
AS

History

7041/1B

Report on the Examination

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General

The depth and quality of most of the responses seen reflect the hard work and dedication both students and centres commit to this specification. The vast majority of students were able to demonstrate what they knew, understood and could do in engaging fully with the demands of the question paper. Most wrote with knowledge and confidence producing articulate and thoughtful answers which demonstrated the work of student and centre willingness and enthusiasm to engaged in the subject and the inherent issues. There were some students, whose ineffective time management defined their overall performance, running out of time or hastily truncating higher level opportunities in weak evaluations and conclusions. Many wrote extended responses with the additional time given yet a few wrote to excess with narrative responses, lacking definition or the requisite interpretive skills to take fuller advantage of the higher levels in Question 01. Overall students coped well with the second year of the new format of the examination which demanded comparison between extracts, and an understanding of historical context and interpretations within A03. These helped to differentiate between students who were more confident than others in the reading of the extracts placing the less able students in the lower levels. Many may well need to move away from simplistic references to “omission” as an effective comparison and interpretive tool, similarly many wrote extensively showcasing their own knowledge whilst not fully developing the interpretation of the extracts to more successfully articulate the convincing views expressed. The essay questions reflect the target A01. The essays were focused and balanced, the most successful demonstrating clear supported and sustained judgements linking effectively to the focus question.

Section A

Question 01

It was clear that the vast majority of students were able to consider the two extracts by Fernandez-Armesto and Kamen in turn, making effective comparative comment in their responses whilst developing this further in the conclusions, displaying a demonstrable understanding of the respective interpretations in the two extracts and showing an understanding of their respective historical content within a secure and supported context. Knowledge of the crucial years 1492-1516 and Ferdinand and Isabella’s relationship with the nobility was extensive reflecting the confidence of the vast majority of the students with this popular topic: There however remained a small minority of students whose responses remained largely content driven, lacking a fuller understanding of “the more convincing view” and were consequently quite reliant on “omission” as a determining factor in interpretation.

Examiners were looking for three key elements in student answers:

- 1) An understanding of the interpretations in the two extracts.

The most able students successfully identified the overall interpretation of each extract and explained it using effective and relevant own knowledge. They were equally able to acknowledge other views and arguments to evaluate, demonstrating high-level skills of reading with understanding. Whilst there was some evidence of a more mechanistic approach with the potential to offer a less effective interpretation. The complexity of the interpretation of comparative views was not appreciated by less able students who usually addressed only one or two statements in each extract, relying on omission: “Extract A is less convincing because it does not mention”.

2) An understanding of the historical context

The more confident students offered a cogent argument by both supporting and challenging the argument. Ferdinand and Isabella and their relationship with their nobility provided both a wealth and depth of own knowledge from well prepared students able to manipulate it in response to the skills required and the demands of the question. Precision was clearly demonstrated by many students here to provide balanced and detailed argument within a clearly defined historical context. Less able students characteristically demonstrated little precision or wider understanding of the need to offer a convincing interpretive and balanced approach. A small number of students produced answers which were largely descriptive rather than evaluative. The majority understood the direction of the question to define the nature of the relationship between the Spanish Crown and the nobility within the period 1492-1516.

3) Comparison between the two extracts

This had the potential to be problematic for less able students whose approach to comparison extended to assertive phrases and reliance upon the content of the extract with little supporting contextual own knowledge. The most able were capable of recognising the need to judge the interpretations themselves drawing on effective and relevant analysis to provide a meaningful and substantiated judgement many arguing that Kamen's view was the more convincing because of his corroborative assessment of Fernandez-Armesto's claims of essential "partnership" between Crown and nobility, his argument shows the skill and success of the Catholic kings in the difficult task of taming the nobility. Fernandez-Armesto's arguments may also be seen as convincing because allowance is made for exceptions and change over time, reflecting a more realistic view of the limitations of royal power.

Section B

Question 02

The focus of the question was the extent to which the expansion of Spain's American Empire was due to the personal ambitions of the "conquistadores" in the years 1519-1556. The question invited students to present a range of evidence and arguments to identify and evaluate the reasons why Spain achieved rapid expansion of the American Empire between 1519 and the 1550's, including the Conquest of Mexico by Cortes and the Conquest of Peru, begun by Pizarro and completed by successors in the 1540's after the civil wars between the "conquistadores." This was acknowledged and students were awarded appropriately. The "personal ambitions" was an effective discriminator which allowed students to explore a wide range of factors and reach supported and sustained judgments within a clear balanced structure. Those achieving the higher levels demonstrated the ability to analyse and evaluate key features such as: the influx of adventurers to the New World seeking land, glory and gold and their relentless quest for El Dorado. The nature of key individuals equally driven by personal ambition and the inability of the Crown to prevent what was happening initially.

Yet equally most were able to a greater or lesser extent offer a challenge to the view by citing evidence against "personal ambitions": The Crown determined which "conquistadores received its authority and hence their legitimacy. This was seen in the marginalisation of Cortes from 1522 and the imposition of royal authority in Peru between 1548 and 1551. Real success however was determined by European technology which along with the horse established military dominance. The discovery of gold and silver determined the rapid expansion, the Crown was as interested as the "conquistadores" as the Church. Equally religious crusade determined expansion, the Church was closely linked to the Crown and played the key role in justifying and implementing Spanish rule

The vast majority of the students were able to reach considered conclusions as to the personal ambitions of the “conquistadores” within the wider context of other key factors. There remained a small minority who sought essentially narrative responses with little developed understanding of the extent of wider issues or who relied on largely unsupported and assertive conclusions. This remained a very accessible and popular question. The vast majority of responses used chronology and detail to sustain convincing arguments leading to equally convincing judgements.

Question 03

The focus of the question was the extent to which Charles V’s commitments as Holy Roman Emperor badly weakened Spain between the years 1529-1556. The focus of the question was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of Spain by the time Charles abdicated in 1556. Not as popular as Question 02 nevertheless was well attempted by many students who were able to respond largely successfully to the demands of the question arguing the premise that Spain was a victim of the imperial responsibilities Charles was bound by but equally the inability to disengage from the wider, and for Spain, disastrous conflicts. The more sophisticated responses demonstrated clear and detailed knowledge tempered with contextual and in the case of higher level responses, conceptual understanding, clearly making links across a range of relevant factors revealing understanding of breadth and change over time.

The better responses acknowledged that Spain, despite the exactions made upon her by Charles V’s pre-occupation with imperial affairs, nevertheless emerged stronger not weaker. Charles’s absences were mitigated by effective regents and the structure of the royal government and administration of the conciliar system. The American Empire was both a symbol and a cause of national power and prestige. Spain despite the parlous condition of its domestic economy and equally poor social conditions emerged as the pre-eminent Catholic power globally, having created religious unity within Iberia. Students who showed knowledge and understanding of the key argument were acknowledged and rewarded appropriately within AO1.

Good answers were able to demonstrate effective balanced and well supported responses leading to informed and well- articulated judgements at level 4 and above, Weaker responses offered little accurate and precise supporting detail with analysis confined to largely unsubstantiated assertion. The focus of the question was an effective discriminator in defining weak, average and very good responses. There was a small proportion of students who exercise considerable descriptive knowledge of events within the HRE without the closer linkage to the arguments and the focus of the question. The most able students were able to discriminate appropriately and made links between the various factors involved, political, economic, military and religious or to analyse convincingly how Charles V’s commitments as HRE impacted on Spain.

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.