Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

Time 2 hours 15 minutes

Paper reference **9HI0/1D**

History

Advanced

PAPER 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1D: Britain, c1785–c1870: democracy, protest and reform

Extracts Booklet

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Extracts for use with Section C.

Extract 1: From Michael Jordan, *The Great Abolition Sham*, published 2010.

In 1807 William Wilberforce prided himself in playing the 'foremost part' in the abolition of the slave trade. Yet his claim is questionable. Government interest in the Caribbean diminished rapidly after the collapse of Napoleon's military threat. Economic factors were also extremely important. The government became less and less concerned with maintaining a supply of slaves to the Caribbean, because it did not make economic sense.

In 1807 the British West Indian sugar industry was already dying and nothing was going to be done to rescue it. In Jamaica alone, 65 plantations had been abandoned since 1788, and another 115 were facing bankruptcy. There was an economic crisis in the Caribbean because free trade had made the slave economy unworkable. The war with France had had the effect of making imports to the sugar plantations much more expensive, and some goods doubled in price in the war years. Furthermore, the government needed to raise revenue, and taxation was steadily killing the West Indian sugar economy. The abolition of the slave trade owed little to the actions of those in Westminster, including Wilberforce.

Extract 2: From Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, published 2000.

It is true that overproduction of sugar did occur in 1806 and 1807 on the eve of parliament abolishing the slave trade. However, upswings and downswings in the British Caribbean sugar economy had happened before. Furthermore, most politicians at the time did not link overproduction of sugar with the need to abolish the slave trade. This point should be remembered by those who argue that the British abolished their slave trade for economic reasons.

The Caribbean economy was actually doing well. For example, by 1807 the West Indian colonies still deployed half of Britain's long-distance shipping. In the period 1783–1807 slavery was expanding into new British possessions in the Caribbean, which remained a centre of world sugar production. The West India trade was still an important sector of British overseas commerce too. This evidence challenges the idea that the slave trade was abolished for economic reasons. We might turn on its head the notion that the decline of the sugar industry caused the abolition of the slave trade, and say that abolition caused decline.

Acknowledgements

Extract 1 from: The Great Abolition Sham: The True Story of the End of the British Slave Trade by Michael Jordan © The History Press, 2010

Extract 2 from: 'Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660–1800', Kenneth Morgan, Cambridge University Press, 2000