



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 1C (A-level)
Question 01 Student 3
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

In Extract A, John Guy argues that the dynastic threat to the Tudors should not be exaggerated. He suggests, by this, that the control of the throne by the Tudor dynasty established by Henry VII was not compromised by the widespread challenges faced. Unlike the previous three monarchs Henry VII was able to die in his bed of old age and hand the throne to his son unchallenged by rival claimants. However, the Tudor Dynasty continued to be challenged by White Rose claimants as late as the 1540s. Henry VIII broke with Rome to secure the Tudors from internal challenge which still existed beyond 1509.

Guy supports his overall argument by suggesting that Simnel and Warbeck 'dressed' their ambitions in dynastic clothes. Certainly as themselves, Simnel and Warbeck would have no support and have had little impact; as 'pretenders' they were not who they purported to be. However, they were 'dressed' and supported by those who did want to reclaim the throne for the Yorkist cause, principally Margaret of Burgundy. Warbeck attempted to use the discontent expressed by Cornishmen in 1497 to undermine the throne of Henry VII.

The Cornish Revolt was the most serious challenge to Henry VII as it resulted in the Cornish army fighting the King's army at Blackheath. Henry had had to face the mercenary army provided by Margaret of Burgundy in support of Lambert Simnel at Stoke. In both cases, Henry might have been deposed, but Blackheath was far closer to the centre of government than Newark.

It is not convincing to suggest that the Cornish revolt was serious because Cornishmen failed to underwrite taxation to defend the country against Scotland, when no mention is made of the rebellion in Yorkshire against the attempt to raise taxation to defend Brittany.

Overall, Guy's argument is not convincing as Henry VII's action, for example breaking off lucrative trade with Burgundy to secure the return of the Earl of Suffolk, suggests that he regarded threats to the Tudor dynasty very seriously.

In Extract B, Mackie argues that by 1502 Henry VII had lost the support of the old nobility on whom he had been reliant to ensure victory at Bosworth. Mackie argues that Henry was so afraid of a conspiracy that he imprisoned and executed those who presented a threat.

The evidence which Mackie presents has an incontrovertible factual base; Tyrrell was executed; Pole and Courtney were imprisoned; Arthur and Edmund (and Elizabeth of York) did die. However, this does not mean in itself that Henry had 'wavering support' in the ranks of the old nobility.

Mackie is more convincing when he writes about conspiracy. Henry was betrayed by Lord Stanley, whose support was key to defeating Richard III at Bosworth, who was his step-father and member of his Privy Council. Stanley was found to be a supporter of Perkin Warbeck. This conspiracy did lead to Henry VII creating a spy network – ‘agents’ as Mackie states. Stanley’s betrayal was not an invention.

Mackie writes about a spirit of disaffection which was the case by 1509. This wasn’t just amongst the old families but across levels of society including merchants. The use of Bonds and Recognizances by Empson and Dudley meant that Henry had financial constraints on the actions of many of his subjects.

Overall, Mackie is convincing in the impression he gives of the fear generated by Henry VII but it was more widespread than he suggests.

AJ Pollard, in Source C, attempts to present a balanced assessment of Henry VII. He writes about Henry’s successful maintenance of royal authority through financial policies and ensuring power in the localities. But, he also challenges the limitations, Henry was ‘never entirely secure on the throne’, at best he was ‘respected feared and obeyed’.

Crown Lands were important to Henry VII. He reasserted the Crown’s authority over property which had belonged to previous monarchs, he passed significant acts of Attainder to regain land. The possession of such territory was important for Henry VII, not just as it was ‘the basis of local power’ and the control which Pollard suggests but also, as Pollard suggests, in terms of providing wealth. Henry needed to make himself richer than his enemies and he began his reign as an impoverished monarch.

Henry was ruthless. His use of spies, his executions and bonds and recognizances confirm this. He wasn’t always prepared to execute people until they were proven to be serious threats, as the examples of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck show. He did put pressure on all people who could present a threat to him. He did store up problems for Henry VIII, one of whose first actions was to execute Empson and Dudley who were seen as his father’s henchmen.

Pollard’s argument is convincing because it is balanced. He recognises that the policies which Henry used to establish his authority were ones which could make him feared and subject to the threat of rebellion.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer identifies the main arguments contained in the extracts and attempts an assessment as to how far they are convincing by the deployment of appropriate knowledge of context. The answer does lack some focus in places. For example, in the assessment of Extract A, the contextual knowledge is appropriate but there is no explicit assessment as to whether this adds to the extent to which the Extract is convincing. The assessment of Extract B is consistently focused throughout, but that of Extract C has weaknesses similar to those in the assessment of Extract A. It is, then a Level 4 answer.