
AS

History

2A Royal Authority and the Angevin Kings, 1154-1189
Report on the Examination

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General

The knowledge deployed by students on this unit was wide and demonstrated thorough understanding of key topics in the specification. The vast majority handled the time in the examination well and made a solid attempt at two questions. As always, a minority lacked clarity and showed limited communication skills (including poor legibility) which made it difficult to assess their answers.

Question 1

The knowledge deployed by students in response to this question tended to be very good, with a clear awareness of Henry's position at the start of his reign being shown. Where students dropped marks was in losing focus on the specific question. Many lapsed into writing an essay looking at whether Henry was in a strong or a weak position, rather than focusing on assessing the value of the sources for telling historians about Henry's position. A disappointing number of answers ignored the issue of 'value' entirely and instead discussed reliability, validity or usefulness, which are not the same things. Explicit links to the question (i.e. value of the sources) needs to be developed more explicitly by many students throughout their answers.

Provenance is an important issue when assessing the value of the sources and many students did remember this. However, there was a large tendency towards either just describing the provenance or bland generalisation, e.g. 'this source was written at the time and so is valuable' or 'this source is biased towards Henry and so is not valuable'. Students need to explain more clearly why bias, hindsight, the time of writing etc. would affect value, rather than making overtly generalised statements. Bias does not automatically reduce value; in the same way that hindsight does not automatically improve it. Students must explain their assessment with specific material. For example, some students said that B was 'biased against Stephen' and therefore wasn't valuable. However, the content and arguments put forward in B about the situation in England after Stephen's death were accurate (supported by wider own knowledge in the best answers) and thus here the bias does not necessarily reduce value. Students should also be encouraged to avoid generalised comments such as "charters have to tell the truth" or "chronicles just report facts and have no personal opinions" as these are very low level generalisations at best. Tone was mentioned by a number of students, but often this was just described (not always accurately) and secure links to the question were not made. Many students wasted time on lengthy introductions which simply paraphrased the source content.

Students should be encouraged to read the sources holistically and to consider their assessment from this viewpoint, rather than attempting a 'line by line' formulaic approach. For the AS examination students do need to reach a comparative judgement about which source is more valuable. This judgement needs to be adequately supported.

Question 2

This was the most popular of the two essay questions. Students seemed to have very good knowledge of some of the reasons for the outbreak of the Great Rebellion and the vast majority of students achieved a balanced answer. Where some students lost marks was in a failure to adequately consider the key factor within the question: the 'oppressive rule' of Henry II. This was

concerned with how Henry ruled his dominions rather than his relationships with his sons and Eleanor (this would be ‘treatment’ rather than ‘rule’). Good answers tended to consider how Henry had treated his barons. Most examples focused on the English barons which was fine. The very best answers could link examples of rule which was deemed oppressive (e.g. the imposition of the Cartae Baronum or the destruction of the adulterines or Henry’s attitude towards baronial inheritances) with specific rebels in 1173 such as the Earls of Leicester and Chester. Some students decided to debate whether Henry’s rule was oppressive and thus dismissed it as a factor as they deemed him to not be oppressive. This argument was not very persuasive as it was the barons’ perception of how Henry ruled which was important. Some students lapsed into generalised examples (e.g. suggesting that Young Henry, Richard and Geoffrey all had the same motives) and some even became confused with the rebellions in the 1180s and thought that John and Philip II were involved. A number of students discussed the murder of Thomas Becket- however, this was rarely well linked to the actual outbreak of rebellion and many students just assumed that this caused barons and bishops to rebel. The evidence to support this is very thin, especially considering that the English Church was on Henry’s side during the rebellion.

Question 3

This question was only attempted by a handful of students, but did produce some fair responses. Some students had clearly revised this topic area thoroughly and had good knowledge about the developments in towns and other relevant factors, e.g. the social impact of the legal changes Henry introduced. Unfortunately some students confused ‘economic development’ with Henry’s financial policies and so wasted time describing the reform of the Exchequer or the introduction of new coins, without effectively linking these points to economic or social development.

Overall students seemed to have revised thoroughly for this exam and could write some good essays which were well structured and had good evidence. The source question was less well answered, but there was a clear improvement in skills from last year.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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