



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 1C (A-level)
Question 01 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

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 1C (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 threats to Henry VII's position in the years 1485 to 1509.

[30 marks]

Student response

There were many threats to Henry's position during his reign, some however were more significant than others.

John Guy in source 1 argues that there was no significant dynastic threat to Henry's reign and he argues the threats that occurred should not be "exaggerated". This is certainly true in regard to Perkin Warbeck, who it could be argued was the most significant threat to Henry in that he was welcomed to the court of both Margaret of Burgundy, Charles V of France and James of Scotland, who married him to a relative. Their support gave Warbeck weight to his identity of being the York heir, and yet his attempts to invade England were thwarted. He was not supported by the nobles in Ireland and in Scotland as a consequence of the Treaty of Ayton, James deserted him easily, so he was not such a great threat to Henry. It could be argued that it was Henry who gave weight to Warbeck's attempts on his throne as he took the threat very seriously, making demands from other foreign powers to return him to England. Guy further criticises Warbeck and another usurper, Simnel as not being dynastic threats but "dressed their ambitions in dynastic clothing". This argument can be challenged by the fact that Simnel was given foreign support by the Irish nobles including Earl of Kildare and Margaret of Burgundy who sent financial aid and German soldiers. The Irish even crowned Simnel and so it could be argued that it was a serious threat. However, as soon as the rebellion entered English ground in 1487, it was crushed hence proving it was not a major threat. It appears that with both rebellions it was opportunism of the supporting nobles like Symonds or Charles VIII trying to unsettle Henry's foreign policy towards France, rather than a significant threat to Henry's throne. Guy argues the most serious threat to Henry's reign was not dynastic but from the Cornish rebellion which was a "tax revolt" caused by Henry's intentions to go to war against Scotland, that the Cornish felt was inappropriate for them to finance. It is a valid argument that Guy puts forward as the rebellion raised 10,000 armed men, who marched as far as London. It created so much fear in Henry as the great landowners such as William Stanley did not stop the rebellion, allowing it to pass, hence why it is argued to be the most serious threat, although even with them it must be remembered that it was easily put down by Lord Daubney. Consequently, Henry refrained from similar taxation again and was forced to reach agreement with Scotland. Overall the argument put forward by Guy does appear to be convincing in terms of historical hindsight as it can be proved the rebellions amounted to very little yet to Henry at the time, the threats appeared real and a threat to this throne.

J.D Mackie in source B has an alternative perspective and argues that Henry did fear a conspiracy against his position from the nobility of England, and that he "expected" it. This is a valid claim as Henry had witnessed Richard III betray his nephews after the death of his brother their father Edward. He also knew that during the Battle of Bosworth his father in law Stanley

swapped sides, leaving Henry with the impression that families of the English nobility were not loyal and could not be trusted, hence his paranoia regarding usurpers and the imprisonment of De La Pole and Courtenay. Furthermore Mackie argues that Henry was so concerned by threats to his throne that he executed James Tyrell in 1502 and this could be linked to his later point that there were dynastic interests and threats from nobles “aroused by the deaths of the King’s sons”. Tyrell’s execution in 1502 would have been within the context of the death of Edmond and Arthur, leaving only second son Henry as the solitary heir, showing that even towards the end of his reign Henry felt his position was under threat. This may have caused concerns amongst the nobles that the Tudor dynasty was not secure and therefore a potential route to the throne was available. This would have also caused anxiety for Henry who had not married after Elizabeth and was fearful for his family name, hence his overzealous and aggressive actions towards the end of his reign. However, Mackie states that Henry’s agents could have “invented these threats in order to advance their own positions”. Yet, it is hard to avoid the dissatisfaction amongst the nobles due to Henry’s policies, hence their support of plots. For example Henry’s tight control over bonds and his committed policy to allow hereditary titles and funds to die out caused outrage amongst the nobles who felt it was their entitled right to have these such as Sir Walter Herbert who was denied his brothers Earldom of Huntington and so the claim by Mackie is correct in this area. It was Henry’s treatment of Stanley who had supported Warbeck that led Stanley to engage in treasonous activities in 1494-5 which resulted in his execution. Stanley’s motives were not due a dynastic desire but in complaint at the way he had been treated over not receiving an Earldom despite being the catalytic force for Henry’s victory at Bosworth and his rumoured comment to not take arms against Warbeck if he was the true heir led to his execution. To conclude, Mackie’s perspective is summed up accurately with “even without the disturbing influence of dynastic interests there was wavering support for the king amongst the ranks of the old nobility”. This is most convincing because during the reign, Henry withdrew his need for the nobles, isolating their power through reducing their retainers, imposing bonds upon them, limiting the number of Earls he created and looked to build up the urban professionals through the creation of the Council Learned under Empson and Dudley whilst expanding the merchant middle class through trade agreements with foreign powers because he trusted them far more than the old English noble families is the most valid claim.

Source C argues that to reduce the threats previously discussed Henry saw that it was important to build up his own power. It goes on to say that to achieve this he saw that it was important to restore “royal finances” and so become richer than his subjects. Looking at the evidence this is certainly true as the actions following Bosworth are considered. This decision to alienate finances through the privy chamber was one way in which he was able to increase income to around £42,000pa by the end of the reign showing the importance for both his own reign and that of Henry VIII, further leading us to question Pollards argument that he “stored up trouble for his successor”. It is also true that his use of land to keep control through a “presence throughout his Kingdom” can be supported by the way he used wardship to improve his finances and control lands of whole families. Furthermore, his Act of Parliament that gave more power to JPs was a further measure that supports the argument of him having a significant presence in the country which shows he saw it as important to reduce the threat to his own position. As Pollard is right to point out the threats to Henry from the pretenders show he was never fully secure, although either through military force e.g. Cornish Rebellion or through agreement with foreign nations e.g. Edward de la Pole he successfully and easily neutralised their threat, suggesting the threat may have been greater in his own mind. It must also be concluded in support of Pollard that he died respected and feared. Nobles, such as Stanley who stepped out of line were executed, meaning that he was able to bring an end to the internal

conflict that characterised the period of the War of the Roses, his lenient dealings, even with pretender Simnel who became his falconer, reveal why he became respected. Yet, the most significant evidence that shows he dealt with all threats to secure his throne was his handing over to his son Henry, who was betrothed to Catharine of Aragon, a significant foreign dignity. This ability to enable an heir to succeed him shows that although the threats may have been significant for some of his reign, his skill in restoring the finances, ensuring an heir, controlling the nobility and foreign alliances reveal that by the end the threats had been removed.

In conclusion, the most convincing argument is put forward by Pollard when he states that Henry was “never entirely secure on the throne”. Given how Henry came to the throne through the usurpation of Richard and also the history of the Wars of the Roses, noble discontent and schemes to take the throne, as evidenced by the Pretenders, would have to have been expected by Henry throughout his reign. Consequently, his actions in removing these threats in terms of dealings with the nobles, financial developments and interaction with foreign powers were all part of Henry’s “ceaseless vigilance and unrelenting pressure”, that meant he was a monarch who became “respected, feared and obeyed”, which allowed him to remove the threats he faced and pass on his throne to his heir.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a carefully structured and effective response. The interpretations of the three Extracts are accurately identified and knowledge of context used effectively to challenge and corroborate these. Occasionally, points are not fully developed; for example, it would have been useful to explain the significance of Henry not re-marrying after the death of Elizabeth. Overall, however, this is a Level 5 answer.