



History

Paper 1C (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.1 12/08/15

Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1C (AS): Specimen question paper

02 'The consolidation of royal authority in the years 1487 to 1509 was due to Henry VII's control over the nobility.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (25 marks)

Student Response

Throughout his whole reign, it was essential for Henry VII to consolidate his royal authority as his throne, like any of the previous kings, was always at risk of usurpation. He had to consolidate his royal authority using a variety of methods, so I therefore disagree with the statement as it implies that only controlling the nobility consolidated his royal authority.

On the one hand, there is evidence to support this statement. Many historians have noted that Henry VII had an anti-noble policy. The King started to rely on fewer men and the power in the Counsel became concentrated on lower- born, but well educated men, such as lawyers. These men were loyal to him, but he did not reward them lavishly like previous kings; instead he rewarded them with the Order of the Garter. This meant that by the end of his reign, there were fewer noble families than there were at the start. Therefore there were fewer powerful men to threaten his royal authority.

A further example of Henry controlling the nobility is the use of acts of attainders as they took power away from noble families who had committed treason against Henry VII and had proven to be disloyal. This therefore prevented them from becoming a threat to his royal authority whilst threatening other nobles into loyalty. For example, after the Lambert Simnel rebellion and the Battle of Stoke in 1487, 28 people were attainted. This strengthened Henry's royal authority as he ensured that all disloyal nobles could never threaten him again.

The noble families that hadn't been proved to be disloyal, but were still a threat to Henry were then put under bonds and recognisances. For example, the Marquis of Dorset was placed under a bond to guarantee future loyalty after the King suspected him to be involved in the Lambert Simnel plot. The use of bonds and recognisances helped consolidate Henry's royal authority as it forced noble families into being loyal to the King or face financial ruin. As the King was estimated to have the majority of the noble families under a bond and recognisance, it ensured that he had the support of the most powerful people.

Henry VII also consolidated his royal authority by ending illegal retaining. This prevented the nobility from committing unlawful acts (such as influencing the jury on court cases) and creating a private army that could be used to usurp him. In 1504, nobles had to be issued a licence from the King to retain which meant Henry could decide who was trustworthy enough to retain. He also punished those who broke the law; for example, his mother, Margaret Beaufort, had to pay a fine after illegally retaining. Ending illegal retaining consolidated his royal authority as it helped prevent nobles uprising and usurping.

However, many of these factors can be seen on the other side. By blatantly showing he did not trust the nobility, he angered them and made it more likely for them to rebel. If a noble family did rebel,

Henry had fewer men to create his own army due to his strict control on retaining.

On the other hand, there are other factors that consolidated his royal authority. One important factor is his family; by having many children, he promised that the throne would be safely passed on. For example, Richard III's son died in 1484, leaving him no direct heir which left him vulnerable. Henry and Elizabeth of York had eight children, with four surviving until adulthood. This consolidated his royal authority as it promised a legitimate dynasty was created. This helped control the nobility as the children showed how the houses of York and Lancaster had united, and the war was over.

Foreign policy was particularly important at consolidating Henry's royal authority. England was an insignificant country in Europe compared to the major power of France. But foreign policy improved Henry's international recognition and therefore safety. For example, the Treaty of Medina del Campo in 1489 with the new major power of a united Spain increased Henry's recognition and safety, as the countries promised to not ally with France, defend each other's countries against enemies and not harbour rebels and pretenders. This therefore consolidated Henry's royal authority as it protected him from attacks from abroad. The Treaty of Medina del Campo links back to the factor of family, as the agreed marriage of Prince Arthur and Princess Catherine showed the alliance was long term whilst promising future heirs.

Imposters and rebellions also helped Henry consolidate his royal authority while they were always a threat; they helped Henry prove he was the rightful King of England as it was God's will for him to win the battles. For example, in 1497, Henry captured the imposter Perkin Warbeck. He was then able to prove that he was not the York Prince Richard and Henry was therefore the rightful king. Rebellions and imposters also allowed him to identify the nobility that were noble, for example Henry's spies found Sir William Stanley supporting Lambert Simnel. Therefore, imposters and rebellions consolidated Henry's royal authority as they proved him to be the rightful King whilst identifying his enemies. Imposters and rebellions link back to royal authority as many imposters gained support from foreign powers. For example, Simnel and Warbeck were both given financial aid from Margaret of Burgundy, which shows failings in royal authority.

The wealth of the Crown also helped consolidate Henry's royal authority. Previous monarchs had left bankrupt crowns which were unstable and left them weak to usurpation. Henry had inherited a bankrupt crown which could not afford extraordinary expenses such as lavish feasts. However, by increasing his ordinary revenue Henry left a solvent throne. For example Henry regained lands using the act of resumption and confiscated lands under the acts of attainder, so he had the largest crown lands than previous monarchs. He also employed Sir Reginald Bray to develop estate management techniques. His annual income from royal estates rose to £42,000 per annum. This then consolidated his royal authority by allowing him to build large powerful castles and live a lavish life. This was important as the majority of the population was illiterate, so having large signs of power and wealth showed him to be a rightful, powerful king to be scared of.

In conclusion, I believe it was a variety of methods that consolidated Henry's royal authority. Controlling the nobility was an important factor of this, but they link to other factors. Without controlling aspects such as wealth, foreign policy and imposters, Henry was under threat. It can be argued that Henry never actually consolidated his royal authority as there were rebellions and imposters throughout his reign which the nobility supported. For example, many nobles supported the 1497 Cornish rebellion as they felt sympathetic to the peasants. As nobles always supported the rebellions, Henry did not consolidate his royal authority through controlling the nobility, and it was other factors that were more important.

Commentary – Level 5

The use of first person in answers is seen as poor practice, but this aside, the range of issues identified and corroborated in this answer is impressive. The premise of the question is fully responded to and challenged and then there is an effective and supported examination of other reasons why Henry consolidated his authority. Lapses in style should not be penalised too heavily.