

# Grade 9 Answer

## Interpretation Evaluation

8/8  
Marks

### Question:

Which interpretation gives the more convincing opinion about McCarthyism? Explain your answer based on your contextual knowledge and what it says in Interpretations A and B. (8 marks)

### Answer:

Interpretation A is more convincing in its portrayal of McCarthyism because it focuses on the direct impact Senator Joseph McCarthy's actions had on individuals within the government and on the general climate of fear he created. Raymond Gram Swing, a liberal journalist and opponent of McCarthy, highlights how McCarthy's tactics led diplomats and government employees to censor themselves out of fear of being falsely accused of communist sympathies. This aligns with historical evidence, as McCarthyism caused widespread fear, especially during his Wheeling Speech where he claimed to have a list of 200 known communists in the US State Department, leading to government officials and ordinary citizens being blacklisted, losing their jobs, or being imprisoned based on unfounded accusations.

In contrast, Interpretation B by Howard Zinn, while accurate in its description of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), focuses more broadly on the political environment in the early 1950s, including support for anti-communist investigations by both political parties in Congress. Although Zinn is correct in stating that the HUAC received continuous funding and that there was public support for it, McCarthy's actions were not supported by everyone, and by mid-1950s his actions were seen as reckless and his influence declined.

Overall, Interpretation A provides a more convincing analysis of McCarthyism because it captures the fear, intimidation, and suppression of dissent within the government, which were central to the movement's impact. Interpretation B offers important context but does not account for the unpopularity of McCarthyism within the US government, especially into the mid-1950s.

### Feedback:

This answer would get 8/8 marks because the pupil has given a complex evaluation of the interpretations based on contextual knowledge, and they have given their overall judgement on which interpretation is more convincing, with reasoning.

## **Interpretation A**

**An excerpt from Raymond Gram Swing's autobiography published in 1964. Swing was a liberal journalist and was a strong opponent of Joseph McCarthy.**

**In those four years he thrived as a demagogue, and frightened many, if not all, diplomats into failing to give their frank opinions to the government for fear of being falsely accused of Communist tendencies. The government thus suffered from a debility among diplomats. Employees in the Information Agency had to smother their political judgments lest they be pilloried by Senator McCarthy's congressional committee.**

## Interpretation B

**An excerpt from Howard Zinn's book 'A People's History of the United States' published in 1980. Zinn was a Professor of History at Boston University, and wrote about the HUAC - a committee that investigated those thought to have communist ties.**

**In the early fifties, the House Un-American Activities Committee was at its heyday, interrogating Americans about their Communist connections, holding them in contempt if they refused to answer, distributing millions of pamphlets to the American public...Liberals often criticized the Committee, but in Congress, liberals and conservatives alike voted to fund it year after year. By 1958, only one member of the House of Representatives (James Roosevelt) voted against giving it money.**