

GCE



Revised GCE **History**

Exemplification

A2 Unit 2: Option 4
Partition of Ireland 1900-1925
Answer Only

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018



GCE History A22 Option 4 Partition of Ireland 1900-1925

Exemplar Response

Please refer to the History Specimen Assessment Materials, A2 2 Option 4 Q2 on page 43, for the extracts referred to in this document.

http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/microsites/history/revise_gce/support/index.asp

The following response is intended to illustrate one approach as to how a candidate may attempt this question. This response was not written by a student or completed under examination conditions. It is not a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Study Interpretation A and Interpretation B.

Using the interpretations, and your understanding of the historical context, which of these different interpretations of the reasons for the outcome of the 1918 general election in Ireland do you find more convincing?

The extracts offer two different interpretations of the reasons for the outcome of the 1918 general election in Ireland. In Interpretation A, Rees argues that the key reason for the rise of Sinn Féin was the anti-conscription campaign which struck a chord with nationalists. In contrast to this, Smith argues in Interpretation B that Sinn Féin's tactics and its appeal as the opposite of all things IPP seemed to win over voters. I will argue that Smith's interpretation is more convincing since he highlights a number of factors which help to explain the swing to Sinn Féin, whereas Rees focuses mainly on the issue of conscription.

In Interpretation A, Rees puts forward the view that '*de Valera drafted the anti-conscription pledge supported by all nationalists*'. I find this view convincing as this issue undoubtedly united nationalists and saw the Catholic Church throwing its weight behind Sinn Féin. According to Rees, '*Sinn Féin's consistent opposition to the war effort, and the Irish Parliamentary Party's earlier support for Britain*' also brought the party electoral support. With the casualty rate increasing and the need for troops at the Front growing, there was a possibility that conscription could be introduced in Ireland. I agree with Rees that the threat of compulsory military service was a powerful cohesive force binding the volunteers together.

Rees argues that the success of Sinn Féin in 1918 was without doubt linked to its stance against the war and the possibility of conscription. With the new German Offensive of March 1918, it was suggested that conscription should be extended to Ireland. However, Chief Secretary Henry Duke maintained that recruiting Irishmen was equivalent to recruiting Germans. Lloyd George's view was that conscription and Home Rule should go hand in hand. Dillon warned of the consequences of this, claiming that 'all Ireland will rise against you.' One point not mentioned in Interpretation A is that, when Dillon returned to Ireland, his party made common cause with Sinn Féin and this issue united nationalists across Ireland. In my view this shows that it was not just the actions of Sinn Féin which are of key importance but also those of Dillon. Yet Rees fails to highlight this point and this represents a weakness of Interpretation A.

Support for Interpretation A can be found in a headline in an English newspaper, in April 1918 which claimed that nationalists were being 'driven into the arms of Sinn Féin as a result of conscription'. The Standing Committee of Irish Bishops issued a public statement against conscription and on 18 April a meeting was held at the Mansion House in Dublin attended by a wide range of moderate and militant nationalists. They agreed on a pledge drafted by de Valera which was to be taken in every parish the following Sunday. As Rees states, '*the association of the Catholic Church with Sinn Féin gave the movement respectability*'. A Committee of Defence was to be formed in every parish to obstruct conscription; in addition, a National Defence Fund was set up and plans were made to present the Irish case to the US President and Congress. The Irish Trade Union Congress decided to call a general strike for 24 hours on 23 April which was held with paralysing effect. This impressive show of unity had not only been brought about by the stance adopted by Sinn Féin but also by the policies of the British government. Thus, I find Rees' argument that Sinn Féin's anti-conscription campaign was crucial to its success in the 1918 general election convincing. However, a key weakness of Interpretation A is that it fails to assess the importance of British actions in Sinn Féin's electoral success.

Rees also highlights the importance of the German Plot in helping Sinn Féin. In May 1918 Lord French issued a statement claiming that a 'German Plot' had been uncovered. Sinn Féin was allegedly conspiring with Germany. Seventy-three Sinn Féin leaders were deported to prison camps in England. The effects of these arrests and the public's belief that this was a lie by the authorities only intensified opposition to British rule and won further sympathy and support for Sinn Féin. This is a convincing view put forward by Rees but again his focus lies with the actions of Sinn Féin rather than those of the British government which are, in my opinion, crucial to understanding the reasons for the party's electoral success. Rees goes on to state: '*In spite of being banned in July 1918, it continued to expand, attracting new members and organising a campaign of passive resistance to British rule*'. Sinn Féin used it to their advantage in a by-election in East Cavan in which Griffith, still a prisoner in England, stood under the slogan 'Put him in to get him out.' He won and this without doubt helped to consolidate Sinn Féin's growing supremacy in Ireland. By the end of 1918 it had 1,354 clubs across the country and was particularly strong in rural areas.

Although Rees' view holds considerable weight, I am more convinced by Smith's interpretation. He pays more attention to the period after 1916 and provides a range of important reasons to account for Sinn Féin's electoral success. Smith explains that '*young first-time voters*' played a role in 1918 and their views '*had been shaped by the pre-war Ulster Crisis, the Rising [and] the British counter-reaction*'. Smith agrees with Rees that '*above all else the threat of conscription*' was a key factor. The Unionists and the British must accept some responsibility for the destruction of the IPP and the rise of Sinn Féin. Throughout the Home Rule Crisis, the Unionists pushed moderate nationalism to the limit. There can be no doubt that the Unionist reaction to the Easter Rising, when they saw all nationalists as traitors, also helped to alienate moderate nationalists. The response of the British to 1916 is also highlighted by Smith and I find this convincing. When Redmond condemned the Rising in the House of Commons, Dillon was concerned about the British handling of the events afterwards and became enraged by the actions of the British. In fact, Dillon said in the House of Commons: 'You are washing our whole life work in a sea of blood'. I would argue that, when Dillon went on in the House of Commons to seemingly praise the rebels, he revealed a growing split within constitutional nationalism. He wanted Redmond to adopt a more critical attitude at Westminster as he believed that the only way forward for the IPP was in vigorous opposition if it was to hold on to support at home. Dillon predicted that the mood in Ireland was changing and the IPP would be the group which would lose the most. Smith reinforces this view which is why I am convinced by his stance, as he claims that '*the result seemed to represent an electoral revolution in favour of Sinn Féin*'.

However, Smith also examines the tactics employed by Sinn Féin in trying to outmanoeuvre the IPP. I find his interpretation more convincing since he is again looking at the wider reasons for its success in the general election of 1918, unlike Rees in Interpretation A. He notes the *'widespread intimidation of voters and certain tricks'* carried out by Sinn Féin. In this line of argument Smith is focusing less on Sinn Féin's own positive efforts and more on the negative election tactics the party employed and I see this as a weakness in his interpretation. I would argue that Sinn Féin's positive actions are vital in understanding their success in 1918. Rees sees Sinn Féin largely as the agent of its own success and points out that it deserves credit for maximising the favourable circumstances in the period after the Easter Rising. Smith, on the other hand, drills down into the actions of the British and the shortcomings of the IPP in the period which I find more convincing.

Smith supports Rees' view of the Sinn Féin Manifesto. Rees states that the Manifesto, adopted at the Ard Fhéis in October 1917, was *'irresistible'* and it was certainly ambiguous enough to attract the disillusioned to the Party and away from the IPP which had failed to win concessions at the Lloyd-George negotiations or at the Irish Convention, from which Sinn Féin had stayed away. Smith supports the view that Sinn Féin's success was due to its *'vagueness'* and the shortcomings of the IPP, such as poor constituency organisation, an ageing personnel and the fact that IPP MPs spent little time in their constituencies and were complacent since, prior to the rise of Sinn Féin, they had faced no real electoral challenge. The IPP was undermined by the lack of Home Rule and the fact that Redmond seemed to concede too much and accepted Ulster Exclusion.

In conclusion, I would argue that both interpretations put forward convincing reasons to explain the reasons for Sinn Féin's success in 1918. Whilst Rees highlights the period after 1916 when Sinn Féin maximised the circumstances after the Easter Rising, I am more convinced by Smith who acknowledges that Sinn Féin's success in 1918 was not just the result of its actions but the interplay between the various factors such as the British government, the Ulster Unionists, the IPP and Sinn Féin itself.