



General Certificate of Education

General Studies 5761 *Specification A*

GA3W Society, Politics and the Economy (Written)

Report on the Examination *2008 examination - June series*

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General points

This summer's paper discriminated very effectively and able, well-prepared students responded extremely well to its challenge. Most students are now familiar with the structure of the paper and the skills they need to develop to tackle it successfully. However, the trend towards shorter answers to Question 1 was reversed and more candidates erroneously looked beyond the source for their answers.

Question 3 is always about source evaluation yet there remain too many candidates who write nothing on evaluation, preferring to concentrate on family issues raised by the source. There were very few instances of questions remaining unattempted and examiners reported a particularly good response to Question 2 on the possible effects of working parents on family life and genuine concern expressed in answers to Question 4 about creeping surveillance.

Specific questions

Question 1

- This is the only question on the paper that confines itself to material contained solely within the source yet a larger number of students tried to look beyond the source. Unfortunately, even if relevant, this cannot be credited and is another example of how time can be lost at an early stage.
- Candidates are asked only to *identify* 5 points. Lengthy explanations are not required to answer this 5 mark question. In this session, answers tended to be longer. 5 separate sentences would usually suffice but 1 page answers were not uncommon. At least one candidate wrote 3½ sides for the five marks available and had no time for Question 5 where 15 marks were available.
- Levels of comprehension were generally good and most candidates identified factors such as recording programmes to avoid missing meals; setting regular mealtimes, preparing the night before, building mealtimes around family routines and keeping Sunday lunch sacred.

Question 2

- The issue of working parents clearly struck a chord and there were many good answers which used both information from the extract and personal experience.
- Most candidates offered well-balanced and well-informed discussion although a few seemed to attribute all modern ills of the family to working parents.
- A number of candidates argued that financial pressures were such that many parents had no alternative but to work to maintain living standards.
- There was some anecdotal evidence that children of varying ages missed having their parents around at times but mainly if the working hours were very long, threatening the structure of family life.
- Others expressed the opposite view arguing that they sometimes appreciated time away from their parents and that they learned to be more independent and resourceful in their parents' absence.
- Ideas from the source were well-used but only a minority brought in points based on their own knowledge.
- Some responses were very lengthy and sometimes this compromised the ability of candidates to tackle Question 5 effectively.

Question 3

- It is clear that some candidates are very well prepared for a source evaluation question. They understand things like the presence of bias, the difference between fact and opinion, the use of quantitative evidence, the provenance of the source, linguistic devices and the importance of providing examples.
- Some students were less well prepared and tended to rely on often lengthy and descriptive source summaries or equally lengthy comments on energy policy. Such answers did not achieve marks higher than the Level I band.
- There seemed to be a higher number of candidates who gained no marks because they clearly did not understand the requirements of the question and even the most basic rudimentaries of source evaluation.
- The other main weakness was that some candidates who did understand at least some elements of source evaluation did not score as highly as they might have done as their answers lacked sufficient supporting examples.

Question 4

- The ways in which the surveillance society might record family life seemed to surprise some candidates but most argued that surveillance was necessary to keep the vast majority safe.
- A few candidates seemed to think that almost every family faced imminent risk of kidnap and that terrorism was far more common than it is.
- There was a reassuring level of awareness about the dangers of data misuse and identity fraud.
- A surprisingly large number of candidates seemed ready to swap the potential dangers of retail outlets keeping personal data with the speed and convenience of making a transaction.
- A minority of more sophisticated answers were quite successful in being able to balance the need for personal freedom and liberty with the need for individual protection and national security.

Question 5

- Not all candidates left sufficient time to tackle this question – one which carries the highest number of marks on the paper.
- There was quite a high level of awareness of changes that have been taking place in the family structure in the last 20 years.
- Most candidates offered coherent responses to the question and were able to relate to the changing structure of the family.
- Although a few wrote about ‘moral decline’ most answers outlining changes in family structure were non-judgmental.
- Most candidates were less successful when they had to explain the changes taking place although most recognised changing social attitudes to illegitimacy and single-sex partnerships and the rise in the economic status of women, some of whom had switched their attention from marriage and the family to their own career. Even the cost of weddings was felt to be a contributory factor in their decline.
- Fewer identified factors such as the impact of changing legislation, the declining influence of religion in society and the rising cost of marriage in the 21st century.

- In coming to a conclusion on this question very few candidates felt that there would be a move back to 'traditional' family structures but did not feel that this necessarily meant the end of family life.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.