



# **Examiners' Report**

## **Principal Examiner Feedback**

**Summer 2017**

Pearson Edexcel A Level  
In History (9HI0) Paper 32

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## Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range with the new A level paper 32 which dealt with The Golden Age of Spain, 1474-1598.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A contains a compulsory question which is based on two enquiries linked to one source. It assesses analytical and evaluative skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO2) by targeting five second order concepts- cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference and significance. Section C comprises a choice of essays that relate to aspects of the process of change over a period of at least a hundred years. (AO1). Most candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and there was little evidence of candidates being unable to attempt all three sections of the paper within the time allocated.

In Section A, the strongest answers demonstrated an ability, in both enquiries, to draw out reasoned inferences developed from the source and backed up with specific knowledge. It is important that candidates do not devote too much time to stating that the source is devalued by what is not there. In some cases, however, candidates made interesting and effective points suggesting that authors may have deliberately left out points and that in itself could be significant.

Candidates are more familiar with the Section B essay section and most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept. Candidates need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument within their answer. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels.

In Section C, most candidates were well prepared in terms of their contextual knowledge of individual elements within the period, but not all candidates fully engaged with the elements of the process of change that are central in this section of the examination. Candidates need to be aware that this is a breadth question and that the question encompasses a minimum of 100 years. This has important implications for the higher levels in bullet point 2 of the mark scheme. It was judged not possible for candidates to have 'fully met' the demands of any Section C question unless at least 75% of the chronological range of the question was addressed.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

## Question 1

Candidates at all levels were able to access this source and respond to the two enquiries within the question. The weaker candidates tended to paraphrase the content of the source but most candidates identified at least one inference. Stronger candidates developed the inference/s and drew on the content of the source and relevant contextual knowledge. Some candidates could have made more effective use of the provenance of the source and linked it with contextual knowledge to develop their evaluation. However, the majority of candidates interrogated the source and used it effectively to identify key points and to illustrate them.

### Examiner Tips:

Use the source to establish the key points for development and identify specific references which can be cited to illustrate points.

## Question 2

This was the more popular of the Section B questions. The strongest answers identified and developed a range of factors with specific illustration, e.g. naming and explaining the significance of Adrian of Utrecht, to add substance to the debate. The best answers also discussed the situation that Charles inherited, commenting on the determination of Castilian nobles to maintain and develop their rights and tradition, e.g. over the servicio and the Cortes.

### Examiner Tip:

Make sure that key points are both explained and illustrated. This will facilitate a substantial debate.

### Question 3

This question was less popular but it saw some excellent responses. The strongest candidates discussed the nominated factor, re the impact of population growth, and explained and illustrated their points. There was some very impressive contextual knowledge and many candidates discussed regional and urban/rural issues and/or provided case studies, notably re Seville. Other factors were at the very least identified with the stronger candidates providing effective specific development often emphasising issue of chronology. Several candidates had a clear understanding of the School of Salamanca debates and of more recent historical debate.

#### Question 4

In general the Section C responses, whilst certainly not weak, lacked the assurance and the informed development of Section B. Coverage of the time frame was often patchy, e.g. the impact of naval developments linked to New World exploration under the Catholic Monarchs was often neglected and there could have been more on the significance of the work of Andrea Doria. Contextual development could also have been stronger. Most candidates had a range of points with some development but only the strongest linked their material together to produce a coherent overall argument.

#### Examiner Tip:

In the breadth question it is vital to have both range and depth and to link their points coherently.

## Question 5

This question was the most popular in Section C. The strongest answers identified a range of points concerning both France and the Ottomans across the time frame and deployed their contextual knowledge to assess the relative challenge posed to Spain. Some answers linked points together effectively and showed a clear awareness of the breadth of the challenges the rulers of Spain faced during this period. There was a clear awareness that the situation fluctuated, e.g. the Ottoman threat was most potent during the reign of Suleiman. Weaker answers had less extensive and precise contextual knowledge and often tended to treat the two countries separately without the linking and comparative comment required for a fully coherent answer.

### Examiner Tip:

Candidates should look for opportunities to link points where possible. It will strengthen their analysis.



## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

### Section A

- Candidates should root their answer in the source identifying key points and identifying specific references in the source which could be cited to illustrate and develop points.
- Candidates should ensure that they deal with both parts of the enquiry.
- Candidates should develop valid inferences supported by arguments raised in the source. They should avoid paraphrase.
- Candidates should deploy contextual knowledge to add substance to their arguments.
- Candidates should explore and discuss the specific stance/ attitude of the author of the source.

### Sections B & C

- Candidates should deploy precise contextual knowledge as evidence.
- Candidates should avoid narrative which tends to undermine analysis.
- Candidates should be aware of key dates to aid chronological precision.
- Candidates should aim to develop links between issues which will help them to formulate coherent argument.

