Candidate B

This extract states that despite the 1930s being a very challenging time for many people in Britain it was also a time full of excitement for others. Brooman says that the people were able to ‘expand their experiences and improve their lives’ an interpretation which challenges the Depression reality of the 1930s.Brooman’s view is valid because in some of the more affluent areas – the South East of England and the Midlands – people could afford to go on holiday, even buy cars as well as own radios and visit the cinemas. This was due to the increase of employment opportunities thanks to government intervention – namely supporting the development of car manufacturing or smaller, lighter industries such as radio production – the affluent side of Britain Brooman refers to are isolated areas with people having disposable incomes.

This contrasts greatly with the Depression side of Britain. South Wales and the North East were areas where people relied on jobs in the declining coal and steel industries. Here, in areas such as Jarrow and Rhondda unemployed workers were forced to go on hunger marches. Having lost work through increased competition from abroad for coal and steel these people were further punished through the crippling Means Test that surveyed individual household needs for dole.

The interpretation offered by Brooman, a historian whose work is aimed at informing GCSE students, was published in 1994. The interpretation that some areas of Britain was booming through the period of the 1930s was possibly not readily available at the time. The media of the age would have been concerned with labelling the 1930s as an era of Depression – focussing on the headline grabbing Hunger Marches or the losses of more jobs with the closures of ship yards and steel works.

It has to be agreed the interpretation offered by Brooman is valid for the 1930s because holidays or buying new homes and new cars did increas in Britain during the Depression era. However, the Britain Brooman describes is a limited interpretation. It is just one aspect of the time period and one that exists after the Government moved to transform and modernise its industries. Hunger marches and the introduction of the Means Test is another aspect of life in 1930s Britain. The depression era and the recovery era of the Depression are both valid views of Britain.

Candidate C

Brooman’s interpretation of Britain suggests the 1930s was a pleasant time for some people. It is a valid interpretation because during the 1930s some British people’s experiences did expand through the modernisation of British industries. More people were able to go on holiday, buy new homes or cars, even radios to tap into new and growing media. However, the interpretation fails to give significance to the impact the Depression had on the lives of ordinary people.

The Wall Street Crash was a shock for all of Britain, but its greatest impact was felt in areas associated with traditional or declining industries such as the coal mines in the South Wales region or the shipyards in the Northern regions of England. These were hit hard by the depression – many workers were left unemployed and unable to support themselves or their families. The government even introduced the Means Test which investigated by the PAC and household’s needs were measured against the distribution of the dole. Many families felt victimised, even humiliated by this invasion of privacy, and the move eventually led to thousands staging Hunger Marches through England. The very term hunger is a powerful word and suggests the severity of the plight of some ordinary people in 1930s Britain.

The 1930s Britain Brooman’s interpretation relates to are the ordinary people who were fortunate enough to find work in new and emerging industries, often supported by Government schemes. These people may also have taken the plunge and emigrated from their home areas to move to areas where work was being created with the introduction of new, more modern industries such as car manufacturing, or small lighter industries making radios and other smaller products. Also the coming war would have seen an increase in jobs as Britain rearmed.

The ordinary people in this Britain, the one Brooman describes, was different to the more depressed regions. Brooman is an historian writing for GCSE students. The purpose of his work is to inform students of life in 1930s Britain, so not only is his view reliable, it is also valid. It was also published in 1996 – decades after the 1930s meaning there is scope for a revision of what he is suggesting is a more traditional interpretation of the time. However, the interpretation, even though it has been researched by a historian, is a limited one. He gives importance to one aspect of the impact of the Depression. Yes some ordinary people found opportunity and an expansion of experiences but not all. The interpretation is valid but also limited about what life was like for everyone in 1930s Britain.