

Commonwealth Topics in Examinations



Commonwealth Secretariat

COMMONWEALTH TOPICS
IN EXAMINATIONS

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON QUESTIONS
SET BY O-LEVEL EXAMINING BOARDS
IN BRITAIN

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COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

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INTRODUCTION

The Background

This review of some of the references to the Commonwealth as a whole and to individual Commonwealth countries in the syllabuses and examination papers prepared by public examining Boards in Britain, is an initial response to a recommendation made by the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference (Accra, 9-18 March 1977).

The recommendation, which appears as paragraph 143 of the report of the Conference, reads as follows:

143. The frequency and quality of the questions that appear on examination papers can have more bearing on what is taught in schools than the topics listed on the syllabus. It is therefore recommended that national and regional examining bodies be urged to ensure that meaningful questions about the Commonwealth are included in appropriate examinations. It is also recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat should give some support to the preparation of a report on the questions set on Commonwealth topics by some of the examining boards in Britain, and that the report is circulated so that it can serve as a basis for similar studies.

If taken in its widest interpretation this task would have been a formidable one. For examinations for the General Certificate of Education there are eight Boards, for the Certificate of Secondary Education there are 14, and as questions on Commonwealth topics could occur in several subjects (such as History, Geography, Social Studies, World Affairs, General Studies or Literature) which frequently have alternative papers, the number of possible syllabuses and question papers would be too great for a complete review. Moreover, because no previous study of a similar nature was known to exist, it was necessary for the authors to devise their own methodology without knowing for certain whether it could be transferred easily and effectively to a consideration of other examinations in other parts of the Commonwealth. For these reasons it was decided to limit the present investigation to the Ordinary Level of the General Certificate of Education (O level GCE) and to the questions set in one year's papers. If, however, a more comprehensive survey is required, it would be possible to extend its scope to cover other levels of the GCE, the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE), and examination papers set in other years. At the same time any recommendations made by the workshop for modifying the methodology could be taken into account.

The Boards

The eight Boards that set O-level examinations for the GCE in England and Wales are:

The Associated Examining Board (AEB)
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (Cambridge)
Joint Matriculation Board (JMB)
University of London School Examinations Department (London)
Oxford Delegacy of Local Examination (Oxford)

Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board (Ox & Camb.)
Southern Universities Joint Board (SUJB)
Welsh Joint Education Committee (Welsh)

The papers reviewed in this report are those set by these Boards in the summer examinations in 1977.

Methodology

First the syllabuses of the Boards were consulted in order to ascertain which courses would repay investigation. There were two reasons for this. One was that if a syllabus made no mention of the topic under consideration, it could be assumed that no question on that topic would appear in the examination. The other was that it was found to be easier in practice to review the syllabuses for initial selection than to cope with the many examination papers. Examination syllabuses should therefore always be consulted as a first step in any similar investigation. It was quickly established that the only O-level papers likely to contain references to the Commonwealth were those in History and Geography. Though the AEB Social Economics syllabus and the JMB Government, Economics and Commerce syllabus were found to contain references to Britain's overseas trade and to international trade in general, these were very small items in those courses. Other potential sources of Commonwealth questions, such as the syllabuses on Literature, contained no mention of the subject. This restriction to History and Geography may not apply to Advanced Level (A level), Alternative Ordinary Level (A O Level), CSE or other examinations.

The O level syllabuses varied considerably in length, content and approach. The most useful were undoubtedly those that did more than merely catalogue subject matter and specified the aims and objectives of the course in some detail. For, by giving more than a simple reference to the factual content required, they could assist teachers wishing to do so to select courses that would enable the development of a Commonwealth perspective, even if this was not specifically mentioned in the syllabus itself. (Examples are given in the notes below.) In addition, the JMB indicated the relative weighting of marks for the various aspects of the answers given by candidates.

History and Geography in O level Examinations

As Table 1 shows, nearly 70 syllabuses are available from the eight Boards setting History and Geography examinations at O level in England and Wales.

Table 1: Number of Alternative
Syllabuses Set in O levels in 1977

	History*	Geography
AEB	6	1
Cambridge	10	2**
JMB	9	2
London	5	2
Oxford	7	2
Ox. & Camb.	7	1
SUJB	4	1
Welsh	8	1

* Including Economic and Social History and Ancient History

** Also a third for a Schools Council Project

For the purpose of this investigation, only those syllabuses that specifically referred to the Commonwealth or Commonwealth countries, or gave sufficiently clear indication that the Commonwealth should or could be included, have been considered. This indication came in many ways. Here are two examples from History syllabuses. First, Cambridge 235, "World Affairs since 1919" lists many topics including "Decolonization and the problems of the developing world". Second, Oxford O38, "History (World)" refers to "Decolonization since 1945 and its consequences". It was found that syllabuses in History paid some attention to the concept of the Commonwealth, but those in Geography did not (or could not) use this term though many did expect Commonwealth countries to be studied by the candidates.

Notes

One example of a syllabus which refers only to the factual knowledge required, and only very briefly, is Oxford O32 History (British Empire and Commonwealth). It would seem that teachers are expected to consult previous examination papers to know what to expect, as only three sentences cover everything.

One paper (2½ hours, marked out of 100) is set on the period 1492 to the present day. Candidates must answer five questions, chosen from anywhere in the paper, but are not necessarily expected to have covered the whole period. Questions may be set which refer to maps.

In contrast is the syllabus from the JMB, Paper B (The British Empire and Commonwealth from about 1750 to the Present Day).

The aim of the syllabus

The aim of the syllabus is first to enable centres to provide Ordinary level candidates who are not necessarily continuing their studies in this subject with a sound general basis of historical knowledge and understanding related to a specified period of history, and second, to enable centres to provide a suitable introduction to methods of further study.

The objectives of the examination

The objectives of the examination are to test

- (i) the candidate's knowledge of a given body of factual material
- (ii) the understanding of historical material, and
- (iii) the ability to select and organise relevant information.

The marks in the examination will be allocated as far as possible as follows.

Knowledge ((i) above) 60 per cent.

Selection, understanding and organisation of relevant information ((ii) and (iii) above) 40 per cent.

It will be noted that no specific allocation of marks has been given to powers of expression. If candidates fail to express themselves clearly they will inevitably penalise themselves.

B. The British Empire and Commonwealth, from about 1750 to the present day

The syllabus covers the development of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the middle of the eighteenth century to the present day. It is not intended that candidates will have studied every territory in detail, but they will be expected to know the principal political and economic developments in the main areas. Questions may be set on the smaller territories, and more recent events in the dismantling of the Empire, which will require a more

general approach. Some of the topics to be studied are listed below under various countries. At the end of the list are some general themes which can be studied, but these are not intended to dominate the syllabus.

America

Anglo-French rivalry, the Seven Years War and the Treaty of Paris; the events leading up to the loss of the American colonies; the War of American Independence and its effects.

Canada

1774 Quebec Act; United Empire Loyalists and 1791 Canada Act; Upper and Lower Canada and the 1837 risings; the Durham Report and the Reunion Act; developments between 1837 and 1867 leading to the British North America Act; new territories; the development of agriculture, industry and communications; Mackenzie King; Quebec libre.

Australia

Cook's voyages; Botany Bay and the transportation of convicts; exploration of the interior; Swan River, South Australia and systematic colonisation; the gold rush of the 1850s; events and reasons leading to the Australia Commonwealth Act 1900; development of agriculture, industry and communications.

South Africa

Acquisition and Anglicisation; abolition of slavery and the Great Trek; establishment of the Boer republics; relations between the British, the Boers and the Zulus; discovery of diamonds and gold; events leading to the Second Boer War; the work of Botha and Smuts; the High Commission territories; the development of National Party policies (Apartheid); secession from the Commonwealth.

New Zealand

Reasons for colonisation; Gibbon Wakefield; relations with the Maoris; Treaty of Waitangi; the work of Sir George Grey; the importance of sheep, steamships, refrigeration; progressive legislation.

India

1773 Lord North's Regulating Act; 1784 Pitt's India Act; the work of Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellesley, Cornwallis, the Marquess of Hastings, Bentinck and Dalhousie; causes, course and results of the Indian Mutiny; 1858 Government of India Act; 1877 proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India; the rise of nationalism, and the work of Congress, Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah; Morley-Minto reforms; Simon Commission and Round Table conference; Cripps Mission; independence of India, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma.

West Indies

Effects of the abolition of slavery; 1865 Jamaican insurrection; economic recovery; federation and its failure.

SYLLABUSES AND QUESTIONS IN HISTORY

Group A: Syllabuses which include the Commonwealth in the Title

The coverage aimed at in these syllabuses, though not uniform, is extremely wide. Starting dates, where given, are 1492 (Oxford), 1558 (Cambridge), c. 1750 (JMB). Finishing dates are less specific. Two Boards state "the present day" (JMB and Oxford); Cambridge gives 1939; and the AEB gives a variety of dates according to the country included, the latest of which is 1953 (AEB). This latter syllabus includes the "English Speaking Peoples" in the title which means that the USA is included. The rubric for this paper allows candidates to answer without reference to the New Commonwealth.

While it is not unreasonable in History syllabuses to study the more distant periods, with this particular topic the result is to emphasize the Empire and the colonial period rather than the Commonwealth, especially the New Commonwealth.

Table 2: O Level Syllabuses in History
that Specify the Commonwealth in the Title

AEB 039	The Growth of the Commonwealth and English speaking peoples
Cambridge 232*	History of British Empire and Commonwealth
JMB (Alternative B)	British Empire & Commonwealth, from about 1750 to present day
Oxford 0 32**	British Empire and Commonwealth

* After 1978, only if special request and with an extra fee

** Not in the Autumn examination unless specially requested

(See also the appendix to this section)

Questions from Syllabuses listed in Table 2

It is noticeable that with all Boards questions stress the role of the British explorers, colonizers, soldiers and administrators, and tend to look upon the overseas territories concerned as the passive recipients of British enterprise. Favourite topics are the Durham Report, Raffles and Singapore, Edward Gibbon Wakefield and Australia, and the Boer War.

It is true that questions written from the perspective of the colonized country and the New Commonwealth can be found. But they are not common. In 1977 the Oxford Board set only two questions out of 20 on the New Commonwealth. These were:

Oxford 0 32, q. 17:

Describe the stages by which the government of India was

freed from British control between 1918 and 1947.

Oxford 0 32, q. 19:

Describe relations since 1945 between Great Britain and either (a) Uganda, or (b) Rhodesia.

The Cambridge paper - which ends in 1939 anyway - consists mostly of straightforward imperial history. The AEB paper includes separate sections on Canada and Australia, but not on Asia or Africa. However, this AEB paper does include two questions which show a commendable detachment.

AEB 039, q. 12 and q. 13:

What progress did India make towards self-government between 1858 and the Second World War?

What were the advantages and disadvantages of "Indirect Rule"? Illustrate your answer with reference to any one area of Africa.

The JMB paper includes only one question related to events since World War 2, although the syllabus claims to examine up to the present day.

JMB (Alt. B), q. 16:

Describe the changes in the British Commonwealth since 1956.

It was expected that because these papers contained the word "Commonwealth" in the title, they would be the most fruitful for the purposes of this review. In fact it was found that they paid little or no attention to the Commonwealth as it is today. Moreover, two other facts about these papers were discovered. First, very few candidates take them (see Table 2a below). Second, the future of the syllabuses is very much in doubt (see Appendix on page 14).

Table 2a: Numbers of Candidates Taking Papers Listed in Table 2 Compared with Total Number Taking History for each Board

Numbers taking History		Numbers taking a Paper which includes Commonwealth reference
AEB (6 papers)	16,797	249
Cambridge (10 papers)	23,220	84
JMB (9 papers)	42,725	308
Oxford (7 papers)	28,128	77

Group B - Syllabuses in which the Commonwealth is Implied in the Title

The syllabuses in this category are those in which, although there is no explicit mention of the Commonwealth in the title, the form of words adopted could not unreasonably lead to the expectation that Commonwealth material would be included. (Some syllabuses refer to the Commonwealth in the detailed description.) Such papers are usually entitled "World Affairs", "Europe and the Modern World", "Britain and World Affairs", or something similar.

Table 3: Papers in History
in which the Commonwealth is Implied

AEB 040	Special Periods and Topics - one option, Growth of the Commonwealth
AEB 041	Britain and World Affairs since 1914
AEB 058	History of World Powers and World Events in the 20th Century
Cambridge 235	World Affairs since 1919
JMB Paper G	Europe and the Modern World 1870 to the present day
London 263	World Affairs from 1919 to the present day
Oxford 038	World History
Ox. & Camb. H39	World History (either 1914-45, or 1939-70)
Ox. & Camb. H40	Special Subject, the Expansion of Europe to 1800
Ox. & Camb. H41	History General Paper
Welsh O g	History of the Modern World from 1919 to the present

Questions from Syllabuses listed in Table 3

Three main conclusions seem to be justified from an examination of these syllabuses and papers. The first is that Commonwealth countries were examined, but there was scarcely any mention of a Commonwealth relationship as such. Ex-colonial territories were examined either in their own right (e.g. as self-governing states like India or Tanzania) or else as colonies either past or present of Britain or some other European country.

The syllabus for the AEB paper 041, "Britain and World Affairs since 1914", states that the development of Empire to Commonwealth will be studied, with an analysis of the changing role of the Commonwealth in the post-war world. However, none of the questions set in Summer 1977 made any specific reference to the Commonwealth as such. Two questions were asked on India.

AEB 041, q. 8:

Describe Britain's policy towards India between 1918 and 1939.
Why did it fail to satisfy India's nationalists?

AEB 041, q. 14:

Describe (a) the reasons for, (b) the events leading up to, and
(c) the immediate results of Britain's withdrawal from either India
and Pakistan in 1947, or Palestine in 1948.

Another question, on modern Africa, included reference to Commonwealth countries and personalities together with non-Commonwealth topics.

AEB 041, q. 20:

Explain the importance in the history of modern Africa of four of the following (a) Apartheid, (b) the Mau Mau, (c) Pan-Africanism, (d) Nkrumah, (e) Mobutu, (f) Amin.

Likewise the Cambridge paper 235, "World Affairs since 1919", included several questions on Commonwealth countries without any mention of their Commonwealth connection.

Cambridge 235, q. 26:

Describe the part played by two of the following in the history of their respective countries: (a) Hastings Banda, (b) Kenneth Kaunda, (c) Jomo Kenyatta, (d) Julius Nyerere.

Cambridge 235, q. 29:

Describe the progress towards independence made by India in the period 1919-1947.

Cambridge 235, q. 32:

What led to the Emergency in Malaya (1948-1960)? Why was the Government of Malaya successful in overcoming the insurgents?

It should be noted that all three of these questions referred exclusively to Commonwealth leaders or countries without any reference to the fact.

The London syllabus 263, "World Affairs from 1919 to the Present Day", mentions the Commonwealth in the section which includes Britain (Section E, "Western Europe including Britain"), where the intention is stated of studying "the changing constitution of the British Empire and Commonwealth", although the paper set made no mention of the Commonwealth in this section. Again, however, questions were set on Commonwealth countries, though they were not described as such.

London 263, q. 2:

Trace successive efforts by the British Government to resolve the questions of the government of India in the years 1919 to 1939. Describe the further development of the problem during the Second World War, and give an account of the solution finally adopted in 1947.

London 263, q. 6 (three parts of the question related to a map of Africa):

(b) Select one only of the former High Commission Territories (marked T on the map) and give both its former name and its present day name.

(f) Why did the attempted Federation of countries X, Y, and Z break down in 1963?

(g) Outline briefly the history of country Z's relations with the UK since 1963.

Other questions on Africa in this section were on Italian and French colonization and the civil wars in the Congo and Nigeria.

The Oxford and Cambridge paper H39 offers "World History" either from 1914-1945, or from 1939-70. This paper deals largely with Great Power conflict. In 1977 it had a documentary question on Vietnam, included European fascism and World War 2, and had a section on the Middle East. Though there was substantial reference to China, there was little to Africa or India. The paper showed no awareness of the Commonwealth as an entity, or of any other international grouping for that matter. Again however, several questions mentioned a Commonwealth country or personality without describing them as such.

Ox. & Camb. H39, q. 1, (a question asking for short notes):
"the fall of Singapore" (in World War 2) was one of the alternatives given.

Ox. & Camb. H39, q. 2:
"Give an account of the work and importance in this period of two of the following..." included Gandhi as one of the options.

Ox. & Camb. H39, q. 9, (a question asking for short notes):
"Sir Robert Menzies, Ghana, the H.M.S. Tiger talks, the West Indian Federation..." were among the options given.

As a last example of this trend, the Welsh paper, on the "History of the Modern World from 1919 to the Present Day", offered two questions that dealt exclusively with Commonwealth countries without any reference to the fact.

Welsh O g, q. 5:
Either (a) Why was India given self-government by Britain?
or (b) Give an account of any one political figure of India or Pakistan since 1945.

Welsh O g, q. 8:
Give an account of the history of one of the following areas since 1945: Kenya, Ghana, Rhodesia, West Indies.*

The second main conclusion to emerge from the study of papers in this category, is that although the Commonwealth as a concept or an entity in international relations is hardly mentioned in questions, let alone stressed, there does seem to be a willingness to take account of other kinds of international grouping. Though more apparent perhaps with some Boards than others, questions could be found dealing with such international organizations as the League of Nations, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the European Economic Community. Moreover, questions were also set on more general concepts such as Pan-Africanism, or the Third World.

The Cambridge paper 235, "World Affairs since 1919", is a good illustration. The syllabus for Section A of this paper (General Problems) mentions the League, UNO, NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the OECD, but not the Commonwealth. In 1977 two questions in the section asked about international organizations.

*The term Commonwealth West Indies would seem to be more appropriate here so as to prevent candidates from feeling obliged to trace the very different paths followed by Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the French and Dutch territories in addition to those islands (and mainland territories) with a Commonwealth connection.

Cambridge 235, q. 1:

How did the victorious powers deal with the possessions of Germany and Turkey outside Europe in 1919-20? Describe the work of the Mandates Commissions of the League of Nations.

Cambridge 235, q. 6:

Describe the work of the UN Agencies in helping to deal with the problems of the Third World.

Section E of the same paper (Africa and the Middle East) includes in its syllabus "Pan-Africanism and the Search for Unity", South Africa and its racial policy, and Rhodesia. Mention is made of the Organization of African Unity, but not of the Commonwealth.

Cambridge 235, q. 27:

Describe the working of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa.

Cambridge 235, q. 28:

What are the aims and membership of the Organization of African Unity? Describe the work of this body since its foundation.

Section F of the syllabus (Asia) states that (among other topics) the Indian sub-continent under British control, the 1947 partition, and the development of India and Pakistan since independence will be examined. The emergence of Malaysia and its difficulties is also included. In neither case is any mention of the Commonwealth made in the syllabus; nor did it appear in the questions set in 1977.

Cambridge 235, q. 29:

Describe the progress towards independence made by India in the period 1919 to 1947.

Cambridge 235, q. 33:

What problems has Pakistan faced in (a) Kashmir, and (b) Bangladesh?

One should not overlook, or fail to commend, the detached perspective of these questions which focus on the countries in their own right rather than as ex-colonial territories. However the countries are not seen as members of the Commonwealth or as having any other international relationships.

Included among the topics listed for study in the syllabus of the Oxford World History Paper (038, Paper I) are the League of Nations and the failure of collective security, and the United Nations and its attempts to keep the peace. The emphasis in the paper itself was largely on the great powers, their diplomatic relationships, and major international problems. The only Commonwealth area included in a question, apart from Britain, was the West Indies. The syllabus for Paper II of this examination includes the "European movement towards economic and political integration"; the questions in 1977 included the following on the League and the United Nations.

Oxford 038, q. 5:

What were the shortcomings of the League of Nations? In what ways was the United Nations Organization an attempt to remedy them?

Although the Commonwealth is not mentioned in the syllabus for this examination, there was one question on the relationship between Britain and India.

Oxford 038, q. 7:

Show the course and consequences of the withdrawal of British imperial power from India after the Second World War.

The Welsh Board paper "History of the Modern World from 1919 to the Present Day", also included a question on the United Nations.

Welsh O g, q. 8:

Give an account of the major achievements of the United Nations.

The third conclusion arising from this examination of World Affairs papers is that some attempt can be discerned in some papers to depart from British or European ethnocentricity and to adopt something of a world perspective. In particular recognition is found of a Third World entity. This is not a universal approach and it appears only partially in certain papers where non-European history may be seen to be added on to the syllabus rather than integrated into it. Nevertheless it is significant enough to be worth noting. However, it is again noticeable that the Commonwealth does not figure as a part of this enlarged world perspective.

The AEB paper O 41, "Britain and World Affairs since 1914", included a question already referred to: one which presupposes Africa as essentially a geographical regional concept.

AEB O 41, q. 20:

Explain the importance in the history of modern Africa of four of the following: (a) Apartheid, (b) the Mau Mau, (c) Pan-Africanism, (d) Nkrumah, (e) Mobutu, (f) Amin.

Paper O 58 of the same Board, "History of World Powers and World Events in the 20th Century" goes further in attempting an international outlook with questions on themes such as nationalism and poverty.

AEB O 58, q. 21:

How far is poverty in the Third World the result of the misuse of resources by the developed nations?

A similarly broadly based question is the following from the Oxford World History paper.

Oxford O 38 II, q. 8:

On what grounds is it suggested that there is a population problem in the world? What solutions to the problem have been proposed?

The London paper, "World Affairs from 1919 to the Present Day", shows an international perspective, especially in its General Section (Section F). The syllabus for this section includes topics such as international relations, institutions, and developments, underdeveloped territories, and technology. In 1977 the documentary question on this section was based on an extract from Tanzania's Arusha Declaration, and the sub-questions related to it approached Tanzania essentially as an example of an underdeveloped territory. There was also a question in the section on Africa and the Middle East (Section B), on colonialism, and the problems of independence. Questions related to Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries.

London 263, q. 8:

How and why did France come to be involved in a conflict with the FLN in Algeria after 1945? Explain the importance of this conflict, and of its eventual outcome for (a) Algeria, and (b) France.

A more international, thematic approach can also be seen in the Welsh Board's Modern World paper.

Welsh O g, q. 16:

Explain three of the following terms giving details or examples where appropriate: Marxism, OEEC, devolution, total war, the Third World, the Organization for African Unity (OAU).

Questions from other History papers

One final comment may be made. This investigation was primarily carried out into papers in which the title either included or implied reference to the Commonwealth. However, Commonwealth and Empire questions are also to be found, though not frequently, in some of the many papers on British or European history. Some random examples are:

Ox. & Camb. H31 (British Outlines 1914-1970), q. 7:

A documentary question consisting of an extract from an essay by Creech Jones arguing for a renunciation of the imperialistic relationship. The question asks, "Taking as examples three of her former colonies and dependencies, show how Britain renounced an 'imperialistic relationship'. Briefly consider the consequences (a) for the colonies, (b) for Britain."

Ox. & Camb. H28 (British Outlines 1660-1763), q. 8:

How did the British extend their influence in India during the period?

Oxford O 34 (British and Foreign 1868-1951), q. 7:

Show the importance in British imperial affairs of three of the following: the South Africa Act 1909, Mandated Territories, the Statute of Westminster 1931, the Ottawa Conference 1932, the Indian Independence Act 1947.

Oxford O 30 (D British History 1815-1951), q. 14:

What were the principal changes during the period 1914-1951 in relations between either (a) Britain and India, or (b) Britain and Palestine?

Oxford O 30 (C British History 1689-1815), q. 10:

What did Warren Hastings achieve in India? Why was he impeached?

London 262 (English and European History 1763-1954), q. 20:

Trace the main developments in the British Empire in the period 1919-1955 concerning (a) Dominion status, (b) India, (c) Palestine.

From this brief glance at British History papers it would seem that the British Empire is seen by examiners as an offshoot of British history and that the Commonwealth is not yet recognized as an international unit of world significance.

APPENDIX

1. To obtain the figures given in Table 2a, we wrote to the four Boards. As well as supplying the information asked for, two Boards were good enough to write a covering letter with further detail. The following extracts seem to make important points.

From the Secretary to the AEB: "In recent years the entry for the Commonwealth History Syllabus at O Level has been declining and as you can see is currently at a low level. The Board is currently undertaking a revision of all its O level syllabuses in History to take into account more recent scholarship and attitudes to the subject as well as the popularity and viability of the Syllabus. It is hoped that the revised syllabuses will be introduced for examination in June 1981 and I enclose a document listing briefly the Board's latest proposals although these are by no means finalized as yet. You will notice that the element of Commonwealth History included in the revised proposals is very small. To some extent the subject will be covered in the revised Syllabus 039, Option 18. Otherwise, interested Centres will have to submit their own Mode 2 style syllabus for examination in this subject."

From the Assistant Secretary to the Oxford Delegacy: "I regret to say that 032 has been falling in entry numbers for the last five or six years and we no longer set it in the Autumn. I am fairly certain that this syllabus will be deleted if examinations are reorganized for a common system at 16+."

2. The AEB were good enough to give details of the numbers of candidates who entered for each of the sections of their paper on "The Growth of the Commonwealth and English-Speaking Peoples". It shows that the two sections on European and British Overseas Expansion attracted more candidates than the other six together.

Section A	- Outlines of European Overseas Expansion to 1763	181
B	- Outlines of British Overseas Expansion from 1763-1945	81
C(1)	- Canada from Early Colonisation to 1931	25
C(2)	- Australia from Early Colonisation to 1931	11
C(3)	- South Africa from Early Colonisation to 1948	55
C(4)	- USA 1783-1865	49
C(5)	- USA 1863-1953	0
C(6)	- West Indian History 1494-1947	91

SYLLABUSES AND QUESTIONS IN GEOGRAPHY

No syllabuses in Geography make specific reference to the Commonwealth. A study can be included in one of two ways, either (a) where there is study of a country which is a member of the Commonwealth, or (b) where there is study of a theme or topic which is, or can be, exemplified by study of a Commonwealth country. It is probably easiest to look at the syllabuses in these two groups. (Though we cannot establish this comment by giving dates for the introduction of these syllabuses, it is the case that the approach to Geography illustrated by the papers in Group B is the approach which is currently being developed in many schools.)

Group A: Syllabuses in Geography with Specific Regional Study

All syllabuses that require a regional study include a study of the British Isles, or areas of the British Isles, as part of the course: none suggests that this study should include the perspective of links between Britain and other countries.

Some syllabuses that require regional studies in addition to the British Isles include Commonwealth countries. Others do not. For example the Welsh Board, Section D, asks for the study of one of three areas: (a) USA east of the Rockies; (b) USSR west of the Urals; (c) Norway, Sweden, Denmark, West Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

Table 4: Papers Specifying Commonwealth
Countries for Regional Study

AEB Paper III	Area Studies, options include North America
Cambridge 261 Paper 2	Regional Geography, options include North America and Tropical Africa south of the Sahara (excluding S. Africa)
London Syllabus B	Options include North America
Oxford O45	Regional options include Canada and the West Indies, and Monsoon Asia
Oxford O46	Regional includes Canada and either Africa south of the Sahara, or Australia and New Zealand

Questions from Syllabuses listed in Table 4

Often questions in regional geography rely heavily on factual recall, but by

selecting subject matter with some imagination it is possible to highlight topics of some relevance and lead candidates from the limits of too particular a study.

Cambridge 261, Paper 2, q. 19:
For one country of Tropical Africa :

- (a) Name, locate and describe the traditional native industries and explain the advantages of the region for their development.
- (b) On a sketch-map name and locate:
 - (i) modern manufacturing industries which have been developed;
 - (ii) sources of raw materials, fuel and power;
 - (iii) communications serving the industry.
- (c) Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the country for industrial expansion.

The next question on the same paper shows that within traditional regional study it is possible to introduce a thematic approach.

Cambridge 261, Paper 2, q. 20:
Three major problems of Tropical Africa are: (i) rapid population growth, (ii) rapid urban expansion, (iii) the need to improve communications in order to encourage economic development and manufacturing. Select one country and discuss each of these problems and solutions which may be possible.

Questions can be set which enable the better candidates to develop ideas that relate to important issues with wide implications in the areas studied.

Oxford O45, Paper 11, q. 18:

- (a) Two-thirds of Jamaica's exports by value are bauxite and alumina, but little more than 40% of the bauxite mined is converted into alumina in Jamaica. Why is this so?
- (b) Each of the Windward Islands depends on the export of one or two agricultural products. Comment on this.
- (c) Why do many Puerto Ricans live in New York?

Though the next example from this group was related to a country often excluded in O level regional syllabuses - and should be excluded from this review by the terms of reference - it is a good illustration of how subject matter often avoided in school syllabuses can be introduced into the examination.

Oxford O46, q. 14:

About 70% of the people of the Republic of South Africa are Bantus, 18% are Europeans, 9% Coloureds and 3% Asians. Discuss the distribution of each of these groups within the Republic and their main occupations.

To summarize, it would seem that in papers which ask questions on regional or area studies, the Commonwealth country most frequently found (apart from the British Isles) is Canada. Other countries are no doubt selected because of the link with the United Kingdom, (e.g. "Africa south of the Sahara..") but the reason for this link is never stated or referred to. Most of the questions asked are for factual recall of information thought important by geographers. (None of these questions has been illustrated above.) But there are examples of questions set on regional study which do go beyond this first step of recall and look at issues of importance. If this can be done for some

topics, then it should be possible to introduce other themes, such as the concept of the Commonwealth, to these papers.

Group B: Syllabuses that Require a Study of Themes or Topics

As an alternative to the attempt to study "the total regional geography" of a country or area, many geographers are now concentrating on a few themes within the study of Geography. These themes are then related to particular areas. Sometimes this approach narrows the range of countries or regions studied as it is argued that a few studies in depth are of greater benefit than wider, superficial cover. (This limitation of areas is shown in the Cambridge paper 269, where six themes are spread across two papers with four of the sections specifying that the theme of that section should be studied in relation to Britain.) The areas to be studied to exemplify the themes of study are either stated by the Board or selected by the teacher.

Table 5: Papers Specifying Commonwealth
Countries to Illustrate General Themes or Topics

London, Syllabus A	The Developed World (to include Canada and Australia) and The Less Developed World (to include Africa, Caribbean, South and Southeast Asia). (N.B. common themes to be studied in both groups of countries)
Ox. & Camb.	Topics related to areas are changed each year, but some Commonwealth countries are included.
Welsh	One section relates to problems of settlement and economic development of one area - options include Africa, south of the Sahara (excluding South Africa), or India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Questions from Syllabuses listed in Table 5

Very few questions in O level Geography papers bring together knowledge of countries from different regions or continents or groupings, such as the developed and less developed countries, and this may create difficulties for introducing questions with a Commonwealth perspective. However, some questions point a way forward. Here is an example.

London Syllabus A, Paper 2, q. 5:

(a) For one region of the Developed World account for the development and growth of one of the following industries: petro-chemical production; motor-vehicle assembly; ship-building.

(b) Briefly explain why the industries listed in (a) above have not been important in the countries of the Less Developed world.

Though examiners are no doubt aware of the danger, it is obviously very easy to slip into the trap of always framing questions on less developed countries in such a way that the candidate never gets beyond the stage of

of identifying problems. Here are two questions which move some way away from this danger.

London Syllabus A, Paper 2, q. 8 and q. 9:

(a) Name and locate one area in the Less Developed World which has developed an iron and steel industry.

(b) Describe, with the aid of a sketch-map, the development that has taken place in the area you named in (a).

(c) Comment on the other industries that were necessary to facilitate this development and those which have arisen as a result of the development.

(a) What problems affect agriculture in the tropics?

(b) Describe the improvements in agriculture that are taking place in one named country in the Less Developed World.

Though the next question on this paper again stressed problems, it did so in a way that would cause the candidates to consider these problems in a positive way.

London Syllabus A, Paper 2, q. 10:

Study the information below which refers to a country in the Less Developed World:

Population	40 million
Birth rate	47 per thousand
Death rate	15 per thousand
Largest city	1,400,000
Second largest city	500,000
Agricultural workers	over 60% of population
Cultivated land	30% of total area
Average farm size	3.2 hectares
Daily newspapers	17.5 per thousand people
per capita share of G.N.P.	£80 per annum

(a) What problems do the figures suggest are facing less developed countries?

(b) Explain why these problems exist.

(c) Suggest three other statistical measurements that might have been included to indicate that the country is in the Less Developed World.

This same positive approach is shown in a question from another Board and which required a quite different type of answer.

Welsh, q. 15:

(a) Describe those aspects of either India or Pakistan which suggest to you that those countries are part of the poor Third World.

(b) With reference to either India or Pakistan show what has been achieved in both agriculture and manufacturing industry to promote economic development.

Finally in this group is a question which tested something of the creative thinking of the candidate and illustrates how a topic can be approached so that it could apply to any country.

Welsh, q. E 13:

With specific reference to either East Africa or West Africa describe the importance of water from the viewpoints of: (a) domestic water

supply, (b) rainfall and agriculture, (c) rivers and power production, (d) water for transport.

Table 6: Papers Not Specifying Particular Countries
to Illustrate a General Theme or Topic

AE B Section A	Problems of population growth, water resources, tropical agriculture, and the environment, which should use examples from any part of the world.
Cambridge 269	World Population and World Agriculture to be studied by sample areas.
JMB Syllabus A	Paper II, General Geography with varied topics designed to show general principles illustrated by specific examples.
JMB Syllabus B	Paper II, Study of the uneven distribution of population with reference to specific studies. Themes include - developed and under-developed countries, communist and capitalist economic systems, and the interdependence of different regions.
Ox. & Camb. Revised Syllabus	Paper II, the topics of agriculture, industry and cities in the Developed World (EEC, USA, USSR) and agriculture, industry and population in the Less Developed World.

Though the Regulations for 1977 do not refer to a Revised Syllabus, there were papers set for the Old and the Revised syllabuses.

Questions from Syllabuses listed in Table 6

Whereas the syllabuses referred to so far have all expected candidates to have studied the geography of some Commonwealth countries to enable them to illustrate their answers by case studies from these countries, the syllabuses in this third group do not specify which countries should be studied. It does seem, however, from the questions actually set that it would have been possible to answer the questions having made a study of selected Commonwealth countries.

As in the previous group of papers there was a question which brought together the study of countries from contrasting economic backgrounds.

AE B, Section A, q. 2

Study the following table which refers to the production of cereals in India and France in 1972.

	India		France	
	Area under crop in 000 hectares	Production in 000 metric tons	Area under crop in 000 hectares	Production in 000 metric tons
Cereal				
Wheat	19,139	26,410	3,958	18,123
Barley	2,456	2,577	2,674	10,426
Maize	5,726	6,206	1,880	8,190
Rice	36,019	57,950	10	41

- (a) State three significant facts that can be learned from these figures.
- (b) Why do many Developing Countries have problems in growing enough cereals to feed their population?
- (c) (i) Name one scheme to increase food production in a Developing Country
(ii) Draw a map to show the location of the area concerned in this scheme.
(iii) Describe carefully how it is hoped that this scheme will increase food production.

As in the first group of syllabuses there was a question that not only asked for knowledge of a country but also enabled candidates to write on an issue of some importance to that country.

AE B, Section A, q. 6

- (a) (i) Name one tropical country in which a single agricultural product accounts for most of the value of its exports. Name this product.
(ii) Draw a sketch-map of the country to show the main producing areas for this product and the main exporting routes; name at least three towns.
- (b) What conditions influence the production of this crop in the country you have named?
- (c) What disadvantages result from this reliance on a single export crop?

Finally, there were two questions which raised issues not illustrated in the questions quoted so far and which gave the candidates the opportunity of discussing issues of great importance.

Ox. & Camb. (Revised Syllabus) Paper II, q. 10 and q.12

Small-scale manufacturing industries are the most typical form of industrial development in many developing countries because, although there is no shortage of labour, the amount of capital available for industrial development is usually very limited

With these two factors in mind, and using examples which you have studied:

- (a) Describe the materials used, processes and products in one such manufacturing activity.
- (b) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of low capital - high labour pattern of industrial activity in one country or region.
- (c) Explain how these two factors have affected the development of heavy industry in one country or region.

The photograph is of a shanty town on the outskirts of a large

tropical city.

(a) Describe the conditions shown in the photograph and suggest reasons for the existence of such "towns".

(b) What impression does the photograph convey about social, health, and economic problems which are likely to occur?

(c) What might be done to improve living standards for the people in this shanty town?

CONCLUSIONS

Our main conclusions can be summarized in these four points:

1. The Commonwealth as such does not appear to be a priority for study in the minds of English examiners in History and Geography. Indeed it is of peripheral, and probably diminishing interest. This outlook appears to be shared by school teachers, since the number of entries to such papers in Commonwealth history that do exist are few.
2. Where the Commonwealth is taught in History, it is seen largely as part of British history rather than as an international organization of significance comparable to the OAU or NATO. In the field of Geography it is probably the great breadth of membership of the Commonwealth that makes it less easy to accommodate in syllabuses than the international organizations of more limited membership such as the EEC.
3. However, despite the above, it seems clear that the Empire and Commonwealth still exert an appreciable influence on the construction of syllabuses and examination questions. Although there is little conscious attempt to foster an awareness of a Commonwealth relationship per se, overseas areas and personalities are included for study which may well not have been there except for their historical connections with Britain. Yet, as a corollary of this, it appears that most examiners view the Commonwealth, if they are conscious of it at all, as an historical phenomenon, rather than as an important organization in the contemporary world.
4. Syllabuses in history and geography are changing and it could well be that the Commonwealth could be included as an identifiable part of these syllabuses. For this to happen, however, would need a marked change of awareness of the nature of the Commonwealth and its past and present links with the United Kingdom.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

This report on Commonwealth Topics in Examinations was considered by one of the committees set up by the Workshop on Teaching about the Commonwealth organized by the African Social Studies Programme and held in Nairobi in August 1978.

The committee recommended that Ministries of Education and Examining Boards in Commonwealth countries should, in addition to essay-type questions, set multiple choice and short answer questions on the Commonwealth, including some which are designed to elicit a response from given material (e.g. pictures, excerpts from documents, graphs, tables and flow charts).

The committee also drew up the following criteria as a guide to Examining Boards in framing questions on the Commonwealth:

1. Some questions should focus on the Commonwealth as a unit rather than on individual countries within the Commonwealth. Others should explore the role of an individual country in the Commonwealth or its impact on other members of the Commonwealth. (Thus, instead of asking candidates to explain the importance in the history of modern Africa of (a) apartheid, (b) Nkrumah, (etc.) a question could be phrased as follows: "Explain why (a) apartheid, (b) Rhodesia, (etc.) are sources of conflict among members of the Commonwealth".
2. Questions should be included that deal with:
 - (a) issues that have arisen since the formation of the modern Commonwealth;
 - (b) co-operation and conflict, and similarities and differences within the Commonwealth;
 - (c) the search for new relationships aimed at improving the quality of life of the peoples of the Commonwealth (e.g. the New International Economic Order, equal partnership, self reliance etc.).

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