

Unit 3 covers two themes on an extended period of at least 100 years, each with a focus on change, continuity, similarity and difference. You will show understanding of the main developments and turning points. The emphasis is on developing and interpreting a broad overview of the period studied. The examination tests this by asking two different types of question.

In Section A, in which you choose one of two questions, you are required to answer a question covering a shorter timeframe, usually about 15-40 years.

Questions can broadly be broken down into four parts:

1. The command term

2. The named issue

3. Areas of debate (leading to a judgement)

4. The required timeframe

Consideration of all of these is essential to a well-argued and historically justified answer.

### Section A: Specific events in a narrower timeframe

**2019 Question 1:** “Kennedy was the president who most successfully met the challenges of the Cold War during the period from 1945 to 1989.” Discuss.

#### The command term:

The command term is **Discuss**. So in the context of this question you will focus on the named issue, **Kennedy**, and debate whether **he was more or less successful than other presidents in meeting the challenges of the Cold War** in the context of the period **1945–1989**.

**The named issue:** Whether Kennedy was the most successful president to meet the challenges of the Cold War:

- His inaugural address in January 1961 could be regarded as inspirational – “let every nation know...that we shall pay any price...to assure the survival and the success of liberty” after the perceived caution and complacency of the Eisenhower years.
- Kennedy’s cool response to the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 can be seen as lowering tensions at a critical moment.
- Kennedy’s handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 is often seen as measured and proportionate, allowing Khrushchev to back down without being completely humiliated. This crisis is seen as one of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War with a devastating nuclear exchange being entirely possible.
- In 1963, the establishment of direct communication between Washington and Moscow and the signing of a nuclear test ban treaty between USA, USSR and UK lowered tensions.
- Kennedy’s assassination in Nov 1963 is alleged to have removed a maturing, far sighted leader who was developing into a great president.

**Areas of debate:** Kennedy’s record was patchy and other presidents may have been more successful in meeting the challenges of the Cold War. The following provides some areas to debate including:

- Kennedy’s criticism of Eisenhower was not only unfair, but downright misleading over the alleged “missile gap” with the USSR. Moreover, Kennedy’s initial foray into foreign policy, the Bay of Pigs episode in 1961, was a disaster and his first meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna also in 1961 left the Russian leader underwhelmed. Khrushchev’s perception that Kennedy was weak and a bungler may have contributed to Khrushchev’s reckless approach to missiles in Cuba. Kennedy’s policies in Berlin and in the Cuban Missile Crisis have also been criticised by some as appeasement and that he should have acted more aggressively towards the Soviet Union. The escalation of US involvement in Vietnam during Kennedy’s presidency is often cited as a major policy mistake. Kennedy’s tragic assassination in 1963 coloured perceptions and may have mythologised an otherwise patchy record as president.
- Harry Truman’s firm response to the USSR set the framework for US foreign policy for at least 30 years - the Truman Doctrine - “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation...” coupled with the ambition of the Marshall Plan, the formation of NATO and the massive defence spending set by NSC-68, provides Truman with a good case to be considered an effective president confronting the challenges of the Cold War. On the other hand, he has been criticised for exaggerating the threat from the USSR, allowing the communists to seize power in China and mishandling the Korean War.
- Richard Nixon proved more pragmatic than his image as a Cold War warrior suggested. His record in pursuing arms reduction treaties with the USSR and attempting a rapprochement with China can be set against his disastrous policy of Vietnamisation and the extension of the Vietnam war into Cambodia.
- Ronald Reagan has been credited with policies that brought the Cold War to an end, particularly the massive increase in defence spending in the early 1980s that is alleged to have forced the USSR to negotiate. His tough approach is often contrasted with the perceived weakness of his predecessor, Jimmy Carter. Reagan’s willingness to negotiate from a position of strength and his ability to work with Gorbachev in the summits of 1985-6 laid the foundations for improved relations and arms limitation treaties. However, it could be argued that Reagan was fortunate that his presidency coincided with significant internal changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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**The required timeframe:** Make sure you utilise details from across the timeframe. Following is an example of some events you may wish to include. However, other information can be used in addition to – or instead of – this material:

<b>1945</b>	Yalta and Potsdam conferences fail to settle differences between the Western allies and USSR about Eastern Europe and the long-term future of Germany.
<b>1946</b>	George Kennan's "long telegram", accusing the USSR of wanting to dominate Eastern Europe, proves enormously influential.
<b>1947</b>	Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan and National Security Act set a long-lasting framework for US foreign policy.
<b>1948–9</b>	Berlin Blockade and Airlift ensures Berlin remained a source of confrontation.
<b>1949</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Communist victory in Chinese Civil War. For the first time in peacetime, the USA entered into a binding political and military agreement.
<b>1950–3</b>	Korean War. Truman's actions had gone beyond containment, but the outcome was a stalemate in the Korean peninsula.
<b>1955</b>	Warsaw Pact. Geneva summit between Eisenhower and Khrushchev keeps lines of communication open.
<b>1956</b>	Hungarian uprising.
<b>1960</b>	Paris summit and U2 crisis resulted in deterioration in relations.
<b>1961</b>	Kennedy's inaugural speech. Bay of Pigs incident. Construction of Berlin Wall.
<b>1962</b>	Cuban Missile Crisis results in Kennedy gaining significant prestige for his handling of a dangerous crisis.
<b>1963</b>	Test Ban treaty. Assassination of Kennedy.
<b>1964</b>	Escalation of US involvement in Vietnam after Gulf of Tonkin incident.
<b>1972</b>	Nixon visits China.
<b>1973</b>	Paris Peace Conference.
<b>1975</b>	Fall of Saigon. Containment policy in tatters with Americans confused and deeply divided about the direction of foreign policy. Helsinki Accords strengthen atmosphere of co-operation between USA and USSR.
<b>1975-80</b>	Policies and SALT process. SALT II derailed by Iranian revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
<b>1980</b>	Reagan elected president. New direction in US foreign policy.
<b>1986</b>	Reykjavik Summit.
<b>1987</b>	Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
<b>1989</b>	Fall of Berlin Wall.

In Section B, there is one compulsory question. It covers the duration of the timeframe or a period of at least 100 years. You will need to draw on material from across the timeframe

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## Section B: Developments across a prolonged timeframe

**2019 Question 1:** “The main reason for improvements in the lives of African Americans during the period from 1890 to 1990 was the action of the federal governments”. Discuss.

### The command term:

The command term is **Discuss**. So in the context of this question, you will focus on the named issue, **the action of the federal governments**, and debate whether that was **the main reason for improvements in the lives of African Americans** in relation to other relevant factors and in the context of the period **1890–1990**.

**The named issue:** Whether the action of federal governments was the main reason for improvements in the lives of African Americans:

- The federal government in the USA includes the office of President, the Congress and the Supreme Court, so it is appropriate to consider examples of action or inaction from each. Roosevelt’s New Deal is often criticised for its failure to address the needs of African Americans, although there is evidence that African Americans did benefit from the relief and recovery programmes despite the persistent high levels of African American unemployment.
- Presidential executive orders in the 1940s did address some issues. Roosevelt’s 8802 forbade racial discrimination in the defence industry. In 1948, Truman’s 9980 ended racial discrimination in federal employment and his 9981 desegregated the US armed forces.
- The Supreme Court in the 1950s, under the leadership of Earl Warren, played a proactive role in forging fuller civil rights for African Americans; the ruling in *Brown 1954* declaring unconstitutional the “separate but equal” interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment. This was regarded as a great victory for the NAACP, as it removed the legal basis for segregation in schools and more widely undermined segregation in other walks of life.
- The presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson saw the culmination of the MLK civil rights campaign with executive action from the Kennedy administration and the legislative success of Johnson in securing the Civil Rights Act 1964 and the Voting Rights Act 1965.
- Presidential and Supreme Court support for the idea of affirmative action in the 1960s and 1970s were important, if controversial, developments. The achievement of political rights, however significant, need to be seen against the continuing evidence of widespread social and economic inequality affecting the lives of African Americans.

**Areas of debate:** The record of federal governments in improving the lives of African Americans over the century has been mixed and there were other significant factors affecting the lives of African Americans. The following provides some areas of debate including:

- The Supreme Court in the late nineteenth century provided legal cover for Jim Crow laws. *Plessey v Ferguson 1896* upheld the concept of “separate but equal”, as did *Cumming v Richmond Board of Education* in 1899, which was the foundation for legalised segregation until the 1950s.
- In Congress, the power of the Democratic party in the Old South was a major obstacle to effective action over civil rights until the 1960s. Anti-lynching legislation was consistently blocked and Democrat presidents such as Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy had little or no room for manoeuvre on civil rights, hence the reliance on executive orders/action to achieve limited progress in their administrations.
- The backlash against affirmative action, bussing and a new conservative reaction contributed to Reagan’s election in 1980. The Supreme Court began to push back against affirmative action school desegregation. The Reagan administration saw dramatic cuts in federal aid programmes, which adversely affected African American communities. Significantly, Reagan vetoed a civil rights bill in 1988, a veto overridden by Congress.
- There is a good argument that other significant developments impacted on the lives of African Americans positively. These could include the campaigning work of Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois and the NAACP, and the social and economic impact of the Great Migration in the period before the First World War.
- Another important theme is the impact of war on society. Both World Wars had positive (and negative) impacts on the lives of African Americans. It is generally accepted that the Second World War had a major impact on the economic situation of African Americans, as the availability of white labour declined. It also stimulated the activities of CORE and the NAACP with important legal results in discrimination and electoral cases.
- The impact of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s was profound. It had built up a compelling and irresistible impetus for action on civil rights that affected not only the USA but also perceptions worldwide. By 1990, the lives of African Americans had improved but persistent inequality remained.

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**The required timeframe:** Make sure you utilise details from across the timeframe. Following is an example of some events you may wish to include. However, other information can be used in addition to – or instead of – this material:

<b>1895</b>	Booker T. Washington's Atlanta compromise speech.
<b>1896</b>	<i>Plessey v Ferguson</i> case in Supreme Court.
<b>1899</b>	<i>Cumming v Richmond Board of Education</i> case in Supreme Court.
<b>1909</b>	Foundation of NAACP.
<b>1919</b>	Race riots across USA.
<b>1933–40</b>	Classic period of Roosevelt's New Deal.
<b>1941</b>	Executive order 8802.
<b>1948</b>	Desegregation of US armed forces.
<b>1954</b>	<i>Brown v Board of Education</i> in Supreme Court.
<b>1955</b>	Montgomery bus boycott.
<b>1957</b>	SCLC founded. Little Rock crisis.
<b>1960</b>	Lunch counter protests and founding of SNCC.
<b>1961</b>	Freedom rides by CORE.
<b>1963</b>	Birmingham demonstrations. March on Washington.
<b>1964</b>	Civil Rights Act.
<b>1965</b>	Selma to Montgomery march. Voting Rights Act.
<b>1968</b>	Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
<b>1971</b>	<i>Swann v Mecklenburg Board of Education</i> case on bussing in Supreme Court.
<b>1978</b>	Bakke case on affirmative action in Supreme Court.
<b>1986</b>	Appointment of William Rehnquist as Chief Justice.
<b>1988</b>	Family Support Act.

### Think like a historian

To reach a valid – and supported – conclusion, you must consider a range of evidence, and a range of viewpoints, weigh them up and make a judgement on their worth.

### Key words

Analyse ★ Concepts and perspectives ★ Key issues and content  
 ★ Debate ★ Continuity and change ★ Similarity and difference ★  
 Evidence ★ Judgement