
AS

History

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Report on the Examination

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General comments

Teachers and students can expect specification coverage when preparing for this paper. Teachers are advised to regularly remind their students that this is a depth paper. As such, it is likely that students will be asked narrowly focused questions and as such they need to hone in on the core of the question, any key dates contained therein, and tailor their responses with the discipline that those features of the question impose. Furthermore there is an expectation that students will have, and be able to demonstrate, conceptual understanding this being especially important to this particular paper.

Neither of the two essay questions appears to have caused students problems either in identifying what was required of them or in their ability to draw upon relevant material from their learning. They were both well understood and students had plenty of material to work with in order to provide a balanced picture. Some used historiography which, although not required, was often applied to good effect. Occasionally an essay was let down by having a purely one sided argument but this was a rare episode.

Most students appear well drilled in dealing with essay questions but some are losing marks on the source based questions often because they are failing to identify what the question requires of them or because they are falling back into habits learnt in handling sources at GCSE level.

Stylistically students are sometimes writing quite long conclusions that offer no more than simple repetition of what has preceded. Teachers might want to focus some guidance upon what makes for an effective but efficient summary.

It might help students if they could think about what sort of essay question they are being asked. For instance Q2 tested the concept of change and continuity, if students were able to shape their response with the key historical purpose in mind it might help with their structure and discipline regarding what to select and deploy

Section A

Q1 Sources

Teachers and students are reminded that the three elements to tackling this question based around two sources. There is an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (with the support of own knowledge) and a comparison. These key features do not have to be treated equally in terms of the weight of response, for instance it is perfectly acceptable that the comparison emerges within a concluding paragraph. That said, some good responses often result from a sustained comparison throughout the answer.

In some cases, there appears to be something of a hangover from GCSE approaches to sources with students keen to point out that the document lacked value because of a variety of rather random omissions of a generic nature, for instance, identifying the date of the source and then making a general claim that the source fails to mention what happened next. Whilst there may be some potential in this line of thought, if linked to a specific feature of the source, a generic suggestion along these lines will inevitably lack focus. Similarly students are still overly concerned with the trustworthiness, reliability and accuracy of the source rather than its value allied to the question. Argument and content were generally dealt with well but it is important that students do not simply approach this skill as a comprehension exercise and simply show what the sources say without a direct link to the core features of the question. Therefore teachers would be well advised

to establish with students what is meant by value. On some occasions students adopted line by line descriptions of the content of the sources which did not ascribe value.

Provenance was handled quite well in many cases however some weaker responses simply regurgitated the information which has been provided on the exam paper. Tone was not something that was dealt with as a matter of routine. When tone was tackled it was occasionally not related to the question and the focus on value to the historian but rather took the form of a general comment on what it was.

Some students erroneously perceived the Luther source as more valuable because they stated it was a primary source whereas source A was only a record of an event that had previously occurred. Whilst there was some benefit to be had from exploring the idea of why this would affect the source content students should be reminded that all sources on this paper will be of a primary nature.

There were some simplistic responses that source B was of more value because it was less biased, Luther's words being regarded as the unbridled truth free of subjectivity because they had come from his mouth. Some weaker answers were too concerned to describe Luther's behaviour rather than apply this to the question about value to an historian. The word 'invaluable' is often used to wrongly indicate that a source has less value.

Most students wrote an introductory paragraph to this question which is not necessary and often is a waste of time as it involves little more than empty assertion with one or the other source baldly identified as having the most value with nothing to indicate what will back this up later in the answer. For source questions centres might want to think about whether students should be encouraged to write introductions at all; clearly this is remains a necessity with essays however.

Many students were able to challenge the notion that Luther had made himself look foolish and had lost reputation with reference to their wider knowledge of how he had in fact popularised himself at Worms and it was the Catholic Church or Charles V that had been foolish in offering him such a platform.

As to the content of the sources themselves there were no major misunderstandings of this feature, the comprehension of what was presented was generally accurate. Furthermore the vast majority of students were able to incorporate some relevant own knowledge to provide the historical context asked for in the question.

Comparison of sources was variable and inconsistently applied with some students failing to deal with this aspect. Students should be reminded to focus on value to ensure that the comparison is drawn out from the source material. Statements that assertively address value without the evidence to back up the assertion are to be avoided. There was some simplistic comparison made with B identified as more valuable than A because it was from Luther himself.

Section B

Q2 Essay

This question was by far the most popular choice. Those who opted for it were generally able to provide a balanced response which identified church corruption but which acknowledged that the position of ordinary people remained one of acceptance and broad support and so although the popes from this era all played their part in fuelling a perception of corruption, ordinary people tended to be at too great distance to develop any acute anti-papalism. Therefore, good balancing

points were made about the abuse of the sale of indulgences set against the comfort and succour they provided for the families of the recently deceased and consequently their sustained popularity. Most students who opted for this question were able to identify the popes associated with this time and many were able to provide evidence of corruption associated with each period of office. Generally essays did show evidence of an attempt to structure. Sometimes this fell apart when a student would write a paragraph for the proposition of the question, the next paragraph being against and the following one returning to the proposition thus suggesting an inability to structure the work and gather the argument together coherently.

Q3 Essay

This was the least popular choice of essay and yet, for those that opted for it, the evidence was that students were able to apply some very good detailed knowledge and offer a balanced response in order to reach an even handed and substantiated conclusion. It is a cause and consequence question and this was understood by the vast number of students who wrote a response. Most showed good knowledge and understanding of the weakness of Charles Vs position with regard to the issues that were of most immediate concern to him, the Ottomans and the Italian Wars, and which ensured he was often not present to enable him to deal with Lutheranism. Moreover there was some clear understanding of the structure of the empire that meant, although Charles apparently presided over a vast empire, in reality he was hamstrung by this loose collection of states and by the individual ambition of German princes. There was also some good attention to balancing points around Luther's post-Worms popularity and the impact of printing.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.