



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**Tuesday 21 May 2019 – Afternoon**

**A Level History A**

**Y311/01 The Origins and Growth of the British Empire 1558–1783**

**Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes**



**You must have:**

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet  
(OCR12 sent with general stationery)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Use black ink.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any **two** questions in Section B.
- Write your answers in the Answer Booklet. The question number(s) must be clearly shown.

**INFORMATION**

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [ ].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (\*).
- This document consists of **4** pages.

## SECTION A

Read the two passages and then answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of why the British emerged as the dominant power in India. [30]

**Passage A**

Why did the East India Company increasingly exercise political power within India? There was one main reason: the decline of the Mughal Empire. The slow collapse of this once great empire created a power vacuum and, as power slipped from Mughal hands, Indian claimants warred with each other at the regional level of politics and government. Commerce and trade inevitably suffer when there is political instability. In attempting to protect their trading interests, the East India Company was drawn into Indian politics. The weakness at the top of the Mughal Empire led to a rise of faction and the increase in power of local rulers. In the north the Jats and Sikhs, and, in the west, the Marathas, firmly resisted Mughal attempts to govern them. In the south, the ruler of Hyderabad ruled over a large, virtually independent state. As the power of the Mughal Emperors weakened, more and more small-scale wars were fought throughout the eighteenth century as rival Indian princes battled for supremacy. In this situation, the East India Company was another player. Their main interest was trade, but there were other imperatives. A series of wars between the French and British spilled over into India, where the French were traders too. Both sides found allies in rival Indian princes and their factions. The British and French backed different factions in the struggle for the control of Bengal, which had been a Mughal stronghold.

Adapted from: R. Rees, *India 1900–1947*, published in 2006.

**Passage B**

The British learnt enough about the political situation in Bengal to realise that in a few months of confused and contradictory policy, of which his aggressive and then conciliatory treatment of the East India Company was only one example, Siraj-ud-Daula [Nawab of Bengal] had lost the confidence of the Hindu merchants and bankers who ran the financial system and some of the Muslims who ran the Bengal army. Ten years earlier no East India Company official would have done much about this, and even in 1757 not many officials would have done the same as Clive: he joined the conspiracy against Siraj-ud-Daula, led his little army of 3,000 men against the Bengal army of 60,000, committed his troops beyond hope of withdrawal by crossing the River Hughli, and on 23 June 1757 held them steady at the Battle of Plassey. His fellow conspirators took no part in the fighting, and Siraj-ud-Daula's army disintegrated in the face of the determination of the Company's army. Siraj-ud-Daula could not have been defeated – if that is the word for the collapse of his army – and destroyed if he had not alienated his subjects by being unreliable, but the decisive fact was that the British had fought him, while his subjects had only deserted him and waited to see who would win.

Adapted from: T.O. Lloyd, *The British Empire 1558–1983*, published in 1984.

**SECTION B**

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2\*** 'Mercantilism was the most effective method of economically exploiting colonies.' How far do you agree with this view of British colonial rule in the period from 1558 to 1783? **[25]**
- 3\*** How serious was opposition to British colonial rule in the period from 1558 to 1783? **[25]**
- 4\*** 'Colonial disputes in Asia were the main cause of international rivalry between Britain and other European powers in the period from 1558 to 1783.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

**END OF QUESTION PAPER**

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