



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2D

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2D

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

General Comments

The standard of most scripts was generally good. Very few students failed to use the sources in their responses to Question 2 and the majority were able to make sound attempts at the questions they selected. Most showed a sound overall grasp of the periods in question. Questions 3 and 4 on the period 1625 to 1629 were much more popular than Questions 5 and 6 on the causes of the civil war.

Question 1

- 01** Most students dealt with comparing the sources well. Most were able to point out some differences. A few unfortunately did not deal with the similarities in the sources. Others failed to support their comparison with own knowledge. Sometimes this use of own knowledge was not always integrated as part of source comparison. It is clear that most students worked their answer to a structure of considering differences and similarities before bringing their answer to a conclusion. The best avoided summarising the sources before beginning a real comparison. The strongest answers made sustained comparisons, pointing out the differences and similarities while paraphrasing key source content and supporting this with specific own knowledge. Those that commented on Sharpe and Hill in terms of historical interpretation were credited for using this as part of their own knowledge when linking this to comparison of the sources.
- 02** Only a handful of students relied too heavily on just the sources, or had their ‘use’ of the sources as a separate section, normally at the end of their essays. The best responses integrated reference to the sources as part of an argument. Students, on the whole, dealt with the idea of finance strengthening the regime comfortably. Most did this by illustrating the improvement of Charles’s finances across the period. Most were able to use a range of financial methods in illustrating how Charles improved his finances and, using the sources, commented profitably on the importance of Ship Money as one of the devices employed. Many were able to refer to Charles transforming his debt of £2 million in 1629 to what was essentially a balanced budget in 1635. As part of this most students ably made use of Source C and how Charles’s foreign policy, Susa and Madrid, was a key part of enabling him to achieve a ‘peacetime’ balanced budget. Students balanced their answer by commenting on the discontent created by the methods employed by Charles. Many referred to Hampden’s Case as an example. Others referred to other examples such as the Earl of Warwick. More developed responses commented on this underlying discontent as part of a general undermining of the regime that built over time. It was very encouraging to see a lot of students then commenting on this in the context of there being no forum for this discontent to be expressed due to there being no Parliament but also, as others pointed out, because Charles had remodelled the court so that it no longer functioned as a ‘point of contact’. Some went on to link this growing discontent, even referring to Morrill’s idea of a ‘coiled spring’, to the impact of the Scottish Rebellion and better responses developed the financial consequences of this religious national rebellion bringing about the end of the Personal Rule, no matter how far Charles’s position had improved before 1637.

Some students also considered Wentworth's policies in Ireland or the administration in England as another way of examining the idea of the regime being strengthened. Again, the best responses supported these points with selection of evidence.

Question 2

- 03** There were many good responses to this question that warranted full marks. Students notably were well aware of the practical failures at Cadiz and La Rochelle, some writing in quite a lot of detail about Spanish wine and short scaling ladders. Fuller responses set this in the context of Buckingham's role as Lord High Admiral, Charles's failings when explaining policy to Parliament and, most fundamentally, the funding provided by Parliament.
- 04** Most students were able to provide some balance in their answers, notably by pointing to other factors, most notably the role of Charles. Most answers ably demonstrated the role of finance, referring to tonnage and poundage and the impact of the Forced Loan. Students also linked finance to foreign policy. Buckingham's central role from his position as favourite as well as commenting on his role in foreign policy as Lord High Admiral and religion through the York House Conference also formed elements of balance provided by students. The weakest element of many responses, as in previous years, was the failure to address central issues in 1628 and 1629, notably the Petition of Right and Three Resolutions. The best answers did so, sometimes by looking at these in relation to Parliament as a factor in the tension of these years or how the relationship dissolved to the point that the Petition and Resolutions emerged. Covering the date range of the questions is important.

Question 3

- 05** Students were able to explain the failure of the Short Parliament in the context of the different approaches to it by MPs and Charles. Further depth was added by considering Charles's aims in 1640 in the broader context of his approach to kingship or by the developing links between some MPs and the Covenanters.
- 06** Despite the focus being the period 1641–1642 there were still many scripts that dealt with too much before 1640. Students, on the whole, commented on the Five Members' Coup as a key example of Charles's role but the better responses set this within the overall context of the development of two sides that made war possible. In doing so there was good comment on parliamentary radicals, Charles and constitutional royalism as linked themes. Some students did not link the Irish Rebellion to the Militia Bill and the consequent division in Parliament. Students should also be aware that while the Militia Ordinance was passed in March 1642 civil war in England did not break out until August 1642. It was the activism of religious radicals in the localities, a key example being Oliver Cromwell, that destroyed the last attempts of moderates at settlement through the 22 county neutrality agreements. In general students need a secure knowledge of the breakdown of parliamentary unity from 1640 and the crucial role of the linked events from the Irish Rebellion to August 1642 that created the two sides that fought the civil war.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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