



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2A (A-level)
Question 03 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 2A (A-level): Specimen question paper

03 'The government of England was never stable during the reign of Richard I'.

Assess the validity of this view

[25 marks]

Student response

Richard the Lionheart was king of England 1189-1199. However, he spent only 6 months of his 10 year reign in England and, as Huscroft has pointed out, he spent all of this time preparing to leave the country. Richard has been heavily criticised by historians for using England as a war chest to fund his crusade and campaigns against Philip Augustus of France and, as a result, is often described as a 'thoroughly bad monarch', who destabilised his country in favour of foreign adventure. However, Gillingham has countered this and suggested that Richard ensured a stable government in his absence by appointing effective deputies to rule on his behalf.

Richard's biggest mistake in terms of appointments was undoubtedly William Longchamp. Richard initially aimed for a joint rule between Longchamp and the Bishop of Durham, but Longchamp managed to manoeuvre Bishop Hugh out of the way and set himself up as sole justiciar. Richard did allow this to happen and was responsible for the great powers amassed by Longchamp who was chief justiciar, chancellor, Papal Legate, Keeper of the King's Seal, Bishop of Ely and Guardian of the Tower of London. Longchamp destabilised the government mainly through his mishandling of the baronage. He was heavy handed in his treatment of them, most notably his arrest of Geoffrey of York raised associations with Thomas Becket.

Richard certainly did levy huge sums of money from England, he even boasted that he "would sell London if he could find a buyer". Rather than tax the people of England, which would be unpopular as a result of the 1188 Saladin Tithe which had brought in £60,000, Richard focused on selling offices and lands to rich men; for example John Marshall bought himself the sheriffdom of Yorkshire. This could mean that governmental roles were not necessarily being undertaken by the best qualified. He also exploited vacant bishoprics, such as Ely, and removed and fined corrupt officials such as Robert Marmion of Worcestershire who was fined £1000. Gerald of Wales described the king as being "like a robber, always on the prowl". Many historians have especially criticised the sale of independence to Scotland through the Quit-Claim of Canterbury for a paltry £6,000. In 1190 the Exchequer audited over £30,000, twice as much as 1188 which shows how effectively Richard exploited the financial system.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Richard was a bad monarch. The selling of offices was a common place occurrence in Medieval Europe, what is different here is that Richard sold a large number of titles in a very short space of time. He sold titles to the rich; these were the very men who traditionally held jobs within the government and so it does not necessarily mean that the quality of those holding important positions declined. The fact that only seven of Henry II's sheriffs survived in office suggests that Richard was concerned with removing corrupt officials in order that royal justice could function more effectively. It is

important to realise that despite the huge spending on the Third Crusade and then the payment of the 100,000 marks ransom to the Holy Roman Emperor, England remained mostly loyal to Richard and he did not face opposition from the baronage as John was to do in the later part of his reign.

Richard continued to rely upon England for financing his continental campaigns against Philip II. He spent £12,000 on Chateau Gaillard which was to defend Normandy and only £7,000 on castles for the whole of England. The justiciar Hubert Walter proved particularly effective at levying money from a cash-strapped country; between 1195-7 he sent Richard a million marks. He introduced a new land tax, the carucage, and effectively exploited feudal dues. He also introduced the Exchequer of the Jews to ensure that all debts were fully paid. John, upon his accession, was able to levy money for campaigns against France, which suggests that England was not bankrupted as a result of Richard's reign.

Richard can also be criticised for his continued absences from the country, it is possible that this meant that England suffered politically and administratively. Certainly, the fall from grace of the justiciar William Longchamps might suggest this. Here it seems that Richard had not chosen carefully; Longchamps was arrogant and disliked by the English barons. He eventually overstepped the mark and became embroiled in a bitter dispute with the Archbishop of York and Prince John. John's rebellious actions in 1193 were also potentially very dangerous for England. Richard had given John extensive lands in England and also a marriage to the wealthy heiress, Isabelle of Gloucester which can be interpreted as a mistake. John combined with Philip and according to some sources he even promised to give up the English lands to the French king.

However, Gillingham argues that this view relies upon the use of hindsight. John only rebelled when Richard was in captivity and it looked unlikely that he would be released. Following his rebellion he was reconciled with his brother and remained loyal for the rest of his reign. Richard's careful diplomacy with William of Scotland through the Quit Claim ensured that Scotland did not help John. It is important to bear in mind that John was an Angevin prince; to leave him with no lands at all could just have easily have provoked rebellion and taking John on crusade could have left the 'empire' without an adult heir should both men die. Richard actually made very astute choices in his representatives. William Longchamps was certainly flawed, but the pipe rolls show that under him law and order was maintained and justice continued to be done. When news of Longchamps' misdemeanours reached Richard he sent Walter of Coutances back in 1191 with orders to replace him if necessary; this suggests that Richard was concerned with what was happening in England. Eleanor of Aquitaine was an effective regent for Richard and she worked well with Coutances to both raise Richard's ransom and also to deal with John's rebellion.

Perhaps Richard's best appointment was that of Hubert Walter- his justiciar for the years where he was fighting on the continent. Walter oversaw an effective administration that functioned flawlessly without the need for the king to concern himself with the mundane tasks of the day-to-day. In 1194 Walter introduced a coroner into each county who would investigate suspicious deaths for example. England remained peaceful during these years and was passed on to John with relative ease, suggesting that the country did not overly suffer from absentee kingship. In fact, there is much evidence that Richard was interested in the administration of the country; major changes required Richard's assent and charters from the time often have Richard's seal on the bottom with the words "myself as witness". Holt's extensive study of the charters shows a king who intervened frequently and persistently; he made the most of the administrative system

which had been implemented in his father's reign where England had had to adapt to a king who was often on the move and not tied down in one place.

Richard was definitely an absentee king who levied huge sums of money from England. However, most contemporaries would have understood and accepted the reasons for his absence; the crusade to recapture Jerusalem from Saladin must be seen through the eyes of contemporaries who would have accepted the necessity of this mission. Similarly, the campaign in France must be understood in a wider context; Richard was also Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and Count of Anjou and so he had to maintain his patrimony using whatever funds he could find. England actually, in some ways, benefitted from Richard's rule as the bureaucracy and government were strengthened. One of the reasons for John's later unpopularity was his constant interference in English affairs that did not require a constant royal presence. However, financially it is fair to say that England was milked heavily to pay for campaigns elsewhere, this would be a difficult legacy for John to deal with. Overall, Richard was not a 'thoroughly bad monarch' but he was not the outstanding king that legend would have us believe.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer begins with a relevant focus on the central issue of stability and throughout displays significant knowledge of the reign. The assessment of Longchamp is clearly relevant in relation to the question, but the answer is increasingly generalised and loses focus on stability. This is a pity, given the knowledge demonstrated, but such a loss of focus and assessment of issues not made directly relevant to the question, limits the answer to Level 3.