**A Level Exam Question Guidance**

**Unit Y212**

**The American Revolution 1740-96**

**1 Hour paper – knowledge based**

The key to this paper is to utilise the 1 hour very effectively. That means that both responses must be fully focused on the question. There is no time, or room, for going off on tangents and for waffling. Every sentence must be honed towards answering the question.

The structure of the two different questions are straightforward and are outlined below. It is important to remember that you cannot mix and match the questions – you must answer both questions in the same section so take a couple of minutes at the start to decide which set offers you the best chance of success.

**Question Type 1 – The Either / Or Question – 10 marks**

This is a relatively straightforward question but the most common downfall is not covering the two options fairly equally. A lop sided answer is where marks will most likely be dropped.

There will be an opening question;

‘Which of the following was most significant in America’s victory in the War of Independence?’

And then two options given;

1. Washington’s generalship
2. British mistakes

It then asks you to explain referencing both given options. There is no need or any time to look at alternative factors – it must be closely focused on the two factors given.

This is essentially a three paragraph answer. The first two paragraphs are focused on each of the factors given. It is entirely OK to look at each separately, the most important thing is that you link them back to the question (in this instance, their relationship to the outcome of the war) and that you provide clear, accurate and concise examples and evidence to explain that relationship. You may take an opportunity to compare the two factors in these opening paragraphs but this is not crucial. Take the opportunity if it arises but don’t crow bar it in.

The final paragraph is a comparative conclusion. Here you should compare and contrast the factors consistently, making it clear which of the two you think is the more significant factor. There should be no ambiguity in your answer, however it is entirely reasonable to accept that both factors are important but that one is more important. I don’t foresee a situation where a factor will be totally irrelevant!

This answer should take no more than 20 minutes. It needs to be very focused, concise and to the point. Every sentence should be explaining and / or evaluating. You have to be disciplined enough to know when to stop writing, confident that you have made good points throughout. The danger is of over-writing and using up time needed for question type 2.

**Question Type 2 – The Essay Question – 20 Marks**

This is a standard essay question that will look at a different time period and topic of the course from its Question 1 partner. Again, there is nothing inherently difficult about this as long as you have revised properly.

You are looking here at a classic 5 part essay. An introduction that gives brief context and outlines the direction of the essay. 3 paragraphs (2 if time pressured) that looks at possible factors and assesses their significance on the question and finally a conclusion that evaluates the themes discussed and makes a clear judgement on the question. For example;

‘Political ideology was the main reason for the signing of the Declaration of Independence’ How far do you agree?

Intro – Gives brief context of 1776, then chooses political ideology, consistent taxation and battle of Lexington and Concord as its themes

Paragraph 1 – Outlines why political ideology led to the Declaration (works of Paine and Locke, increased letters and pamphlets by revolutionary writers)

Paragraph 2 –Outlines why increased taxation led to Declaration (Intolerable Acts, Stamp Act, No taxation without representation)

Paragraph 3 – Outlines why Lexington and Concord led to Declaration (actual armed conflict, casualties on both sides, American victory increased confidence)

Conclusion – Weighs up the themes and assesses the importance of each, using direct comparison to show which is the most significant. Clear judgement on whether political ideology was most important factor or not.

Again, this is fairly straightforward and you have about 40 mins to write the essay. A sound and clear introduction will be key – it will set you on course and you can refer to it if you get stuck. Take a minute or two at the start to consider your options but once decided write to the plan outlined in the introduction.

Stay tightly focused – although longer that the time for Question 1, you still want to be consistently addressing the question. Interim judgements in each paragraph is also good practice.

The best answers will also be able to link paragraphs together – think about the best order of your themes to make it easy to move between them. As a rule, we suggest addressing the factor in the question first to ensure you cover it but if your plan works better with it either second or third that is fine. Just be sure to discuss it properly – an answer that fails to address the main theme of the question will do very badly.

For this entire paper, revision is key. As a content / knowledge based paper is it vital that you know the details across the breadth of the course, including content from the very start and the very end. The questions are set up to test different periods within the course, so there is no room for gambling on leaving sections out. This is a paper you should do very well in but given the short time frame it is also one where a lack of revision and focus on the question will cost you dearly.