the article with a range of other pro-federation arguments. Many also commented that the article's prediction about the site of the capital did not come true.

Weaker answers tended to offer a narrative and simplistic account of federation.

## G. Aborigines and government policy

Few students attempted this topic. The best responses were able to identify the irony in this cartoon. Most thought the Aboriginal woman and child looked oppressed and downtrodden, as the European crowd surrounded and stared at them. Others saw something defiant and proud in the Aboriginal woman's demeanour and suggested that the onlookers in European dress looked ridiculous. The better answers then explained something of the background to situations such as this, often providing further evidence of oppression and dispossession. Some also suggested that not all Europeans viewed the Aborigines as curiosities – some referred to further exploitation while others gave evidence that there were attempts (sometimes misplaced) to relate to Aborigines in a well-meaning way.

## H. Women's suffrage

This was one of the less popular choices. Strong answers commented on the emotive words (for example 'unity of the home') used in the speech, and recognised that it was an argument against the granting of votes to women and it reflected many of the popular ideas of the time about the differences between men and women. They also commented upon the irony of the words 'deny that the slightest disrespect to women is involved'.

In the second section, students were able to refer to further arguments against women's suffrage and to explain that these views were fairly widespread at the time. Some also commented on the fact that not all men or women felt this way and that this was borne out by the eventual granting of the vote to Victorian women early in the 20th century.

## Section C

Question Chosen	0	4	5	6
%	2	37	11	49

### Criterion 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	5	14	31	32	15	3.3

### Criterion 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	6	16	31	29	14	3.2

### Criterion 13

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	8	20	33	26	9	3.0



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## Criterion 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	8	19	30	26	12	3.0

## Criterion 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	18	21	23	16	8	2.3

Responses in Section C tended to reflect a strong interest in the subject matter and a reasonably strong knowledge of the content. The main weakness was that students often did not use their knowledge to answer the specific questions asked. Despite the fact that teachers and students have been repeatedly told (through Assessment Reports and HTAV conferences) that the quotes are there to be challenged, most students accepted the quotes as true. Many students offered narrative accounts that addressed the question but sometimes missed the central points.

It was also disappointing that only a small number of students really addressed criterion 15 effectively. An awareness of the sources of historical information, the problems related to sources from the early 19th Century and the different perspectives of historians should be central to the study of this period.

### Question 4

**‘The possibility for self improvement was a major factor in determining patterns of migration.’**

**To what extent do you agree? Answer with reference to the colony, district or settlement that you have studied.**

This was a reasonably popular question, which asked students to consider ‘self improvement’ as a factor that influenced migration. There were some very strong responses which considered both poor conditions in the homeland and opportunities in the colonies as reasons why people migrated to the chosen colony. They supported their answers with reference to individuals (for example the Hentys or the McCraes), specific success stories and to letters, documents and some posters. The best answers also challenged the quote and offered other factors that determined patterns of migration (for example transportation). They also addressed the words ‘patterns of migration’ and suggested some change occurred over the period of the colonial era. Only a small number of responses actually addressed criterion 15 specifically. Several of the best suggested that those who had succeeded in their new colony were most likely to record their experiences and that they may tend to romanticise their ‘improvement’.

Middle range and weaker answers simply dealt with push and pull factors in varying degrees of depth and detail. Many made little or no attempt to address criterion 15.

### Question 5

**‘Colonial societies presented their populations with abundant opportunities for economic and social improvement.’**

**To what extent do you agree? Answer with reference to the colony, district or settlement that you have studied.**

This question presents a very positive view of the opportunities available in colonial societies. The majority of students tended to accept this proposition and to give evidence of groups and individuals whose economic and/or social lives improved during the colonial period or as a result of migration. Many of these answers also made some passing reference to historians and to some of the problems relating to sources from this period.

Unfortunately, only a small percentage of students challenged this quote to any degree. Those who did were also able to write about individuals and groups whose lives did not improve during the colonial period. There was a clear opportunity for students to include Aborigines as members of colonial populations, but few did this.

The best responses examined both sides to this quote and supported their points with evidence from letters and documents from the period. They also addressed criterion 15 clearly, often by examining the reliability of some colonial resources and also by comparing mid-20th Century and more recent interpretations of the period.

### Question 6

**‘Aboriginal people did not respond passively to European contact.’**

**To what extent do you agree? Answer with reference to the colony, district or settlement that you have studied.**

This was the most popular question in this section, and most responses reflected a good overview and a strong engagement with this aspect of the course. Many students recognised the fact that the quote was too extreme and that there was potential for challenge. The best answers examined and supported a range of ways in which the Aboriginal

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response was passive and offered some explanation for this in terms of cultural difference, European ignorance and disease. They also acknowledged the fact that not all Aboriginal responses were passive, and that the circumstances often determined the reaction (for example the violent reaction to white exploitation of Aboriginal women). These strong responses integrated an understanding of historians and sources throughout the response. The most common comment in relation criterion 15 was that Aboriginal thoughts and opinions were rarely recorded and that the perspective on this period is predominantly a white one. Some students made reference to recent writing and research which presents a different perspective on the colonial experience of the Aborigines.

Middle range and weaker answers tended to accept the quote. Some provided sketchy evidence, while others simply gave an account of relations between Europeans and Aborigines. Many of these made only passing reference to criterion 15.