



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1B

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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Unit HIS1B

Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529

General Comments

The work of candidates was generally good and showed significant improvement compared with the experience of January 2009. Most scripts revealed a good awareness of the demands of the questions. The length of answers was almost always appropriate to the marks allocated. Only a minority of candidates failed to produce complete answers to all the four questions attempted. Many candidates were evidently well-prepared, both in knowledge and skills. Their work was presented with care, showed good organisation and was expressed in clear and cogent language. The standard achieved in the best answers was impressive.

Despite these generally favourable impressions, there were some widespread failings that need to be addressed urgently by teachers and future candidates. Although many essay answers to Questions 1(02), 2(04) and 3(06) were substantial and well-written, a significant minority relied upon generalised and often simplistic assertions, often making points of relevance and potential value that were let down by inaccuracy and vagueness. In some extreme cases, the quality of written expression was so poor that the results lacked even basic coherence. It was also noticeable that many candidates lacked an adequate grasp of chronology. Many answers got key events in the wrong order, or did not respond appropriately to the key dates in the question, leaving significant gaps. Although many scripts there betrayed by lack of sufficient depth of knowledge, by far the most important cause of under-achievement was lack of clarity and precision in the use of English.

Question 1

- 01** Answers to Question 1(01), on the causes of political instability in 1483, were mostly competent, making effective references to the problems inherent in Edward IV's premature death and the succession of a minor. Most candidates showed a good grasp of the reasons why Richard of Gloucester usurped the throne; it was pleasing that many answers dealt skillfully with the factional rivalry between the Woodvilles and their political rivals, and of the questions over the precise terms of Edward IV's will. There were many answers meriting a mark in Level 4. One weakness, even in otherwise good answers, was the inclusion of extensive background on the reign of Edward IV. Answers to this question needed to be concise and focused clearly on 1483; a paragraph on Edward IV's achievements, however well-produced, was of little value and wasted precious time.
- 02** Answers to Question 1(02), on the downfall of Richard III, mostly attempted to provide a balanced argument. Alongside extensive material on Richard's 'mistakes', there was also consideration of relevant other factors, including the strengths of Henry Tudor's challenge and problems that were beyond Richard's control. Several answers wrote very effectively about the impact of Henry Tudor's promise to marry Elizabeth of York. Sometimes, discussion of these issues was not sufficiently precise. Too few answers discriminated between actions by Richard III that genuinely qualified as 'mistakes', rather than weaknesses in his political position. It was hardly by mistake, for example, that Richard's wife and son died when they did. There were also some uncertainties about the basic chronology of events – several candidates floundered when trying to explain the impact of Buckingham's rebellion.

Question 2

- 03** Answers to Question 2(03), on laws against retaining, were almost universally disappointing. A clear majority of candidates were unable to explain even in general terms what retaining was and why Henry VII attempted to restrict it. Many answers offered little more than wild statements about acts of attainder, bonds and recognisances and so on, showing little accurate knowledge of any of these terms. There was much better understanding of the context in which Henry VII passed such laws. Many candidates wrote effectively on Henry's concerns about over-mighty magnates. A small minority of successful answers explained the issue of illegal retaining and why laws against it were passed early in the reign and again in 1504.
- 04** The response to Question 2(04), on the effectiveness with which Henry VII dealt with the challenge from rebellions, was of mixed quality. Many weak answers lacked accurate knowledge and offered little beyond low-level narratives of the careers of the Pretenders. A number of relevant and potentially effective answers fell short in terms of accurate factual detail or of written expression – there was a surprising degree of uncertainty about chronology and the sequence of events. A minority of very good answers wrote fluently about a range of rebellions, especially in Yorkshire and Cornwall. Such answers often showed effective differentiation between internal rebellions and foreign support for Pretenders and a good grasp of change over time, as Henry became less vulnerable after the early years of his reign.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to Question 3(05), on the reasons why Henry VIII went to war against France, were generally better on the personal motives of Henry VIII than on the precise diplomatic and military factors in play in 1512 to 1514. There was good understanding of the desire for glory shown by an ambitious young king. A number of candidates were tempted into irrelevant accounts of the successes and failures of the war. In these part (a) questions, it is essential to focus precisely on the specific demands of the question.
- 06** Answers to Question 3(06), on Wolsey's management of foreign policies, were mostly done either very well or very badly. A number of successful candidates made confident, balanced assessments of a range of policies, showing a good grasp of the motives behind the policies and of their consequences. Such answers often revealed good understanding of the relationship between Wolsey and his King, and on the extent to which Wolsey's failures may have been attributable to Henry's direction. Other responses were much less convincing. Many failed to deal with the key dates of the question and had little to offer beyond 1520. Many relied on generalised assertions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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