
AS

HISTORY

7401/2B The Wars of the Roses, 1450–1499

The Fall of the House of Lancaster, 1450–1471

Report on the Examination

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General

Students are clearly able to manage their time effectively with regard to the examination. There were very few cases of incomplete papers. With regard to the essay questions, question 03 proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very good and weaker answers to both. The poor use of spelling, punctuation and grammar remains an area of concern. It is understood that students are writing under exam conditions, but centres and students should note that well-organised and effective communication is a part of the mark scheme and 'use good English' is also noted on the front cover of the question paper. Weaknesses in this regard often obscure (and sometimes entirely undermine) the possible meaning of the student.

Question 01

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion, something of each was expected in answers. There was no expectation that provenance/tone and content should be discrete sections. On the contrary, answers that blended these tended to do better by avoiding comments on provenance without own knowledge relevant to the question.

Most students made some effort to consider the provenance and tone of the sources. However, the failure to do this in a meaningful manner limited the achievement of far too many students. The provenance 'steer' at the beginning of the source needs to be read carefully. It is important to apply the provenance to the material provided and to the question asked. Too many students made generic comments about each source that were discreet from the question asked. 'Bias' was frequently deployed but, as in previous years, far too often in a highly simplistic and dismissive manner. Whilst it certainly can be effectively deployed, centres may find that other terminology is less problematic.

It was common to find, as was the case for the last two years, that responses attempted to evaluate content but a lack of contextual own knowledge made doing this very difficult and, in many cases, quite superficial. This continues to be a major (probably the major) area for centres to work on with students. It was a bigger issue this year than previously. This is a 'depth' study and students are expected to provide contextual own knowledge that is relevant to the question. Too many merely repeated the content of the source with little or no knowledge to support or challenge its value. In the worst cases these amounted to a simple summary of each source. As was the case last year, students who addressed content through a sentence-by-sentence (or even phrase-by-phrase) approach tended to produce far less satisfactory answers than those who summarised and commented on the overall arguments. Students would be well advised to take a moment to read the entire source and consider its main emphasis with regard to the question before beginning their reply.

Comparison can only be effective when both sources have been understood and their value has been established using provenance/tone and contextual own knowledge. It should also be noted that the students are being asked to discuss 'value' and not reliability, usefulness, validity or any other concept.

Question 02

This was the less popular of the two essay questions but it did attract a wide range of marks. The strengths of the Nevilles were largely understood and their roles regarding Richard of York's actions, especially the First Battle of St Albans, were well known. However, some responses limited their answers to the Earl of Warwick alone. Some students persuasively used wider contextual knowledge to contrast the greater success of York after 1453 with his failures before that date, when he did not enjoy their support. If anything, there was a tendency to not consider limitations to the Neville alliance or the alternative factors that supported Richard of York. This left some responses rather unbalanced.

Question 03

This was the more popular of the essay questions and, like question 02, the responses to it attracted a wide range of marks. Some students struggled with the issue identified in the question. One problem was the excessive focus of some responses on the Lancastrian resistance from 1461 to 1464, which had been decisively crushed much earlier than the period in the question. Others struggled to distinguish accurately between Warwick and Clarence's actions in 1469 when they orchestrated rebellion from within the Yorkist regime, and their subsequent alliance with the Lancastrians. The key differentiating factor between responses was the range and depth of knowledge used to support and challenge arguments.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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