



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

03 'Edward IV's failure to consolidate his position as king in the years 1461 to 1469 was due to his own mistakes.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25marks]

Student response

In 1461 Edward IV came to the throne after winning the Battle of Towton. He was the image of a strong king, capable of making decisions and an excellent military leader, however faced a number of difficulties during his reign. Many people viewed him as a usurper which made it difficult to win support, and he was overshadowed by his lead advisor, Warwick, due to the power and land he had associated with his name. Edward was faced with the task of bringing peace and unity to an England which had just been through many battles. Ultimately he lost the crown in 1469 on Warwick's third attempt to rebel. Warwick succeeded and Edward was forced to flee and so England was once again ruled by King Henry VI. There were many factors which contributed to his inability to consolidate his position as king. These were due to his own mistakes involving foreign policy, Warwick, marriage and Lancastrian opposites.

Edward IV came to the throne at 18 and had to prove to the people that he would make a good leader, capable of making sensible decisions. The marriages of English kings tended to be to gain some sort of diplomatic advantage and win favour abroad; Warwick was trying to secure a marriage deal with Bona of Savoy, King Louis of France's daughter, when in 1464 it was announced that Edward had secretly married Elizabeth Woodville. This suggested to the people of England that Edward was in fact too young and inexperienced to be king as he had chosen to marry for love and not for the good of England. Furthermore the secrecy of the marriage caused a lack of confidence in Edward. Therefore one of the reasons that Edward failed to consolidate his position as king was due to his own mistakes as he appeared too inexperienced to be king. Also, in ignoring Warwick's advice of marriage he weakened their relationship as Warwick was made to seem as though he had less influence over the king than originally thought. This relationship is weakened even further when dealing with foreign policy.

Another factor which contributed to Edward's failure to consolidate his position as king was in dealing with foreign policy. The main decision that he was faced with regarding this was whether to ally with France or Burgundy. The natural decision would have been to choose Burgundy, due to traditional enmity between England and France, however by forming an ally with France, it would prevent them from providing Margaret of Anjou with support against Edward. Warwick was trying to secure an alliance with Burgundy. Edward ended up choosing to ally with Burgundy since this alliance would have benefits for England's economy as at that point in time Burgundy and England were in a trade war in which English cloth was banned from being sold in Burgundy. Therefore, this decision was a good decision in terms of what was good for England, but it again reinforced the idea that Warwick was losing influence and power over Edward. His decisions with regard to foreign policy were beneficial to England, and so for

this reason cannot be seen as a mistake, however they were another cause of the weakened relationship between Edward and Warwick, which eventually led to Edward losing the crown. Therefore, Edward's handling of foreign policy was another factor which contributed to his failure to consolidate his position as king, as it increased tensions between himself and Warwick.

Warwick's opposition to Edward was a key factor as to why Edward was unable to consolidate his position as king. At the beginning of his reign Edward appeared to be overshadowed by Warwick making him seem as though he was not making any ruling decisions. However, when Edward announced his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 people began to question Warwick's power. Additionally, the marriage angered Warwick as it disrupted marriage plans that he had for his family. For example, Warwick hoped his nephew would marry the wealthy Holland heiress but instead she was married to Thomas Grey, Elizabeth's son. This caused the start of Warwick's betrayal as the decision to marry Elizabeth Woodville was not only humiliating, as his opinion was ignored, but also inconvenienced his own plans for his family. Therefore it could be said that Edward lost his position as king due to his decisions and therefore his own mistakes, as these are what drove Warwick to rebel. Furthermore the decision to ally with Burgundy, not Warwick's choice of France, helped solidify Warwick's choice to oppose Edward and so it can again be said that Edward's failure to consolidate his position as king was due to his own mistakes. However this decision was a good decision, just one which had some unforeseen consequences as it angered Warwick and so contributed to his rebellion.

To conclude, Edward IV came to the throne at a time of unrest in England and as king had to make decisions. His failure to consolidate his position as king was as a result of his own decisions, as although generally for the good of England, they ended up driving Warwick to rebel which led to his deposition in 1469.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer has a number of weaknesses. The introduction is contextual and descriptive and it is only the last sentence which begins to suggest an argument to be advanced. The mistakes allegedly made by Edward focus first on his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and then on his foreign policy. In relation to the former, there is some relevant assessment interspersed in some rather general comment. References to the views of the 'people of England' are best avoided as too vague and it is not made clear why secrecy led to a lack of confidence. In relation to foreign policy there is too much that is muddled and inaccurate to be convincing. Warwick sought an Anglo-French rapprochement, not an alliance with Burgundy.

The treatment of the role of the Earl of Warwick is clearer and more convincing but the answer overall is somewhat undeveloped and inaccurate.