



History

Paper 1B (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 26/02/16

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 1B (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of royal power in Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella?

[25 marks]

Student response

I agree with extract A when it states that 'Spain became united' under Isabella and Ferdinand. This is because many efforts were made to achieve unification such as their marriage which brought the neighbouring kingdoms of Aragon and Castile together. Through this union Isabella found a very useful ally in regards to Ferdinand's impressive diplomatic skills and military mind. With Ferdinand's help many territories within and outside the Iberian Peninsula began to come together in one united state which would become known as Spain, such territorial achievements are the incorporation of Granada into Castile due to the successful result of the Reconquista 1492, the restoration of Cerdagne and Roussillon via the Treaty of Barcelona into Aragon 1493, the annexation of Navarre 1512, the discovery of the New World and the incorporation of the Canary Islands. Furthermore the Catholic Monarchs united Spain economically by standardising the currency across the kingdoms and they united all Hispanic kingdoms under one religion. However I disagree with Extract A to the extent in which Spain was united as certain evidence shows they still remained relatively separate kingdoms for example there were many different political institutions in each kingdom reflecting their individualities (Aragon had its own 3 separate Cortes which neither Ferdinand or Isabella had much control over). In addition to this trade with the New World had been exclusively granted to Castile not any other of the kingdoms and also trade struggled between kingdoms due to different taxes and economic barriers between them.

A further way in which I agree with Extract A is when it states that the Catholic monarchs strengthened their power was 'through the suppression of aristocratic power', for example the monarchs completely 'reorganised the royal council' in order to suppress these overbearing nobles. By the end of their reign there was no longer any nobles on the royal council in fact they had been replaced by letrados (had at least 10 years of experience in legal practice) this removed nobles from the very centre of power reducing their influence. In addition to this after the conquest of Granada in 1492 many nobles were taken away from the centre of power and given lands in the faraway Granada again suppressing their power. The Catholic monarchs also dealt with nobles personally if they defied them for example in Galicia the Count of Lemos deprived a marquis of his right to collect feudal rents, in 1486 the monarchs travelled to Galicia and ordered Lemos to hand over various lands, pay compensation and surrender the town of Ponferrada to the Crown. A similar example was when the Duke of Alba struck a royal tax collector and Ferdinand ordered that his hand should be amputated as a punishment. This demonstrates that the monarchs took significant steps in order to suppress the power of the nobles in several ways. However Extract A fails to mention that toward the ends of their reign the monarchs became more unwilling to suppress defiant nobles, for example the

Duke of Najera terrorised the people of Leniz with 1,500 soliders and the monarchs took no action towards them at all. Also after Isabella's death Ferdinand became more reliant on the nobles as they had lent money to him for his military campaigns and their influence and power had begun to grow again.

Extract B states that the Catholic monarchs 'certainly did not unite Spain' I disagree with this statement and believe that the monarchs did go some way in uniting Spain. Isabella and Ferdinand kept a constant royal presence throughout their vast kingdoms which helped unite them. They were peripatetic and spread their authority with the use of officials in towns called Corregidor's. 64 towns had Corregidor's who kept order and maintained the crowns influence, which helped unite the several kingdoms that became Spain. However they did not completely unite Spain because when Isabella died in 1504, Ferdinand was not entitled to take control of Castile and it would take until Charles Hapsburgs reign until Spain was completely united.

I further disagree with Extract B that Isabella and Ferdinand did not 'reform the Church' as during their reign many methods were taken in order to reform the Church. For example in 1482 after requests from Isabella the Papacy grants her the right to appoint her own bishopric positions, this led to reforming extremists such as Cisneros being appointed the senior Church position as the Archbishop of Toledo. For example he sets up the University of Alcala (1508) which offered a complete ecclesiastical course which was unheard of at the time which helped teach future Clergy to be more pious than previous members. Cisneros also wrote the Polyglot Bible which allowed more people to access the teachings of the Bible. Efforts were also made to reform the Clergy, they were ordered to give up their mistresses and reside in their dioceses. With the authority granted by the monarchs Cisneros also reformed monastic orders and abolished the lax conventional Franciscan houses In favour of the Observants and Jeronimites. However no major reforms did occur as these new rules were hard to police and met stiff resistance but the Extract is incorrect in saying no achievements were made at all.

Extract B that Isabella 'played little part in the formation of the Spanish empire' in agreement with the Extract it was Ferdinand which played the key role in gaining territories such as Navarre, Naples, the Canaries, Granada etc. However in disagreement without Isabella's support, influence and funds these achievements wouldn't have been conceivable.

Overall Extract A is a more convincing interpretation of royal power in Spain as it highlights the monarch's efforts in suppressing the nobles referring to them removing Grandees from the royal council in favour of letrados. Also referring to the relocation of certain nobles to Granada where they would be away from the centre of power which would therefore reduce their influence. The extract also refers to the achievements of the monarchs such as the conquest of Granada and the discovery of the new world which again gives an accurate representation of the Catholic monarchs success overall. However Extract B does not give a very convincing interpretation as it dismisses some of the greatest achievement of the monarchs reigns such as stating they did not unite Spain, however the monarchs did take many steps in order to unite Spain such as standardising currency and joining the kingdoms through marriage, the extract also fails to mention reforms that did take place under Isabella and Ferdinand in regards to the Church and the royal council overall making this extract a less convincing interpretation.

Commentary – Level 4

This is a carefully structured response, which identifies arguments advanced in the two extracts and deploys appropriate and detailed knowledge of context to challenge and corroborate these

arguments. It is much less secure in the appraisal of Extract B where the answer becomes somewhat assertive and is confused in relation to 'Empire'. The answer lacks a sense of overall interpretation of the two Extracts, focused on parts rather than the whole and there are also stylistic weaknesses. It is a low Level 4 answer.