



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2D

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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Unit HIS2D

Unit 2D: Britain, 1625–1642: The Failure of Absolutism?

General Comments

There were a number of pleasing high quality scripts that illustrated an excellent understanding of the narrative of Charles's reign and the key concepts that underpinned the early modern period. These scripts not only selected precise evidence to support their arguments but did so in an analytical and fluent manner. It was a mark of the weaker scripts that they had only a thin grasp of the key content and tended to respond to questions generally rather than with specific focus. There was a good balance between candidates opting for Question 2 and Question 3.

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates dealt with this question that always demands a comparison of the sources for differences and similarities, with a judgement of the extent of this, very well. Only a minority of candidates did not focus on directly contrasting the sources. Candidates were, generally, confident in pointing out that on the whole the sources agreed about the importance of Pym and the resultant development of constitutional royalism as a result of his prominence and actions. More developed responses were also able to point out the difference in the sources about Pym's motives, from the attempt at a negotiated settlement in Source A through Bedford's 'bridging appointments' to the portrayal of Pym's more radical and negative stance in Source B at the time of the Grand Remonstrance. The better comparisons supported their use of the sources with sound contextual knowledge.
- (b) While there were some good focused responses to this question many candidates did not reach the top of Level 4 because of their failure to address the post Irish Rebellion period and its impact on parliament, specifically linking the consequences of the Rebellion to the Militia Bill, Grand Remonstrance and the subsequent further development of Constitutional Royalism. Questions on the causes of the civil war demand that attention is given to the post-1640 period. Candidates should have a secure knowledge of how the general unity of MPs in 1640 broke down in relation to events such as the Root and Branch Petition, the Bill of Attainder and then particularly after the Irish Rebellion. It is also a mark of responses on the causes of the civil war in England that they have a tendency to stop either at the Five Members' Coup of January 1642 or the Militia Ordinance of March 1642. Few account for the role of activists in the period to August 1642 in bringing about the actual start of conflict and the failure of the attempts, in 22 counties, to agree neutrality pacts.

Question 2

- (a) This question was answered well by the majority of candidates who opted for it. Most were able to explain Charles's needs in relation to his foreign policy. Some were able to explain his collection of Tonnage and Poundage in relation to his ideas about his prerogative or Parliament's limited votes of subsidies.

- (b) Most candidates were able to address the range of factors that undermined the relationship between Crown and Parliament in the years 1625 to 1629. In doing so they tended to focus on foreign policy, finance, religion, Buckingham and Charles's own central role. Even the better answers tended to be let down by their limited treatment of parliamentary radicalism. Some reference to the Petition of Right and the Three Resolutions would have helped such responses.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered well by most candidates who could address the Prayer Book with confidence. Some were less sure of how to support this with reference to such issues as the Act of Revocation, Charles's advisors or his coronation in 1633.
- (b) Most answers dealt with financial and religious policy well. Many were able to illustrate the importance of religion in creating opposition. Generally candidates need to be more secure in their knowledge of examples of opposition and specifically the nature of opposition in the years before 1638. Candidates could also profitably consider the Hampden Case (November 1637 to June 1638) in the context of the Scottish Rebellion. It was Charles who initiated the proceedings to establish his precedence for the continued collection of Ship Money in light of the need to fight the Scots.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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