
AS

History

7041/2D

Report on the Examination

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General comments

The standard of responses was higher than in 2016. It is clear that centres are preparing their students more appropriately for the challenges of AS. Indeed, it is hoped that the experience gained in this examination will stand the students in good stead for the A-level examination in 2018.

Q1

It is worth repeating the advice provided in last year's Report on the Examination. Examiners are looking to reward students' ability to assess the value of a source to a historian studying a particular issue, in this case Henry VIII's attitude to religion in 1540-3. To assess the value of a source, students are expected to consider its provenance, tone and content. Having considered the value of the individual source, students are then expected to compare the two sources to make a judgement as to which is the more valuable source.

In a pleasing development, more students than last year focused their evaluation of the sources on the question, rather than making general comments about reliability and 'bias'. Nevertheless, there was still a number of responses that included often extensive comments on how useful the sources were in finding out about how reformers viewed Henry's religious policies, or how popular his actions were with the general population. The mark scheme is clear that, for marks in Level 3 and above, it is necessary to make explicit reference to the issue identified in the question. Since this question asked about Henry's attitude to religion, only students who focused on this could expect to score highly.

Source A was generally considered the more difficult source to interpret. Most answers commented on its provenance – it was written by a reformer to a reformer – but different conclusions were reached as to how this affected the source's value. Rather too many were led (or misled) by the religious identity of the letter's author and recipient into speculation about whether they were trying to influence Henry or whether they approved of Henry's actions. Better answers commented on the fact that Hilles' aim was to inform Bullinger on events in England, and that he provided information about important events in 1540 in a largely factual manner. Hilles also offered his opinion on the reason for Henry's actions – 'he wanted to please the clergy and obstructive members of the nobility'. This is a possible explanation of Henry's attitude to religion, and one which led some students to explain in detail the King's need for support after the threat of the Pilgrimage of Grace. However, it should be noted that Hilles' explanation was not necessarily correct.

The best answers were alive to the nuances of Hilles' account: the conservatives who reject Henry's royal supremacy are described as 'Popish priests'; the reformers who share their fate are more approvingly called 'preachers of the Gospel'. We are left in no doubt as to the side of the religious divide on which Hilles sat! Nevertheless, to demonstrate good understanding of the source's value, it was necessary to explain how Hilles' bias affected his description of events and, thus, how valuable the source is in relation to Henry's attitude to religion. That Henry ordered the execution of conservatives and reformers may have mystified Hilles ('I could never discover why [they] were executed...') but not a good number of students, who used this information to explain Henry's desire to secure his royal supremacy and to chart a 'middle way' in religion. Contextual knowledge and understanding is useful in corroborating statements on Henry's religious attitude: it was pleasing to see references to, and explanations of, the executions of Lambert and Cromwell, the enactment of the Six Articles, Henry's excommunication and the Treaty of Nice, the Howard marriage, and the influence of Norfolk and Gardiner.

Source B was thought by most students to be the more valuable source. Even if one were unfamiliar with the statute itself, it should have been recognised that, as an extract from an Act of Parliament, it had to be approved by Henry. Knowledge of the context was useful here: since the fall of Cromwell in 1540, Henry had ruled without a chief minister; as a result, it seems correct to assume that legislation passed in the 1540s was, if not drafted by the King (as some claimed), then at least written with his personal demands in mind.

The majority of students were able to demonstrate reasonable, and in many cases very good, understanding of Source B's content. The Act for the Advancement of True Religion restricted access to the English Bible, forbidding 'women, apprentices, serving men of the degree of yeoman or under' from reading the Word of God in their own tongue. This was a dramatic change from the Royal Injunctions of 1538 and the publication of the Great Bible in 1539, whereby the government encouraged Bible reading by all.

Many students were able to illustrate the King's control over religious policy in this period with references to the Act of Six Articles and, even more pertinently, the King's Book. Less convincing were the numerous answers that explained Henry's conservatism in 1543 as the result of his fear of foreign invasion. Given that the alliance between France and Spain had broken down by 1542, and Henry was from February 1543 allied with Charles against Francis, this was highly unlikely. Similarly, the influence of the Howards had waned after the discovery of Queen Catherine's adultery in 1541. It makes more sense to view the restrictions imposed on the Bible in English as stemming from Henry's personal conservatism. Those students who made this point and were able to support it with evidence, such as the King's complaint to parliament that 'the word of God is disputed, rhymed, sung and jangled in every ale house', were justly rewarded.

Q2

The majority of those who attempted Question 2 understood its demands. Most students could identify a range of opponents of the annulment – the most notable being Catherine of Aragon, Thomas More, John Fisher, Elizabeth Barton, Charles V and Clement VII. Mentioned by a significant minority were Eustace Chapuys, William Warham, 'ordinary people' in England, and Francis I (although his somewhat ambiguous role was interpreted in different ways). Overall, good knowledge was shown of the way in which these individuals or groups opposed Henry's attempts to secure an annulment. Catherine's impassioned defence of her marriage at Blackfriars, the actions of the 'Aragonese faction', the visions of the 'Holy Maid of Kent' – all are well known and generally well understood. Charles V's power over Clement VII is also well known, although it cannot be emphasised enough that the Sack of Rome in 1527 was not prompted by the Emperor's desire to thwart Henry.

In order to achieve high marks, however, it was necessary to do more than simply to describe the opposition to the annulment. A pleasing number of answers evaluated the strength of the opposition and arrived at different, yet equally persuasive, judgements as a result. The more popular argument was that opposition abroad – in particular, the authority of the papacy and the power of Charles V – was more significant than that at home, and caused Henry to avoid conflict until 1533, and to fear it thereafter. Others averred that, whereas overseas opposition could be bypassed by breaking with Rome, the domestic opposition Henry faced could only be overcome by executing its leaders and was, thus, more important.

Q3

Question 3 was slightly more popular than Question 2, perhaps because the question is a 'classic' that lends itself naturally to the analytical structure that is an essential characteristic of a good AS History essay. Most students were able to identify reasons for the dissolution of the monasteries,

showing awareness of Henry's financial, religious and political motivations. However, it was a notable weakness of some answers that they were better at suggesting why Henry might have wanted to pursue the programme of dissolution than they were at providing evidence in support of their analysis.

A surprisingly high proportion of answers left Cromwell out of their explanation altogether. GR Elton's interpretation of Henry as a weak king, controlled by his chief minister, seems to have fallen from favour somewhat. Even less popular, it seems, is GW Bernard's more recent thesis, in which Henry's desire to purify the Church is regarded as the primary cause of the Dissolution, at least at the start. Although extensive knowledge was displayed of the many evils of the monasteries, the vast majority of answers saw the removal of corruption from the Church as merely an excuse for what followed.

Even if one does not swallow Bernard's thesis whole, it is worth questioning the extent to which the Dissolution was one event. Although most answers explained the Dissolution as a single phenomenon, some excellent entries assessed the motivations behind the two phases separately. While Henry may have been willing to close only the smallest and least viable monasteries in 1536, the rebellions provoked by the Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries seem to have led him to consider the monasteries as a whole a threat to his realm. As Bernard has argued, Henry's Erasmian desire to reform the monasteries was behind the first phase. When the ensuing counter-revolutionary protests threatened the realm, however, Henry's attitude to the monasteries became more destructive.

The best answers to this question were able to demonstrate conceptual awareness. Some students made the persuasive argument that, for Henry, everything was political. Not only did the Dissolution enable the replacement of abbots in the House of Lords with pliable bishops and make possible the patronage on which Henry depended for noble support, but the increase of royal revenue was the means by which the King could defend his realm against internal and external threats.

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.