

Depth Study USA – Part C exemplars

- Below are a series of possible questions for Part C (10 marks)
- To achieve at least 6 /10, you need a balanced (yes / no) answer
- Ideally, you want to have 3 paragraphs (2 for 1 against or vice versa) for 8/10
- However, you can get +2 for developing one side of an argument effectively.

Suggested revision activities

This is a word document – you could take the information, which is in ‘note form’ and develop each part of the answer into an essay written in full prose.

OR

Simply read through them to familiarise yourself with the style of questions, to give you more confidence in tackling them and developing more supporting knowledge.

OR

Do both!

Remember:

Always begin with a phrase which will demonstrate that you have read and understood the question.

Using question 1 (below) as an example.

- 1. Republican policies were the main reason for the economic boom in the USA in the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.**

Yes – There is certainly some validity in the view that the economy in the 1920s boomed because of the nature of the policies adopted by the Republican party which dominated the decade.

Firstly, Republican Presidents (Harding, Coolidge and Hoover) were all very much pro-business in their outlook. One of their main policies was more an ‘attitude’ called laissez-faire economics. This meant that they believed in limited government interference in the economy, leaving the economy to the experts, the big business and corporations that knew what they were doing. Hoover and ‘rugged individualism’; low taxes on income and business profits encouraged economic growth and spending; business profits allowed wealthy to invest in industry and expansion; tariffs on imported goods encouraged the buying of American goods – imports more expensive; no control over financial institutions, etc.

No

US confidence in the economy encouraged buying of shares, purchasing of new consumer goods; availability of credit through hire purchase; banks lent money – ‘buying on the margin’ of shares pushed up share prices; mass marketing and advertising; mass production – industrial production doubled; technological advances helped modernise industry; First World War left USA as world industrial superpower; USA’s vast resources, etc.

2. Mass production was the main reason why there was prosperity of the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Production line techniques and economies of scale kept costs down so lower prices were possible; Henry Ford and car/lorry industry production by the end of the 1920s biggest US industry – one car per five Americans; older industries stimulated e.g. steel, petrol, road building; wages rising overall – if not in some sectors nor keeping pace with profits. For those with higher wages there was demand for many domestic goods – radios, telephones, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washing machines; electricity allowed demand to grow for these goods which could also be mass produced etc.

No

Mass production reduced the need for labour and unemployment remained at 5% throughout the decade; government policies helped – Fordney-McCumber Act (1922) increased tariffs on imports and so protected US market; cutting taxes increased disposable incomes; unregulated banks and speculation; was the spending based on real disposable income or was money borrowed on HP?; speculation and 'buying on the margin'; inadequate anti-Trust Laws aided largest companies; Federal Highways Act funded 50% of the construction of new major highways. Low competition from war weary Europe; cheap credit and advertising wealth of resources; food prices low BUT agriculture did not share in the prosperity etc.

3. The policy of laissez-faire was the main reason for the economic boom of the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Laissez-faire was the main economic policy followed by three consecutive Republican governments (Harding, Coolidge and Hoover); low government intervention in the economy allowed business and enterprise to grow rapidly; low taxes on business and income meant there was more expendable income for consumers and greater profits for businesses and shareholders; bigger profits helped increase share prices and encourage greater stock market speculation and investment; profits allowed businesses to reinvest and expand, creating more jobs and higher wages in some sectors of the economy.

No

More significant – new inventions and innovations increased production and led to cheaper products; electrification gave industry cheaper and more widely available power sources and also allowed for powering domestic appliances; mass production in factories – assembly line first used by Henry Ford; knock-on effect of car industry – roads, diners, glass, rubber, etc.; mass-marketing of products, commercials, adverts, radios, etc.; hirepurchase now available for many consumers; increased speculation; availability of resources in the USA; high government tariffs on foreign goods encouraged US consumers to buy American goods and protect domestic industry, etc.

4. Credit and hire purchase were the main reasons why there was economic growth in the USA in the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

YES

Easier for low income families to buy new manufactured goods; hire purchase used by many firms such as motor industry; banks were more willing to loan money to individuals and firms as confidence

was high; buying on the margin allowed many speculators to invest in companies; many new millionaires made from investments based on borrowing money, etc.

NO

Republican policies – low taxation, tariffs and laissez-faire economics allowed profits to increase; mass-marketing and advertising campaigns for new consumer goods; mass production such as assembly line used to make goods cheaper and faster; USA world leader in many sectors, e.g. chemicals after First World War; new inventions such as plastics and household consumer goods, e.g. vacuum cleaners/radios; electrification allowed for more productive factories; markets gained during WWI, etc.

5. The development of the motor car was the main reason for the economic boom of the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

YES

Mass production reduced cost of cars – by 1920s one was produced every 10 seconds; affordable and reliable – the Model T dropped in price from \$1200 to \$295 by 1928; allowed many middle-class families in rural and urban areas freedom; stimulated boom in other sectors of society – radio, cinema, sports, etc.; caused massive road building projects to connect USA and rural and urban areas; decreased isolation for rural families; allowed women to travel into towns and experience nightlife; increased freedom for women; breakdown of social norms in more urban areas, etc.

NO

Prohibition led to illegal drinking, speakeasies – ‘Roaring Twenties’; changing attitudes, especially in urban areas and amongst middle-class families led to increased freedom for some women – flappers; entertainment industry – impact of film and Hollywood (film stars, the first ‘talkie’ in 1927); jazz music and night life; expendable income due to economic boom; new household products such as vacuum cleaners increased leisure time; advertising changed fashions; other new technology such as typewriters opened up new job opportunities for women, etc.

6. The entertainment industry was the reason life changed in the USA in the 1920s. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Covered all sections of society and gave a wider choice of entertainment; access to news; radios – 60000 in 1920, 10 by 1929; huge choice of stations; music industry benefited; silent movies and then talkies from 1927; cinemas available to mass audience – 100m tickets sold every week by 1929; Hollywood created wealthy studios, stars and fans; film made sex a less taboo subject; jazz clubs, new dances lessened restrictions on young, developed new fashions; Flappers; Cullen’s poetry, etc.

No

Several states had film censorship; film industry itself set up some moral restrictions in 1927 – Hays code; **other factors more significant** – cars increased from 9m to 26m; lorries, new roads, suburbs; telephones doubled to 20m; electricity in urban areas; labour saving devices; advertising; tabloid newspapers; Prohibition; mass production lowered prices; increased employment and wages; women had the vote even if of limited effect; very little change for minority groups; rural areas more conservative; strength of religion continued; growth of expendable income, etc.

7. Immigration was the main cause of intolerance in US society in the 1920s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

1901–10 huge numbers of immigrants coming to America – 8.5 million including Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia and Italians fleeing poverty; competition for the best jobs in the cities and towns between Western European and Eastern European immigrants; many of these were Americanised with American prejudices; WASPs saw these poorer immigrants as a threat to American religious beliefs (protestant as opposed to Catholic or Judaism); this fear increased with 1917 Russian Revolutions and Bolshevik seizure of power; Red Scare – communism and anarchism un-American; 1919 anarchist bomb plots led to Palmer Raids; Sacco and Vanzetti; KKK; immigration quotas, etc.

No

Many immigrants blended in and were 'Americanised'; some brought expertise and wealth and built successful companies; other factors more important – segregation and Jim Crow Laws in the South; KKK violence and propaganda; religious intolerance – Monkey Trial; Prohibition led to growth of gangsterism and alcohol use and abuse; native Americans; women, etc.

8. A loss of confidence in the economy was the main reason for the Depression in the USA in the 1930s? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Confidence of speculators and investors key to rising share prices throughout the 1920s; banks lent money and allowed speculators to buy on the margin; hire-purchase based on a high confidence economy; consumers bought new mass produced goods creating profit, more jobs and higher wages; loss of confidence led to Wall St Crash in 1929, etc.

No

Republican Party policies, especially tariffs, meant it was difficult for US companies to gain an international export market for their goods; led to overproduction of mass produced goods; market saturation – consumers had bought new cars, fridges, etc. and were repaying loans; European markets still recovering from WWI; family income unevenly distributed in the USA – 60% of Americans too poor to participate in prosperity; slowdown in economy in other areas since 1927 – house building, cars, etc.

9. The main reason the stock market collapsed 1929 was overproduction? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

YES

Mass production in factories and the use of the assembly line led to overproduction of consumer goods that could not be sold; market saturated (50% of families had an income of less than \$2000 a year); prices began to drop and profits fell rapidly; knock-on effects from primary to secondary and tertiary industries; lower wages and less spending power; led to loss in confidence in markets, etc.

NO

Over speculation had led to rise in share prices that were overvalued; many speculators had borrowed 'on the margin' which pushed up share prices artificially; panic selling in Autumn 1929; lack of overseas markets, especially Europe, due to US tariffs and war loans; poor distribution of wealth in the USA –

Black Americans, farmers, workers in old industries; lack of effective government action due to Hoover's 'rugged individualism', etc.

10. Organised crime was the main reason for the failure of prohibition? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Many Federal Prohibition agents were poorly paid and privately opposed to Prohibition, leading them to be open to bribery and threats from criminal gangs – nearly 10% of agents were sacked for accepting bribes; state officials, judges, senior police officers and jury members were often bought off and gang leaders were not convicted for their crimes; authorities in some states varied in their support for Prohibition; some were actively involved with criminal gangs and profited from bootleg liquor and the smuggling of alcohol across borders; some city and local authorities actively worked for gangs and helped remove business rivals and murder opponents or prevented Federal agents from making arrests; 130 murders by gangs between 1926–27; Al Capone and Saint Valentine's Massacre, 1929, etc.

No

Federal authorities did increase the number of arrests and seizures of illegal breweries throughout the 1920s; only a small minority of officials in some cities involved in corruption; more important – there was never an overwhelming majority of US citizens that supported Prohibition from the start, especially in the more liberal big cities; drinking continued behind closed doors and consumption increased in the 1920s; speakeasies became commonplace in most cities and towns – 32 000 in New York by 1929; many people took part in distilling illegal moonshine; loss of revenue for the government saw many call for an end to Prohibition; impact on farmers; effects of Depression and FDR's promises of a New Deal, etc.

11. Republican reactions to the Wall Street Crash were the main reason for Roosevelt's success in the presidential election of 1932? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

Their attitude that market forces would quickly adjust the imbalance; traditional laissez-faire inadequate for the scale of the problems; Hoover's Presidential Addresses aimed at reassurance, 'prosperity just around the corner', and voluntary aid not convincing; measures taken inadequate/inappropriate – initially lowering taxes; cutting government expenditure; new tariff; did not tackle banks – c.5000 collapsed by 1932, despite Reconstruction of Finance Act on higher incomes angered some supporters; Republicans blocked Relief Bill in 1932; Republican Campaign ineffective, etc.

No

Only a minority of voters – wealthy and speculators affected by the Crash and stock market recovering by 1932; government did not create Hoovervilles; response to Bonus Army's campaign and action against the camps 1932 seen as heartless by many voters; weaknesses in the economy and inequalities of wealth longer standing than 1929–32; Roosevelt's personality and success as governor of New York; Democrats united for once; effective whistle-stop campaign; depression worsening, by 1932 13m unemployed = 25% of workers; despite vague New Deal promises, voters were willing to try any alternative, etc.

12. Hoover was the main reason for Roosevelt's success in the 1932 Presidential election? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

YES

Depression brought high unemployment – nearly 14million by 1933; President Hoover believed in 'rugged individualism' and offered very little government help to those affected; government schemes provided less than \$500million to help create jobs; wages dropping rapidly; farmers' prices continuing to fall rapidly; banks refused to lend money to businesses; Hoover increased tariffs which led to increased taxes on US goods abroad; Hoover blamed for Depression and its effects, e.g. homelessness and 'Hoovervilles'; soup kitchens; Hoover and Republican's unpopularity – people felt the government was doing very little to solve effects of Depression; Hoover's actions with the Bonus Marchers in 1932, etc.

NO

Roosevelt promised action – Relief, Recovery and Reform; popular amongst unemployed and some middle-class voters due to his energetic and optimistic campaigns – the opposite of Hoover; offered USA hope; some saw Roosevelt as a way of preventing socialist revolution in the USA; Roosevelt had proved his policies could help when he was Governor of New York State in 1928 – first state scheme for unemployed, etc.

13. Roosevelt's New Deal improved the lives of the poor in America? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

New Deal helped return confidence to the banking system (Emergency Banking Act); CCC, PWA and CWA helped relieve unemployment – millions of jobs created; NRA promoted better wages and working conditions; FERA had a \$500 million budget to assist those most in need – soup kitchens, clothing, bedding and work schemes; Wagner Act allowed trade unions to bargain with employers for better pay; Social Security Act, 1935 helped provide pensions and unemployment benefit; WPA helped find work and create jobs; RA helped sharecroppers and poor farm labourers, etc.

No

Unemployment persisted (never lower than 5 million) throughout the 1930s until US entry into WWII; unemployment actually rose in 1938 due to budget cuts in the New Deal; many poor Americans remained on low incomes, especially in rural areas – cotton prices did not recover until 1941; some major New Deal agencies such as the AAA focused only on helping certain groups rather than all unemployed; many Black Americans, farm labourers worst hit with little help from the New Deal; growing opposition from the Supreme Court and Republicans meant the New Deal was limited in effect, etc.

14. The New Deal was successful in dealing with the problem of unemployment? How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Yes

FERA helped poor unemployed – \$500 million spent on soup kitchens and other relief; CCC helped unemployed men for 6 months with conservation work; PWA gave jobs to build schools, roads, dams; TVA provided jobs in the Tennessee Valley through electrification; Social Security Act provided benefits for sick and disabled; WPA helped unskilled find jobs – office workers, actors, etc.

No

Unemployment remained a constant problem; actually increased when state funding was cut in 1937; only saved by Second World War; other areas more significant to New Deal – banks (Emergency Banking Act and Securities Exchange Commission); ‘fireside chats’; AAA to help farmers increase food prices; NRA to improve working conditions; Wagner Act allowed trade union representation; Social Security Act also for widows and pensioners; RA helped tenant farmers and FSA gave loans to farmers to buy land, etc

**15. Roosevelt’s Second New Deal was successful in dealing with the effects of the Depression?
How far do you agree? Explain your answer.**

YES

Second New Deal focused on helping the victims of Depression and creating a fairer society in America; Wagner Act, 1935 allowed workers to join trade unions and bargain with employers; Social Security Act, 1935 helped provide pensions for the elderly, unemployment benefit and help for the sick and disabled; WPA addressed continued unemployment by providing work on schools, hospitals and highways; Resettlement Administration helped resettle farmers who had been affected by the Dust Bowl – later the Farm Security Administration provided loans to farmers and set up work camps for migrant workers, etc.

NO

New Deal faced critics from the Republican Party and big business who viewed government intervention as socialist and anti-American; faced opposition for allowing trade unions; radical opponents such as Dr Francis Townsend and Huey Long criticised the Second New Deal as too moderate and proposed more radical solutions; First Hundred Days more important than Second New Deal – Emergency Banking Act, CCC and PWA provided millions of jobs until 1939; FERA spent \$500 million helping the poor; TVA most successful agency; Second World War, etc.