



History

Paper 1A

Question 1 Student 5

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 1A (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 reasons why knights went on Crusade.

[30 marks]

Student response

Extract A, 'The Crusades', is the most convincing of the three provided sources, based on the arguments and evidence it provides. It considers the idea that the non-spiritual rewards many believed to be obtainable from the crusade was one of the key points in why knights travelled on the crusade, and gives exceptional detail into why this was the case. The main reason for this apparent desire for plunder and riches is due to the 'crisis in the agricultural economy of Southern France and Italy', which consisted of droughts and famines occurring in the 1090s. One specific famine which happened in 1095 was made worse for non-nobles, as the wealthy began to store food and rapidly increase the price of it. Although this factor would affect the masses more than the knights, the lands on which they worked probably belonged to these knights, and would therefore begin to also affect them too. The extract also considers the custom of the inheritance of land, and how it would simply be passed onto the eldest son of a family, leaving the rest of his siblings to 'look after themselves'. With no guaranteed source of income, and the probable pressure put on them from their family, knights in these circumstances may have felt inclined to join the crusade in order to gain some form of wealth or reward elsewhere, putting their status as a knight into practice rather than simply joining the ranks of the Church. Despite these reasons provided in the source, it should be noted that it contains no mention of religion as another factor, and therefore is rather one-sided in terms of argument, and lacks range of all the reasons that are being considered.

Extract B on the contrary, does consider the religious reasoning for participating on the crusade, challenging source A's evidence by stating that there is 'little evidence to support the proposition...for landless knights seeking to make a fortune'. This point is backed up by the letters sent by Urban II as in all of the four letters sent out during the period of time after the sermon at Clermont in 1095, not one of these mentions the idea of going on the crusade for plunder. According to Fulcher of Chartres, one key point of Urban's sermon was Canon 9, which focuses on the idea that those who attended, 'prompted by piety alone' would 'suffice for all penance'. Riches and personal gain was never once considered. However, Riley-Smith, the author, states that all evidence towards the salvation reasoning for going on the crusade was found upon 'reading the charters that have survived' and would therefore offer the account of the sermon, and the crusade itself, from the perspective of a churchman. This would, as a result, make this evidence much less impartial and unreliable as a neutral source to explain why knights went on the crusade, as it was presented by an entirely different class of people who may have not been entirely familiar with the motives of the knights at the time.

The final extract, C, is unlike the aforementioned sources in the fact that it provides considerable evidence for both spiritual and non-spiritual reasons as to why the knights went on the crusade. The main reason brought forward concerns the feudal nature of society in this period, and considers the 'tied' status of knights to their lords and landowners. As the knights owed their land to their lords, they were left with almost no choice but to attend the crusade if their lord also wished to do so. As stated in the extract, many lords acted as crusade leaders, due to the lack of kings on the pilgrimage, who instead remained in their respective countries to rule over the remaining masses as willed to by Urban II. This meant that, although other reasons for the knights attending the crusade may have existed, the extract proves of how it was mainly due to the actions of their lords above them, and the mouvances they

formed as a result of Urban's 'recruitment method' that persuaded most nobles to join in. The extract, however, also briefly mentions how bringing the 'cross remained voluntary', showing that religion was still important to these social rankings and one of the final goals, if not the most essential or most accepted. Not much else is provided on this reasoning, however, so the extract only provides a broad range of views in this argument.

Despite its limited range of views when considering religion, overall, Extract A has to be the most convincing of the three. It is due to its description and explanation as to why the potential rewards of the crusade were so important, to knights and also makes reference to specific events and customs which existed during the period, drawing significant conclusions and arguments as a result.

Commentary – Borderline Level 3/4

It is important to stress that this exercise does not require comparative evaluation and whilst students may wish to offer an opinion as to which extract is the most convincing, this is not required. This answer is effective in that it clearly identifies the interpretations and arguments advanced in the three extracts and offers some comment as to the extent to which they are convincing. There is, however, limited deployment of knowledge of context to challenge or corroborate the interpretations; some is offered, but it is not fully developed. For this reason, it is borderline Level 3/4.
