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Exam focus

OCR: Civil rights in the USA

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This resource presents three OCR-style questions for Civil rights in the USA, 1865–1992, as well as some points to include in an essay response.

Question 1

How accurate is it to say that opposition to African American civil rights remained powerful throughout the period 1865–1992? (25 marks)

Points in support of the accuracy of the statement

- The use of terror and intimidation was constant — at least until 1940
- The hostility of the Supreme Court
- The attitudes of Southern whites, from the Jim Crow laws to resistance to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s
- Continued discrimination in housing and employment
- Federal government became less supportive after 1968

Points against the accuracy of the statement

- The federal government was not always opposed — reconstruction and Second World War
- The declining support for the KKK
- The judgements of the Supreme Court which supported African Americans
- Support from whites — the decline in racism

Question 2

‘Native Americans saw significant progress in their civil rights in the period from 1865–1992.’
How far do you agree with this statement? (25 marks)

Points in support of the statement

- The work of John Collier
- The Indian Reorganization Act and its impact
- Respect for culture and traditions

Points against the statement

- During the Indian Wars the aim was to destroy opposition to westward expansion and this was continued with reservations and their later break-up

- Attempts to destroy Native American culture and separate identity, converting them to Christianity and teaching children in special schools
- Denial of political rights
- Attempts to seize Native American land throughout the period and the disposal of Indian land without consent, following the *Lone Wolf v Hitchcock* (1903) ruling and by encouraging them to relocate to cities

Question 3

'The impact of the First and Second World War were the most significant events in bringing about gender equality in the period 1865–1992.' How far do you agree with this statement?
(25 marks)

Points in support of the statement

- The wars expanded employment opportunities and earning power
- The wars brought about changes in attitudes towards women and opened up educational opportunities

Points against the statement

- Federal elections of the 1920s allowed women full participation in political life
- Answers might compare the situation in 1865 when women could not vote with 1984 and Ferraro was the vice-presidential Democratic candidate.
- The Flappers of the 1920s: compare their liberalism with previous periods and link it to gaining the vote
- Within 13 years of 1920, Frances Perkins became the first female member of cabinet.
- Changes to abortion provision could also be argued to be the most significant event in bringing about gender equality

Always do the following:

- Reach a balanced and sustained judgement linked to the question
- Include detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge
- Knowledge should be consistently evaluated in relation to the question
- Use a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning
- Establish a set of criteria against which to make a judgement
- Present arguments which both support the hypothesis in the question and also refute them

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