



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE
HISTORY**

SUMMER 2023

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UNIT 1: STUDIES IN DEPTH – WALES AND THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE

General Comments

Generally, the papers for Unit 1 performed as expected with most candidates answering each of the questions with good knowledge of the key features. They also showed ability in using different historical skills to analyse and interpret source material and reach judgements in their answers. In some cases, candidates' understanding of how to answer questions correctly was weak, and contextual knowledge was generally lacking detail. Further, it was apparent that some candidates found it difficult to complete the paper in full in the one-hour time allocated to this examination.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 In this question, candidates are given two sources and are asked to describe an issue by using both. Candidates should use both sources equally and should be taking two points from each in order to gain the highest marks. Most candidates dealt with this question very well, showed sound understanding of the sources to be discussed and were therefore able to achieve full marks. As this question is based on source extraction only, it was good to see that very few candidates included own knowledge of the topics, which was an improvement on previous years. In the *Depression, War and Recovery* paper, however, it was noted that several responses were imbalanced due to weak analysis of the visual source and were unable to gain full marks.

Q.2 In this question candidates are expected to explain a topic using the source provided. Candidates must explain the validity of the source in relation to its content, authorship, date, audience and purpose, with evidence of detailed use of the attribution needed to achieve the highest marks. In order to reach Band 3 candidates must discuss the strengths and limitations of the source.

Most candidates were able to provide a good explanation of the validity of the source, with its content discussed, and background knowledge of the issues presented. On the *Depression, War and Recovery* paper, several candidates did not provide sufficient detail to gain Band 2 marks of AO1. Across the unit as a whole, few candidates addressed the strengths, limitations and authorship.

Q.3 This question is one that will test candidates' knowledge of a topic and their ability to explain the significance of it. This can be a fairly challenging question for some candidates as it is dependent on knowledge and explanation and does not include source material to guide them. Detailed knowledge is necessary to reach the higher marks; however, some background knowledge can still enable candidates to reach the middle marks.

Overall, candidates performed well on this question, and most were able to achieve Band 3 on both AO1 and AO2. Across the options, candidates were able to show understanding of the key issue and included relevant background knowledge. Most responses provided a number of examples to demonstrate the candidates' understanding of the issue set, and a few candidates were able to confidently offer a full explanation of why the chosen issues were significant.

- Q.4** The answers to this question were generally more successful than in previous years; however, many candidates needed to enhance their focus on explaining the links between factors. They are expected to choose three topics and explain the link between them all. There is one clear link, which is the main purpose of the question – *This question is about...* Some candidates made only this link, and in doing so could not exceed Band 2 in AO2. Candidates should further develop their answers by showing other links between the three topics.

There was a range of responses to this question:

- Some candidates chose their three factors and linked them all together in one explanation.
- Other candidates explained two separate connections, covering three factors as required by the question.
- Many chose to make three or even four connections, sometimes covering all of the factors at least once.
- At other times, responses took the form of “X links to Y” without actually explaining any connection.
- Some connections identified were generic, for example, “X, Y and Z are all connected because they are about...”

The highest-scoring responses offered clear links between the elements chosen, supported by precise factual knowledge, and often referring to the historical context as well. On the whole, candidates showed excellent knowledge of the individual topics, and many could write extensively about them. However, it should be noted that candidates can gain a maximum 2 marks for knowledge, and therefore should focus on explaining the links between the three topics rather than writing a detailed description.

- Q.5** This question is aimed at assessing each candidate's ability to discuss historical interpretations. They are expected to discuss how far they agree with the interpretation given by discussing what the content of the source tells them about the subject, ensuring that they incorporate an in-depth discussion of the source's attribution (which is essential). Relevant factors to include here are the author of the interpretation, the nature of the interpretation (that is, what form the interpretation takes), when it was produced, for what purpose, and its likely audience. Candidates must also suggest different interpretations to that given in the question. In essence, candidates must:
- discuss the interpretation in the question
 - explain how that interpretation has been reached (via a discussion of the attribution)
 - suggest different interpretations.

Some outstanding responses were seen across the different options. Many candidates explained the interpretation given in the question by discussing the content along with historical context. Often, they also suggested many different interpretations. While most candidates were able to discuss the attribution by saying who the author was or what the interpretation was, as in previous years, some – otherwise high-calibre – responses did not address the attribution at all and were therefore capped at Band 2, 5 marks, in AO4. This was disappointing as they had demonstrated a great deal of knowledge regarding the historical context and the different interpretations available.

Some candidates also only discussed the interpretation in the question along with the attribution. This is also capped at Band 2, 5 marks. In AO4, in order to reach the top of Band 2, and then onto Band 3 and Band 4, candidates must have discussed the interpretation in the question, the attribution and other interpretations. Many comments in addressing the authorship were mechanical, apparently rote-learned, and indicated a lack of understanding in relation to how and why interpretations are formed. Some candidates were uncertain of the difference between historical sources and interpretations and were therefore unable to progress up the mark bands.

Summary of key points

- The handwriting of many candidates was poor, and at times illegible. Where handwriting is observably poor, it may be worthwhile investigating if they are permitted to use a word processor to complete their studies and then make use of that technology in the examination.
- Candidates must include clear references to strengths and limitation in Question 2 and make use of the attribution/authorship.
- They should emphasise their explanations, ensuring that these are clear and rely upon detailed supporting evidence when gauging the significance of factors in Question 3.
- Candidates will benefit from focusing on explaining the connections and links between the chosen factors in Question 4. Lengthy, description-only responses should be discouraged.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the italicized guidance for Question 5, thus ensuring that they answer the question accurately. Candidates should always refer to the authorship in answering the question.

HISTORY

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UNIT 2: STUDIES IN DEPTH – HISTORY WITH A EUROPEAN/WORLD FOCUS

General Comments

Generally, the papers for Unit 2 performed as expected with most candidates answering each of the questions with good knowledge of the key features of the questions. Candidates also demonstrated the ability to deploy different historical skills to analyse and evaluate source material before reaching a judgement in their answers. Candidates were clearly aware of the different Assessment Objectives and were able to gain higher marks accordingly.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 While many candidates, having used the source content and contextualized it, attained full marks in AO3, many others did not provide sufficient material from the source to gain both those marks. Unfortunately, a minority of candidates did not provide any reference to the source and, as such, were unable to be credited any AO3 marks. Overall, however, this was a well-answered question that used both the source and candidates' own knowledge in all papers.
- Q.2 This question was accessible to most candidates, with many of them providing several detailed points. Although most candidates accessed Band 2 by offering two points to partially describe the issue at hand, most common this year was a three-point response, that failed to develop the answer effectively. Many candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge, but often did not develop this to answer the question set effectively, and so did not reach Band 3. However, there were several particularly good answers in the *Germany in Transition, 1919–1939* paper, where the candidates provided detailed knowledge on the reduction of unemployment in Nazi Germany. Across the options, most candidates developed at least one issue. Responses that did not provide enough detail to support the argument being made were rewarded with either low-Band 3 or top-Band 2 marks.

Candidates should aim to describe three issues in detail when tackling this question, and they must remain within the dates set on the question. Failure to do this was especially evident in the *Changes in South Africa, 1948–1994* paper.

Q.3 Most candidates accessed this question through their understanding of the source material. The attribution in the source is a steer that the candidates are expected to use to answer the question fully. Some candidates did not access Band 3 for AO3 as they did not fully engage with the attribution, nor did they refer to the intended or likely audience. Further, many did not reach a substantiated judgement either. Most candidates, however, obtained at least Band 2 for AO3, using the content of the source and providing a partial analysis of its purpose. Those candidates who accessed Band 3 on AO3 identified the target audience of the source and gave a more developed explanation as to its purpose.

Although most responses indicated an accurate understanding of the historical context in relation to the source, they also lacked balance and/or detail to achieve Band 3. Overall, to gain higher marks candidates need more specific historical context and more developed explanations of the purpose of the source, focusing on the intended audience and the circumstances of the source's existence.

Q.4 This question was accessible to most candidates. The responses offered indicated an understanding of the source material and accessed Band 1 for AO3 by describing the source and referring to its attribution. It is recommended that candidates provide two clear and detailed factors that support either the content or the provenance of the sources. This will enable them to achieve higher marks for AO1. Across all the optional papers, some candidates offered detailed knowledge of the key feature in the question, but many others did not develop their understanding of the relevant context at AO1.

For AO3, most candidates reached Band 2 as they were able to identify and provide an analysis of the sources and reach a judgment on this. Some candidates simply paraphrased the sources and/or the authorship and as such were restricted to Band 1. Few candidates accessed Band 3 as they did not fully engage with the attribution and audience, and then did not arrive at a substantiated judgment. Some candidates accessed Band 2 by discussing the utility of the sources in a mechanistic way: they made some valid comments as to the utility of the sources but did not make the substantiated judgements that were seen in Band 3 responses. Nearly all candidates offered a judgement on which source was most useful, but in many cases justifications for their choice were often weak.

Overall, candidates must demonstrate greater understanding of the historical context of the sources and offer a more developed explanation of the authorship in order to progress further up the mark bands.

Q.5 Most candidates showed detailed contextual knowledge to support their answers, but many of them did not develop a response that directly answered the question set. This resulted in imbalanced and/or weak judgments being applied, with basic or partial analysis of the key issue. Some candidates listed factors and failed to analyse them in the correct context of the question set. Many candidates, however, demonstrated some very impressive knowledge and were awarded with full marks in AO1.

Many candidates produced a two-sided response, thus accessing Band 2 for AO2, most, however, were able to access Band 3 through a partial analysis of a range of factors. Some went on to reach a well substantiated judgement, which is essential in order to achieve Band 4 in AO2.

It is important that candidates stay within the confines of the specification in this question. In the *Russia in Transition, 1905–1924* paper, it was noted that some candidates strayed from this and missed some crucial factors. Further, in all options, some candidates only described each event without attempting an explanation of how it had an impact on the issue at hand. It seems that, overall, candidates would benefit from further assistance in focusing on developing an explanation in relation to the question.

With reference to Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) marks, generally, candidates scored well, which was pleasing to observe.

Summary of key points

- Most candidates were able to finish all questions in the time provided. Where they did not, it may be worthwhile offering some additional timing support to such students. A lengthy response to a low-tariff question is not a good use of a candidate's time.
- We would encourage candidates to demonstrate their knowledge more effectively: AO1 is awarded for every question; and is a good source of marks for those aiming to reach the higher end of the bands.
- Similarly, AO3 can provide marks for future candidates who make sure that they comment effectively on the content and attribution of the sources.
- By and large, candidates were able to show their knowledge and understanding of the topics to a good standard, analysing different historical issues throughout the set papers.

HISTORY

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UNIT 3: THEMATIC STUDIES FROM A BROAD HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

General Comments

Overall, there were some good responses seen in this unit, although certain questions continue to be poorly answered across the options. Foremost among these is Question 2, in which candidates needlessly spend too much time providing irrelevant knowledge. Another area of concern was Question 7: this was disappointing for the examining team, as there are many detailed responses, but they infrequently scored highly as they failed to offer a Welsh example, which is a requirement of the question. Consequently, candidates could not achieve as highly here as the quality of their responses may otherwise have suggested.

A review of performance across the four optional papers indicated similar levels of skills across the candidature, with no one option outperforming another in terms of the range of ability seen.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** This question was answered well across the options. Most candidates were able to recall all or most of the required answers. Very few candidates did not provide answers to all four parts of the question.
- Q.2** For this question, which required candidates to identify one similarity and one difference, it was evident that some centres had focused on the recommended exam technique, with candidates providing one clearly defined similarity and one clearly defined difference, with sources identified for both. This technique led to the most successful responses. However, some candidates are still losing marks on this question, for various reasons.
- Some are going into far more depth than is required, for example, describing the sources and then providing a similarity and a difference. Many described the sources rather than pointing out the similarities and differences.
 - Some are using their own knowledge instead of using the sources as the question demands.
 - Some are not naming and identifying the sources used.
 - Some are simply paraphrasing the wording of the question, for example, Sources B and C are different because they show changes in the role of women in warfare over time.
 - Many describe the similarities and differences but make the same point, for example, in the *Crime and Punishment* paper, the argument that “In Source A, he is working alone” as the difference, and “In Sources B and C, they are working in gangs” as the similarity. It is essential that different points are made.

- Q.3** This description-based question was generally well-answered. As in 2022, most candidates demonstrated enough knowledge to take them into Band 2. While a few scored nothing on this question, conversely only a few achieved Band 3 marks, mainly because they did not fully describe the issue, as the band descriptors demand.
- On the *Crime and Punishment* paper, many candidates were able to describe some reasons for economic hardship, but in very general terms such as growing population and rising prices. Many could reach Band 2, referring to the economic changes that led to crime. Many discussed the rising population, the decline of the cloth trade, and the dissolution of the monasteries, which led to unemployment. Few reached Band 3 as answers lacked sufficient detail.
 - On the *Health and Medicine* paper, most candidates were able to describe different methods that were used to avoid the Black Death. Most were able to access Band 2, however, few reached Band 3 as answers again lacked sufficient detail.
 - On the *Warfare* paper, answers were varied. Many candidates offered good responses, referring to nursing, and Florence Nightingale and so on. However, many answers were generalised with allusions often made to changes during the twentieth century as opposed to the nineteenth century.
 - Finally, on the *Migration* paper answers were varied, with many candidates focusing on the general movement to America as opposed to the Puritan settlers, Pilgrim Fathers and those that followed. The higher-scoring responses offered detailed examples of the challenges faced by the early Puritan settlers, including starvation, the Indigenous peoples and difficult conditions. These responses reached, and often exceeded, Band 2 and above.
- Q.4** Across all four thematic studies this question was on the Welsh historic site. This question also required a descriptive answer. As with Question 3, there were very few candidates who received zero marks, with most of the responses achieving Band 2 (for much the same reasons as in Question 3). However, the quality of responses was a little varied across the four thematic studies.
- In the *Crime and Punishment* paper, most candidates were aware that changes in policing occurred in Merthyr Tydfil. Many were able to reach Band 2 with specific detail as to the changes that occurred. Answers here tended to be a description of crime in Merthyr itself, with many tending to focus on life in “China” and Merthyr as opposed to the developments in policing during this time. These answers remained in Band 1.
 - In the *Health and Medicine* paper, candidates who performed well tended to know the historical site in some detail. The higher-achieving candidates were able to cite Thomas W Rammell’s report, the 1848 Public Health Act, and the work of Dr Henry James Paine. The responses of those who scored lower marks tended to refer only to sewage and housing, including Stanley Street. Some responses were highly generalized, with little or no reference to Cardiff, instead discussing Britain-wide improvements during this period. Responses here tended to consist of a general description of public health improvements, with very few candidates giving examples that were specific to Cardiff. This again led to a fairly low number of Band 3 marks being awarded.
 - In the *Warfare* option, this question was well answered with most candidates accessing Band 2. Detailed examples were given of the main defensive features of Harlech Castle, with some cogent references to factors such as defensive walls and its geographical siting.
 - In the *Migration* paper, this question was well answered with most candidates able to access Band 2. Detailed examples were given of the challenges faced by the early settlers in Patagonia.

Q.5 To get into Band 2 for AO1 and Band 3 for AO2, candidates were required to provide specific references to the set enquiry, rather than offer merely a generalised overview and explanation. Most candidates were focused on explanation, rather than simply providing a descriptive answer. This meant that many candidates achieved Band 2 for AO1 and Band 3 for AO2. However, there were relatively few who achieved Band 4 for AO2, mainly due to the lack of detailed historical context.

- In the *Crime and Punishment* paper, this question was generally well answered with many candidates demonstrating good detail and knowledge about the importance of prison reformers such as John Howard and Elizabeth Fry. Many candidates could explain their influence, and the highest-scoring responses also included the work of GO Paul, and Fry's establishment of the *Association for the Reformation of Female Prisoners*.
- In the *Health and Medicine* paper, many candidates knew the work of Simpson and Lister and were able to describe their work. Most described the work of both, however, there was a lack of explanation in many responses and certainly very few that explained the long-term importance of these two. Again, there were very few answers at Band 4 as candidates tended to describe rather than explain, and a few confused Lister and Simpson. Some candidates accessed the higher bands for AO2 by discussing the wider significance of the work of both scientists.
- In the *Warfare* paper, this question elicited some good responses, with many candidates demonstrating a detailed understanding of the reasons why the English Navy defeated the Spanish Armada. Many candidates accessed Band 3 in AO2, however, once again, few responses in Band 4 emerged.
- In the *Migration* option, most candidates focused on the reasons why Irish, Italian and Jewish migration happened in the nineteenth century. Their responses, by and large, reached Band 2 and sometimes toward the higher end of that band. Few achieved Band 1 or indeed 0 marks, but the work of those that did was characterized by generalized comments and undeveloped arguments. Further, some candidates incorrectly wrote about twentieth-century migration instead of that in the nineteenth century.

Q.6 This question required candidates to explain the significance of a set issue. There were few candidates who failed to access at least Band 1 for AO1, and for AO2, most candidates made some attempt to analyse the significance of the set issue. Nevertheless, as with Question 5, it was the quality of contextual support that differentiated lower-band responses from the fuller analysis required for Band 3 and Band 4.

- *In the Crime and Punishment* option, there were some good answers, but overall, the question was not answered as well as had been expected. Relatively few candidates went beyond Band 2 on AO2. Some answers were mainly descriptive, others provided only one or two factors, for example, the development of cars, helicopters or the use of walkie-talkies or radios. A minority focused on technological advances instead of communication and transport. The highest-scoring answers were able to give specific dates and explain how these developments helped the police.

- In the *Health and Medicine* option, many answers lacked detail and explanation. Where candidates did well, they included references to, among others, the Beveridge Report, Aneurin Bevan, figures for prescriptions and the paucity of public care prior to the period. However, many candidates gave a generalized description of the NHS and the services it provides or gave a description of its foundation and establishment during the post-war period. Only a handful of candidates included specific dates and references, ergo few marks in Bands 3 and 4 were given.
- In the *Warfare* paper, many responses lacked detail and explanation of the significance of new technology. Generalised comments were made about the development of technology after 1945, however, these seemed to be discussing the whole of the twentieth century as opposed to the post-1945 period. Few candidates incorporated specific dates and references, and – as in Health and Medicine – few marks in Band 3 and Band 4 were given.
- In the *Migration* paper, most candidates had a general idea of why EU immigrants came to Britain, for example, the search for work, and the existence of freedom of movement. Unfortunately, only a small proportion of these provided the detailed historical support needed to access the higher bands. Many responses focused on post-war Britain, with some confusion regarding the Commonwealth. As per most of the other options, for this question, relatively few candidates were awarded marks higher than those available in Band 2 on AO2.

Q.7 It was clear that candidates clearly understood the need to cover all three historical periods however there tended to be an imbalance and the modern era was generally not as well covered as the two earlier eras. Many candidates also discussed variations in the extent of change over time. While many candidates offered Welsh examples from all three periods, there are still a significant number that do not provide any specific Welsh examples. This capped those candidates at Band 2 (2 marks) for AO1. While still able to reach the higher bands for AO2, there needs to be clearer focus on Welsh examples to score in AO1.

- Though there were some excellent responses to this question, there were relatively few candidates who achieved Band 4, particularly for AO2. Timing remains an issue for many candidates, notably those who wrote in great detail on the medieval/early modern era and seemingly rushed through their modern examples. This contributed to unbalanced responses that did not score as well as they otherwise could have.
- For *Crime and Punishment*, most candidates showed some knowledge of the changes in attitudes to punishment used over time. However, there was a tendency among some to lose focus and to drift into a discussion of the changing nature of punishments and policing as opposed to the changing attitudes to punishment.
- In *Health and Medicine*, candidates seemed to have a reasonable understanding of medical knowledge in the Middle Ages, but after this, responses became generalized. Few specific examples emerged, and there were fewer still references to how these showed an improvement. A minority of candidates reached Band 4 as most did not discuss variations in improvement, nor did they refer to the Welsh context – either at all or in a meaningful way. Overall, most responses remained within Band 2 for AO1 as they tended to be general and lacking in the specific detail needed.
- In *Warfare*, candidates seemed to have a reasonable understanding of how tactics and strategy have changed over time, but many answers were somewhat general. Very few candidates reached Band 4 in AO2 as they did not discuss the extent of change in detail. These also tended to lack references to the Welsh context, which meant they could not exceed Band 2 in AO1.

- For *Migration*, candidates showed some knowledge of the extent emigrants from Britain have had a positive impact on the countries they settled over time. However, there was a tendency with some to lose focus and to drift into a discussion of the reasons for emigrating as opposed to the impact of emigration on the host countries. Positively, examples of the Welsh Context were seen, which enabled many candidates to access Band 3 in AO1, and several of the higher-scoring responses reached Band 3 because they offered a discussion on the extent to which the impact was positive or negative.

Summary of key points

- When answering Question 2, candidates need to be concise and clear, stating which sources are similar and which are not. The sources must be named.
- For Questions 3 and 4, detailed knowledge is a requirement, with the better answers giving at least three specific points in detail to reach Band 3.
- For Question 7, candidates must cover all three historical periods, ensuring that there is a reference to the Welsh context in all of them.

HISTORY

GCSE

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UNIT 4: WORKING AS AN HISTORIAN

General Comments

The work presented was of a good standard with no obvious difference in quality in comparison with previous years. Most of the work was handwritten and of a reasonable and sensible length. Centres that adhered to the recommended time limit for the write up succeeded in producing more focused and relevant answers.

The vast majority of centres opted for the NEA exercises produced by WJEC. Most centres used the marking checklist produced by WJEC. This is recommended as it is a useful tool in establishing consistency within and between centres. However, annotation on scripts and on the marking checklist were inconsistent. Even markers at the same centre followed different practices. Annotation should be directed at the moderator, indicating in the script where the assessment objectives have been met and adding a summative comment, linked to the mark scheme, either on the script or in the space provided on the checklist.

It is worth stressing the importance of keeping to the submission deadline date. If a centre finds itself in a situation where they cannot meet the deadline, please contact the GCSE History team at WJEC as soon as possible. The sample should include the H1 form signed by the teacher, the H2 forms signed by candidates and a copy of the NEA exercise. Care needs to be taken with the inputting of candidates' details and marks on the H1 and H2 forms, as well as on IAMIS. This is all required for a smooth moderation process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Part (a) On the whole, Part (a) was done well with candidates discussing the usefulness and reliability of their chosen sources. Many candidates successfully produced coherent pieces of prose with source evaluation integrated in the answer. However, some candidates' responses were mainly led by the content of the sources. Candidates should answer the question set using the sources critically in support of their answers. For example, the question on women in the First World War should show how the war affected women by reference to greater work opportunities: working in munitions factories, on farms and as nurses for example, and introduce the sources in support. Answers to Part (a) require a conclusion clearly addressing the question.

There is still a tendency to reward any reference to utility and reliability, even if it is incorrect or irrelevant to the question. Candidates need to indicate what a source is useful or reliable for. There was some generosity in awarding AO3 especially at the top band. Too many candidates were awarded Band 4 for work that clearly did not merit it. There was, also, an increase in candidates merely selecting four sources and discussing and evaluating them without much consideration of the question and no attempt to integrate the answer and source evaluation.

Part (b) A common criticism of centres' marking involves the awarding of AO4 at the top end of Band 3 and at Band 4 in particular. As has consistently been pointed out in the General Report, centre reports and at Professional Learning events, Part (b) is not another source evaluation exercise.

Effective answers begin with candidates identifying the two given interpretations using a historian's viewpoint and then examining the sources he or she might have used to come to that interpretation. Candidates should consider how and why interpretations differ and make a judgement on the question asked. To achieve the higher bands, judgements need more depth and detail and be related to the question. On the whole there was generosity in awarding AO2 and in particular AO4.

For further guidance and support please refer to the guidance for teaching Unit 4 on the GCSE History pages of the website or contact the GCSE History team.

Summary of key points

- Integrate the source evaluation in the narrative in Part (a).
- Select a range of sources in Part (a) and use sources in support of discussion.
- Explain the given interpretations in Part (b).
- Effective answers in Part (b) begin with the view of an historian and then examine the sources that historian may have used to come to their interpretation.
- A judgement on the question is clearly made and supported in Part (b).



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