



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS1B

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1B

Unit 1B: Britain, 1483–1529

General Comments

As in previous years, there was a very impressive performance from a good number of students. There was an increasingly precise and focused use of subject knowledge and a confident use of dates at the top end. It is clear that many students had been very well prepared. This was especially true in the 12-mark questions where there was often a very good range of reasons for an event identified.

The 24-mark questions were answered confidently with a good focus from many. However, there remains a significant minority of students that insist on using historiography in a manner that does little if anything to advance individual argument. It is worth reminding students that knowledge and use of historiography is not required at all at AS. If it is used, it can of course be very effective in supporting the views of the student, but it should not be a simple end in itself. Simply indicating that a historian thinks something is little more than description, as at Level 2 in the essay questions. There was also a good number of students that embarked on a chronological narrative and struggled to really argue a point – more common however was a lack of focus on the dates set in the question.

Question 1 and 2 were by far the most popular on the paper, with only a minority attempting the Wolsey question.

Question 1

01 This was answered well, and it was obvious that many students were able to offer a good range of motivating factors. At the lower end students did tend to resort to generalisation along the lines of 'he seized power because he was ambitious' – this type of comment often had little supporting information and thus struggled to advance very far at all. Similarly, although not quite as superficial, were the comments about Richard being fearful of the Woodvilles but these often failed to offer any evidence that this was the case. Students would be well advised to remember the need for precise supporting evidence.

The most convincing responses not only deployed sound subject knowledge but were able to link factors together. Here, links most commonly took the form of arguing a most significant factor, although there were also many answers that compared long term with short term factors. Each of these styles worked well and offered students the chance to advance to Level 4. Some very impressive responses focused on how factors worked together, often arguing that whilst there were a number of background factors at work, it was the sudden arrival of opportunity that was key.

02 This was answered confidently by a good number of students that had obviously thought carefully about this as part of their preparation for the exam. There was also a clear range of quality of response. At the top there was excellent command of subject knowledge with students able to identify specific events that illustrated foreign support. Often this took the form of the role of foreign troops at Bosworth or indeed the specific accounts of what Henry Tudor received and accomplished whilst abroad. It was impressive that these students then moved beyond a simple description of what foreign support Henry received

to actually attempt to address the focus of how important this support was. There was a good range of factors addressed by students and quite a few managed to advance beyond simply addressing events at Bosworth to consider foreign support in a broader context. At the lower range there was clear confusion over where foreign support came from. The precise naming of individual monarchs and potentates at the upper end was mirrored by confusion over geography at the bottom.

Question 2

- 03** This question was answered well – and was answered especially well by students that had a good grasp of dates. Unfortunately a notable minority of responses referred at great length to rebellions that were outside of the period set by the question. It is very much worth reminding students to pay particular attention to the dates referred to in any question as credit cannot be given for reference to rebellions that falls outside. Some students struggled to identify the motivation of the rebellions, with quite a few resorting to generic responses along the lines of ‘they were unhappy with the king’. This type of general response also failed to identify the range of motivating factors that might be hoped for. In addition, there were some very well prepared students that unfortunately tended to simply describe the events of the rebellions in turn rather than addressing the reason that the rebellions occurred. The students that dedicated much of their response to a detailed analysis of one rebellion tended to identify only one motivating factor and hence limited the marks they achieved. Range is crucial in response to the ‘Explain why’ questions.
- 04** There was quite a range of quality in response to this question. Much was determined by how keenly the students focused on the issue of the strengthening of the King’s position. There were some very comprehensive overviews of foreign policy but these often failed to link to the question. An analysis of the success or failure of foreign policy overall was not required, but quite a number of students who had perhaps prepared a response to that type of question, produced three or so sides that argued economic, financial and diplomatic successes and failures. The clear focus should have been the position of the king within the set dates. Again, a failure to appreciate the date range given saw many students repeat material they had given in response to question 02 about the role of foreign support in Henry overthrowing Richard – this of course could not be credited. At the top end there were some very well focused responses that most commonly argued that foreign policy was merely one of several factors that secured the king’s position. Typically, the higher level responses also deployed a precise understanding of foreign policy, being able to name and date relevant treaties. At the very highest level students were able to make reference to the terms of these treaties and linked this to Henry’s position on the throne – this was however very much the exceptional student.

Question 3

- 05** This question was not answered very well and was the lowest performing of all on the paper. Quite common, was the very general response that argued Henry married Catherine because he needed a child. Whilst this had some validity, it was rarely made specific to the circumstances in which either Henry or Catherine found themselves. It was quite rare for a response to make reference to Catherine’s extensive years at the English court, or indeed to her marriage to Arthur. It was disappointing that so few students seemed to know the narrative of Catherine of Aragon or of her personal tribulations once she had arrived in England. Some responses suggested that Henry VIII had fallen for Catherine, but offered no contextual information about why this might have been the case, or indeed links to other possible factors such as events in Spain and how this may have impacted upon the worth of a Spanish match for Henry.

- 06** This question was the preserve of the minority, and of these many responses failed to focus on the precise demands of the question. Wolsey remains an unpopular topic whenever it is asked in the exam; however, this is a notable section of the specification and students should feel confident in responding to the demands. Students did struggle to find precise subject knowledge – especially with dates; indeed it was unusual for a response to refer to even some of the major events such as the Amicable Grant, with dates. More important however was the difficulty quite a number of students had in really focusing on the issue of overcoming opposition. There were some obviously detailed, although possibly heavily prepared, essays that assessed the extent to which Wolsey’s domestic reforms were successful. This of course was not the focus demanded. The relatively small number of responses that actually examined the extent to which Wolsey overcame opposition to his reforms did very well.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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