



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 1C (A-level)
Question 01 Student 2
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

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 (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to the threats to Henry VII's position in the years 1485 to 1509.

[30 marks]

Student response

Henry VII experienced many threats in his reign, as one would expect for a usurper. He faced major rebellion such as the Cornish uprising in 1497, and the Warwick rebellion in 1499, as well as major distain from his nobles for his tough financial and military controls that limited their power. Central to these threats were the pretenders Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck who's rose against Henry pretending to be Prince Richard (son of Edward IV) and later Simnel the Earl of Warwick, both gained support significantly from foreign powers who sought to august Henry. These foreign powers such as Burgundy and France are not to be underestimated as a threat to Henrys reign and you can see Henry sought to avoid conflict with them (for fear of loosing) through his foreign policy. Henrys position was constantly threatened but I think one of the biggest threats to him were the foreign powers as they were the driving force of not only wars but also pretenders and rebellions.

Extract A asks the reader to not 'exaggerate' the dynastic threat to Henry VII, something I must take issue with. The phrase 'no one to cause rival political tensions' in particular is, at best, ignoring the facts. Edmund de la Pole Earl of Suffolk was a leading Yorkist claimant who fled to Burgundy in 1499, he reappeared in England only to flee one more, this time to the Holy Roman emperor Maximillian in 1501. There were frequent rumours that Suffolk was plotting to overthrow Henry, hence why during 1504 many of his family members were imprisoned and parliament issued attainders (seizing the nobles land and titles). Pole was the designated heir of Richard the third so he very clearly was a threat, arguably if Henry VII failed, Pole would have been the next king of England. Clearly Henry understood the power he had (even if Guy does not) as in 1506 through a deal with Phillip of Burgundy, Henry imprisons Pole. Henry VIII later executes Pole (in 1513) which to me just proves he clearly was a legitimate threat. Guys' argument is based on the premise there was no 'obvious focus for political discontent' meaning there was no other prominent heir for people to rally behind. The Duke of Suffolk was just that, rendering his argument implausible.

In extract A Guy then proceeds to limit the importance of the pretenders Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck. He states that 'supporters of Simnel and Warbeck dresses their ambitions in dynastic clothes' and goes on to explain they are surpassed in importance by the Cornish rebellion. The reason why this is not convincing, is that Guy is looking at the events of Henry VII's reign with hindsight, not as they would have been viewed at the time. The lost Princes in the tower was a mystery and both Warbeck and Simnel claimed to be Richard Duke of York (Simnel later changing to the Earl of Warwick). To the contemporary's these were legitimate claims as there was no evidence of the death of the young princes, also due to the long running wars of the roses it would be unsurprising for Henry VII to just be another Lancastrian king in the fight between the two warring families, soon to be usurped. Furthermore both pretenders

received foreign support, Warbeck from Charles VIII, Margaret of Burgundy and the Earl of Kildare, all of whom funded/ houses him. Simnuel also received support from Margaret of Burgundy (Richard III and Edward IV's sister) in the form of 2,000 soldiers and James IV of Scotland married him off to Lady Catherine Gordon, as well as the English nobleman the Earl of Lincoln and John de la Pole fleeing to join him. They clearly believed the pretenders had a real possibility of gaining the throne, and for Guy to ignore this is simply erroneous.

Although I do agree with Guy regarding the significance of the 1497 Cornish rebellion as it was the second tax related rebellion in his reign (the first being the Yorkshire rebellion- 1489).It is significant because this was not simply a rebellion by a over mighty noble, the commander of the army was An Golf a blacksmith, which goes to show Henry's people do not fear him (as Pollard suggest in Extract C). The lack of support from his people would be a serious threat to any King, but more so to Henry due to the amount of pretenders and his fragile claim because if the majority of the population backed just one opposition Henry would see himself toppled. Whilst factually sound and containing detail (hence making it more considerable) I would not try to argue, as Guy has done, it was the most important threat to Henry's reign. To me the Cornish rebellion only emphasises Henry's dynastic insecurities; would the people have faces a powerful and secure King so directly? I honestly didn't believe they would, at least not rebellion without another alternative to place on the throne. Therefore, although Guy makes some interesting points, Extract A does not fully convince to see the main threat to Henry VII's position as the Cornish rising of 1497.

Mackie, in Extract B takes an entirely different stance arguing it was Henry's dynastic insecurity combined with over mighty, suppressed nobles that was a biggest threat to Henry. He notes that the imprisonments of 1502 must mean Henry suspected a 'far reaching conspiracy', whether there is truth behind the allegations against Lord William de la Pole and Lord William Courtenay can never really be known due to the contact fabrication in such cases. However I think Mackie is correct in the assumption that there was 'a spirit of disaffection among the old families' this is only supported by the events of April 1509 when Henry's death was kept a secret for two days for fear of rebellion. Henry vastly unpopular with the ruling class due to his oppressive means of controlling them. Henry used several ways of doing this including attainders which would seize the nobles land a title; during his reign 138 attainders were passed, 46 were reversed but for a substantial fee (this is similar to Pollards explanation in Extract C). Henry also used financial controls such as bonds to keep nobles in check, the noble would have a debt placed on them and if they misbehaved this debt would be called in thus bankrupting them. Attacks on retaining were also successful, but much like attainders and bonds angered the nobles, no longer allowed to keep private army's they felt fragile and at the power of the King. Though one might argue because Henry reduced their power they were of little threat, however I think Henry did not limit them enough for him to be safe and yet angered them placing him in a vulnerable position. Also the fact Henry deemed it necessary to suppress the noble's power show he also saw them as a threat so I have to agree with Mackie that the nobles presented a very real threat to Henry's reign.

Furthermore I agree that Henry was placed in a more precarious position on the death of two of his three sons, having an heir is paramount as a early modern king and Henry only had one son left. The death of Queen Elizabeth in 1503 also meant there was no possibility of another heir, she died in childbirth and the premature child also perished. Not only, as Mackie puts it did this cause 'wavering support' but it was a deep psychological blow for Henry. After 1503 he became more paranoid about threats and increasingly focused on achieving financial insecurity. This

meant he was harsher on the nobility both with financial threats and punishments, 51 of the 138 attainders were passed between 1504 and 1509, which shows how these deaths clearly placed Henry in a vulnerable position. Mackie presents a sound argument but like both other sources fails to examine the foreign threats to Henry, and Mackie ignores the major rebellions and pretenders which both presented a threat to Henry.

The first half of extract C is mostly insignificant regarding the threats to Henry VII's position. Pollard illustrates how the King attempts to 'build up his own power' through finances and keeping control of crown lands, but this does not explain the threats but rather Henry's reaction. It slightly hints at the power of over-mighty nobles through saying 'pretensions of mighty subjects' but gives no details. It does imply however, that Henry was a 'direct royal presence throughout his kingdom' which is the opposite of Guy's reasoning, that the common man was the biggest threat to Henry's crown. In the next paragraph however Pollard does examine some of the threats to Henry. He specifies Henry faced major rebellion in 1497, I am presuming he refers to the Cornish rebellions that were opposed to taxes levied to support Henry's invasion of Scotland. He is therefore contradicting himself, the Cornish rebellions shows Henry did not have 'a direct royal presence', as Guy argued the Cornishmen were a threat to his throne and they clearly didn't respect Henry VII. By contradicting himself Pollard becomes instantly less convincing regarding the threats to Henry's crown.

Also Pollard's argument that Henry's 'unrelenting pressure' on his subjects instilled 'respect..., fear...and obey[diance]' is far from the truth. Henry faced many noble rebellions in his reign such as from the Duke of Suffolk and the Earl of Kildare supporting Warbeck. Many historians have argued it was lucky Henry VII died when he did, in order to avoid a full noble rebellion caused by his instigation of bonds, cognances and attainders as well as his attacks on retaining. These were not all successful and whilst people may have feared the council learned in law (particularly Empson and Dudley) this did not make them obedient to Henry, in many cases it only encouraged support for the pretenders. For me extract C lacks clarity, by contradicting himself Pollard is invalidating both points and the source also lacks specifics such as the 'major rebellions' faced. Through my own knowledge I am aware of the Scottish attacks on the English border and the Cornish rebellion as a response, but by not specifying it is unimpressive as it does not present a clear argument as to the biggest threat to Henry's reign.

I would argue that extract A is the most convincing due to its in depth analysis and specific examples followed by the reasoning behind them, which extract C lacks. Though Guy does not examine all of the reasons behind Henry's instability (leaving out the influence of foreign powers) he does however include a large range of arguments and dismisses them before confirming his own, therefore making it a very convincing extract. Similarly Mackie also neglects the foreign threats to Henry's power but presents a sound argument on the threat of the nobility but only gives one example. This is backed up by 'wavering support' produced by his sons' deaths but Mackie fails to mention the death of Elizabeth and Henry's demise due to these deaths, thus increasing his paranoia and making him harsher on the nobles which all contributed to their downfall by 1509. Whilst Extract C for me produces the worst argument of all. Lacking in detail and contradicting his position on the power/support of the common Englishman means Pollard is not particularly convincing.

Commentary – Level 3

Such introductions as in this answer are best avoided and students are advised to focus in the Extracts immediately. Similarly, this is not a comparative exercise and comments on the relative effectiveness of

interpretations are not required, although a brief conclusion can emphasise points that have been made.

This is certainly a robust response and the answer is very clear as to what is thought of each Extract. It also does attempt to deploy knowledge of context to assess how convincing the arguments are. The response is, however, too robust and in a number of places makes assertions about the arguments in the Extracts which are either wrong, or exaggerated. John Guy comes in for particular criticism. He does not, as claimed, suggest that 'there was no one to cause rival political tensions' per se, rather he suggests that there were no relatives to cause this. Similarly, the comments on the Cornish Rebellion are contradictory, claiming it was and was not, a dynastic threat. The dismissal of much of Extract C as irrelevant is also over stated; Pollard approaches the issue in a different way, emphasising that Henry took a number of measures to avoid threats to his position.

The answer demonstrates the need for close and careful reading of these Extracts. Extrapolation of phrases to make a point must not distort the actual argument and it would be wrong to assume that Extracts would be presented which lack relevance. Although this answer meets the need to identify arguments and comment on them by deploying knowledge of context, it suffers from exaggeration and a degree of distortion and represents Level 3, with a feeling that it could have been much higher.