

History A Level  
Non-exam assessment (NEA)  
Commentary on Specimen  
Answer 1

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# GCE History: NEA Commentary

## Specimen Answer 1 (Martin Luther King)

### Marks awarded

**AO1:** the mark awarded is a low Level 4.

It is placed in Level 4 because the Investigation is generally analytical, it offers judgements and shows good awareness of change and continuity. It is well written with sound understanding of some of the concepts that are relevant to the issue of the question.

There are, however, a number of weaknesses that limit the mark to low Level 4:

- Understanding of 'black civil rights' is assumed and an attempt, albeit brief, should have been made to define the concept
- The introductory paragraph does not make clear the argument to be advanced. It appears to advance an argument about the significance of King to the Civil Rights Movement, rather than to place King's contribution in the context of 100 years. Indeed, it appears that the candidate had initially preferred to limit the scope to the 1950s and 1960s. The reference to 'before and during King's time' needs to be developed as this would be more consistent with the question
- Having failed to frame the question adequately in the introduction, the ensuing paragraphs do not always have a clear and coherent analytical direction
- It does not deal adequately with the 100 years context, for example, there is very little analysis of the period before Washington and the comments on the period of Reconstruction and its aftermath may be seen as contentious and undeveloped
- Whilst generally well organised, the attempt to look at factors other than the roles of individuals is not well integrated or developed.

**Mark: 14/20**

**AO2:** the mark awarded is top Level 3.

The three primary sources are generally well integrated into the overall analysis and represent a range, both of type and chronology. The analysis of the evaluation of the Washington speech is generally effective, clearly setting out the context, the limitations and the argument. Some of the comments are rather generalised, but the analysis is generally good.

The analysis of the Du Bois article is less effective. It is not clear when the particular extract cited was produced and is limited in terms of context and, to an extent, purpose. It needs to be clearer to whom it was addressed and who the readers of the magazine 'The Crisis' were. It says much about content, but is undeveloped as to the significance of provenance and tone.

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There are similar weaknesses in the analysis of the speech by Roy Wilkins (initially referred to as an 'article'). There is no indication of when precisely the speech was made or to whom, although there are general references to the broad context. There is no analysis of the significance of Wilkins' position and what might be concluded from this. There are useful references to tone and some appropriate references to impact, but its focus is more on what was said than the evaluation of it as source in the context of the question.

**Mark: 6/10**

**AO3:** the mark awarded is top Level 3.

The analysis and evaluation is of the interpretations of Meier and Carson. There is good examination of the historians and the context of their writings with some suggestion as to how these had an impact on their views, although this part of the analysis could have been developed. For example, Meier is described as, 'a white professor who taught at black colleges' without any suggestion as to how this may, or may not, have been significant. The comments made are relevant, but rely too much on the reader to make conclusions.

There are, however, some serious weaknesses. Both interpretations are essentially of the contribution of King to the Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. As such, they are, at best, partial in terms of the issue of the question. Meier is only referred to once in the essay before being chosen as an interpretation to analyse and evaluate and his actual overall view is unclear: what does 'King as a paradox-a conservative militant' actually mean? There are more references to Carson throughout the essay and a clearer explanation of his interpretation and the treatment of Carson is more effective, but does not compensate sufficiently for the weaknesses in the evaluation of Meier.

Overall, the selection of these historians to evaluate is questionable in relation to appropriateness and value. Theirs are interpretations of a limited aspect of the essay as a whole.

**Mark: 6/10**

**Overall Mark: 26/40**

### **Concluding comments**

It is probably the case that this candidate's ability, as opposed to performance, is not reflected in the final mark, given the quality of the writing and the depth of analysis presented in large parts of the answer. An underlying problem is in the choice of issue and the approach to it. As suggested above, it does appear that the candidate's real interest is in Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the attempt to place this in the context of 100 years as reflected in the question, has not been successful.

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