



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2A

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2A

Unit 2A: Conqueror and Conquest, c1060–1087

General Comments

This paper did not seem to be as well done in some areas as previous June papers. Candidates' knowledge of actual events seemed limited which led to them making unnecessary errors and coming to unsupported conclusions, while actual understanding of the period and the part played by important events, as well as aspects of society, are not being fully grasped. The continued increased use of personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' and assertive phrases such as 'in my opinion', few of which are supported by facts and relevant explanation only serves to underline the lack of depth and grasp of relevant context. In addition, answers are poorly structured. Judgement is a requirement of 24 mark questions and statements are presented to be challenged. Therefore, conclusions are meant to answer the question, arising naturally from the arguments put forward. Instead, many candidates summarise what they have already written or even state '...I both agree and disagree with the statement' in contradiction of the purpose for which it was set, which obviously closes off the higher levels.

It is important to remember that 'Explain why' questions require a range of reasons, supporting evidence and the identification of some link, order or the ability to demonstrate why one factor is more important than the others in order to reach the higher levels.

In essay questions (02, 04 and 06) candidates are expected to show an awareness of the question through the use of relevant material and explicit comment. Links need to be made which may take a variety of forms such as distinction between long and short term factors or results, themes or the relationship of factors. It is the overall awareness of these and the depth given to explain this that is important. In most answers the 'balance' required for the higher levels will be achieved by comparing material supporting the focus of the question or premise of the quotation, with other factors.

It is very important to consider what is meant by 'historical interpretation' as this appears to have become a new issue this year with candidates generalising about 'contemporary' and 'revisionist' historians with no obvious understanding of what this means – if anything – in the context of this period, and no knowledge of who any of these might actually be. Historical interpretations at this level can be taken to be an awareness that events, issues and developments have more than one explanation or consequence; specific historiographical references are **not** required though they will be rewarded when used well which sadly, was on very few occasions.

Question 1

01 Source comparison questions are there to examine the extent to which the views within the given sources agree or disagree on the topic of the actual question. They are not concerned simply with the reliability of the source and in this case it was rather disturbing to see the number of candidates who took a simplistic and erroneous route by declaring that as a 'primary' source, Source A was more reliable and discounted completely Professor Allen Brown on the Norman Conquest! There were also a number of cases here where candidates failed to grasp the meaning of the actual question and saw it as an opportunity to test the sufficiency of the content of the sources against their own

knowledge. 'Own knowledge' requires candidates to consider the issue in context, to display an understanding of why sources differ (or are similar) possibly with reference to provenance or type of source and use these in the actual question to possibly explain the reasons for similarity/difference. It is not additional factual information for its own sake. Failure to do this effectively led some candidates to provide material more suited to the following question.

- 02** Many candidates still make very little use of any 'own knowledge' at all in this question and rely almost entirely on the sources, using them as evidence within themselves rather than looking for ways to support or contradict what they said based on events at the time. This limits them to Level 2 or low Level 3 as the answers produced remain unconvincing and of insufficient depth. These answers lacked organised argument. The best answers provided appropriate detail, comparing the material relating to the focus of the question with other factors to construct a case. These answers showed a good level of understanding, providing precisely supported argument which led convincingly to their chosen view, rather than a summary. There were unfortunately too few of these answers.

Question 2

- 03** Most candidates could present at least 2 or 3 factors to explain William's need for militarisation. However, it did appear strange that what might be considered the most obvious reason – that he had conquered England – did not figure largely in answers. There is still also the tendency to stress **how** rather than **why** which limits candidates to Level 2 only.
- 04** Some candidates had problems accessing this question and there was a feeling that those who did relied more on a general knowledge of what they had possibly covered in year 7 rather than any relevant study at this level. Many answers were vague and generalised or tried to turn the question into a comparative one and point out that the peasants had not suffered as much as the aristocracy and then proceed to write an essay about the earls. Alternatively, there was an attempt to claim that the changes in the Church impacted greatly on the peasants, which as previously mentioned, argues limited grasp of context, as did the claim that the Domesday Book somehow affected peasant life. Many have difficulty in distinguishing between cause and effect. None of these approaches would progress beyond Level 2. Good answers did conclude that regional variations played a part and that on the whole, the Conquest was more a dislocation than a break.

Question 3

- 05** The best answers here could produce a range of both political and military factors and link them effectively to William's ambition to claim all of Edward's rights. Many however, had little grasp of context.
- 06** The main problem with this question was that there were few candidates who could go beyond 1072 and some who failed to get that far. Failure to cover the period given in the question limits answers to Level 3, as balance is seen to be affected. Weaker answers again attempted a comparative approach, which was not what was required and tried to turn this into a question on rebellion. Good answers went as far as 1079 with the renewal of the Treaty of Abernethy at Falkirk and concluded that although in some ways Scotland might have appeared as a major threat during these years as it was a sovereign kingdom – and as such could not 'rebel'! – Malcolm did not have the military resources to face William in battle and some even mentioned that the relationship between Lanfranc and Malcolm's queen Margaret, provided some common ground to diffuse the situation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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