



History

Paper 1A (A-level) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1A (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 Using your understanding of the historical context assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to the reasons why knights went on Crusade.

(30 marks)

Student Response

Clearly, some knights went on crusade for economic reasons, some for religious reasons, and some for social reasons, but for the bulk of them, social reasons were paramount. Therefore, the argument put forward by Jotischky is the most convincing of the three.

Mayer argues that economic motives were crucial, talking of a "hunger for loot" and citing the poor conditions in Europe and the system of primogeniture, creating a surplus amount of knights with no land. This argument is also made by Runciman who argues that Europe was overpopulated and that landless younger sons sought to get land for themselves in the east. This was certainly a motivating factor for some knights such as Tancred de Hauteville and Baldwin of Boulogne, both of whom fought over land at Tarsus and Mamistra in Cilicia. Baldwin's conduct in Edessa, murdering Thoros of Edessa, is also evidence of his own hunger for land.

However, it is not the case that all knights went purely for economic gain. An example of someone clearly not interested in economic gain is Raymond of Toulouse, who gave up 13 of the richest counties in France to take the Cross. Not only this, but his immediate action after taking the Cross was to visit a monastery to ask for the intercession of the Virgin Mary. More important still is the fact that crusading was an enormously expensive endeavour. Crusading knights could not go simply because they wanted to as it would cost them roughly 4-5 times their annual income. One way to raise the necessary funds would be to mortgage one's land, as Robert of Normandy did for £10,000, but not everyone had that option. Rather, knights could not reasonably expect to return from the east any richer than when they set out.

Riley Smith argues that knights went mainly for religious reasons. Citing the example of Baldwin of Guines taking his four sons on crusade with him, he argues that most crusaders were not "spare sons" and hence the argument that economic motivations were paramount is flawed. Instead, for Riley Smith, the crusaders were "moved by idealism." Now, it is certainly the case that the 11th century was an age when "sin was ubiquitous" (Phillips). The knights would no doubt be feeling guilt for their profession, i.e. killing people, which was an especially sinful act. This Knightly Dilemma could be solved by going on crusade since this would wipe their spiritual slate clean, so to speak. Religion had a very big part to play in the crusade, preached by the pope himself. The time at which the crusade was preached would have been particularly important, too. The idea of millenarianism – that the Day of Judgement was set for 1100AD - would have made many in Christendom particularly concerned eschatologically. The behaviour of some crusaders seems to support this. For example, Godfrey of Bouillon took several monks with him to the Holy Land to assist him in his daily prayers. Therefore, religion was of course a very important factor in their decision to go on crusade.

However, there were other ways of purging themselves of sin. Doing penance was far less costly and there were pilgrimages nearer to home, e.g. to Rome or to the Santiago de Compostela in Spain. And the problem still remains that the majority of the knights would not be able to afford the cost of crusading themselves. While they may have wanted to go on crusade to cleanse their souls of sin, they still couldn't afford to act on that desire. Rather, the majority of knights went through ties of obligation, through the feudal system.

Jotischky argues that the most important reasons for knights going crusade were social reasons. He cites Joinville who took the cross along with his cousin, suggesting that taking the Cross "worked through existing relationships." Robert of Normandy and Stephen of Blois are also examples of crusaders who took the Cross as a result of social pressure.

Not only this, but 11th century Europe was a hierarchical place where the feudal system was in operation. This meant that bodies of knights would be at the disposal of their lords and if their lords wanted to go on crusade, then they would go too.

There was obviously a strong religious element to crusading. However, this religious element itself was infused with feudalism. The pope, in the words of Karen Armstrong, "was becoming Christendom's head of state" due to the Gregorian Reforms of the mid-11th century. The pope was effectively acting as if he were the supreme feudal overlord of Europe. Indeed, Urban II's strategy was, as Jotischky notes, to seek out the nobles and recruit them to take the Cross who would then take their own knights with them on crusade. Ultimately, then, the reason why so many knights went east was because of the chain reaction of enlistment set off by the pope and the nobles. While these nobles may have been concerned for their soul, only they could afford to act on this concern, with the bulk of the knights going because they were dependent upon their lords.

In conclusion, the most convincing explanation for why knights went on crusade is provided by Jotischky. While it is true that harvests and living conditions had been poor in Europe and that there were lots of landless younger sons as a result of the northern French practice of primogeniture, the enormous cost of crusading made it unlikely that knights would come back from the Holy Land any richer than when they set out. In addition, while religion played a very important part of peoples' lives in the 11th century and even though the crusade granted participants remittance of their sins, the problem still remains that the expedition cost between 4-5 times the annual income of a knight. Rather, the best explanation for how so many knights went on crusade is that the leading nobles encouraged them to accompany them to the Holy Land.

Commentary – Level 5

An outstanding answer; the arguments of the extracts are clearly identified and knowledge of context is used to corroborate and challenge the arguments in clear and appropriate detail. This is clearly a Level 5 response, but some inaccuracies in relation to the precise details in Extract A and a limited challenge to Extract C places the response more to the middle of the level rather than the very top.