



General Certificate of Education

History 2041

Specification

Unit HIS3A

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS3A

Unit 3A: The Angevin Kings of England: British Monarchy, 1154–1216

General Comments

This was a very pleasing first examination for this new A2 examination. The majority of candidates showed themselves to be able and enthusiastic historians, well-prepared, both in knowledge and skills. The best answers were clearly focused on the question and set out an explicit historical argument supported with detailed own knowledge. Candidates' work was presented with care; showed good organisation, focus and structure, and was expressed in clear and precise language. The standard achieved in the best answers was very impressive.

Candidates coped well with the demands of the examination. There was a full range of answers on all questions. Time did not appear to be a major issue for most candidates: they generally managed to answer two questions in good time. There were very few unfinished answers. One particular weakness however, noteworthy because it was pervasive in some centres, was in use of historiography. Centres should note that while use of historical reading as a source of ideas, interpretations and details, may be creditworthy if it helps develop an historical argument, but it is not a requirement of this paper. Moreover, superficial descriptive references to historians as 'revisionist' or 'traditional' are trite and redundant. Centres must understand the board's view on the meaning of term 'historical interpretation'. For detailed guidance on this matter please go to the AQA website for History, Teacher Resource Bank and read Advice from the Chief Examiner on the assessment of Historical Interpretation (AO2b) in A2 History.

Each of the three questions attracted responses across the ability range, Question 3 was the most popular choice, attracting over three quarters of the candidature, in contrast to Question 2 which attracted just over half of all scripts, while approximately two thirds answered Question 1.

Question 1

01 In this question candidates were asked to evaluate the aftermath of the death of Thomas Becket and its consequences for King Henry II. Most displayed clear focus and understanding and could produce a structured response, so depth and quality of historical evidence was the most significant discriminator. Many candidates made good use of the wider context, using the key events of the 1160s and the Constitutions of Clarendon in particular, to define the issues at stake before evaluating King Henry's gains and losses. Weaker candidates chose to ignore the focus of the question and produced descriptive narrative on the conflict between King Henry II and Thomas Becket. More able candidates gave useful evaluation on the long versus short-term impact of Becket's death, while synoptic understanding was shown on wider relations between the papacy and the English crown.

Question 2

02 As the breadth question this made different demands upon candidates, while historical knowledge and analysis was still expected, range across the period was also required. Most candidates were able to meet these requirements and produced well-balanced analysis rather than biographical narrative on the career of Queen Eleanor. Although most candidates simply analysed the extent of Eleanor's achievements at different times

more able responses showed conceptual understanding on the roles of women and used Eleanor as an exemplar of wife, mother and widow. The issue of significance was analysed within context with candidates analysing the constraints on women and Eleanor in particular.

Question 3

03 In this question candidates were asked to analyse reasons for the creation of Magna Carta, in particular the role played by the barons' reaction to King John's personal behaviour. Structuring their response proved especially challenging for weaker candidates. Noteworthy issues were a failure to focus on Magna Carta itself as evidence of baronial concerns, also a lack of knowledge on the barons involved, and finally a lack of understanding on the issue of John's character and behaviour-especially in the context of Magna Carta. A significant number of answers simply provided general narrative on the events of 1199 to 1204 and attacked John for the loss of Normandy, the Angouleme marriage and being mean to Poitvin barons, especially Hugh of Lusignan. In contrast, more able candidates showed strong conceptual understanding on issues such as personal kingship and angevin despotism, feudal, financial and legal concerns were well-defined. Useful historiography was shown, using the arguments put forward by Holt and Carpenter. Some candidates showed significant independent judgement and challenged the implication of the question that Magna Carta was a baronial creation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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