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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In History (8HI0) Paper 1A

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Publications Code 8HI0_1A_1906_ER

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, the fourth year of the reformed AS Level paper 1A which deals with the crusades, c1095-1204.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause and/or consequence. Section B offers a further choice of essays, targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates in the main appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. Examiners did note a number of scripts that posed some problems with the legibility of hand writing. Examiners can only give credit for what they can read.

Of the three sections of Paper 1, candidates are generally more familiar with the essay sections, and in sections A and B most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question. A minority of candidates, often otherwise knowledgeable, wanted to focus on causes and engage in a main factor/other factors approach, even where this did not necessarily address the demands of the conceptual focus. Candidates in the main were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections in terms of the greater depth of knowledge required where section A questions targeted a shorter-period, as compared to the more careful selection generally required for the section B questions covering a broader timespan.

Candidates do need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer comparative analysis of the merits of the different views, exploring the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence, both from within the extracts, and candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence, or a drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider taught topic.

8H10_1A_Q01

Question 1 asked candidates to consider whether settling in the Holy Land was the main aim of crusaders in the years 1095-1150. This question proved to be accessible and popular. The majority of candidates were well informed of the various motives of the crusaders. At the top end candidates were able to focus on the changing motives over the time frame, e.g. offering information about the increasing importance of chivalric values to knights who crusaded, as well as the need to recapture Edessa. The less able candidates tended to emphasise the causes of the First and Second Crusades, often spending too long on the First Crusade. The stated factor of settling in the Holy Land was often side-stepped at the bottom end of the range, although most referred to Bohemond of Toranto's seizure of Antioch, or Urban's description of a 'land of milk and honey'. Overall this question served the full range of candidates' abilities.

8H10_1A_Q02

Question 2 asked candidates to consider whether the consolidation of crusader territory in the years 1100-18 was achieved mainly because of the capture of Jerusalem. This was the less popular question in section A. Candidates were generally knowledgeable about the importance of Jerusalem as a site of Christian importance in terms of the life of Christ, and as an important city for pilgrims. At the top end of the cohort candidates understood Jerusalem's political importance. Less able candidates tended to offer a narrative of the conquest of Jerusalem and were usually able to offer something on Baldwin I.

8H10_1A_Q03

Question 3 asked candidates to consider whether the leadership of Louis VII was different to that of Richard I. This question proved to be accessible to a range of abilities. The majority of candidates were able to offer a comparison of the two crusader kings. Answers tended to take the form of a weak Louis versus strong Richard analysis. However at the top end candidates

made the second order concept of similarity/difference the focus of their responses and there was good analysis of relevant military and strategic issues paying attention to points of similarity as well as difference. Less able candidates tended to offer a narrative of the Second and Third Crusades and offered a judgement on the merits of them rather than the leaders.

8HI0_1A_Q04

Question 4 asked candidates to consider whether the seizure of Edessa was the most significant event in the growth of Muslim power in the years 1144-87. This question proved to be accessible and was the more popular question in section B. The majority of candidates understood that the seizure of Edessa was a huge boost to Muslim confidence and was also a significant loss of territory for the crusader states. At the top end candidates were able to weight the significance of the fall of Edessa against other significant events such as the battle of Hattin and the fall of Jerusalem. Less able candidates were generally successful in appraising the fall of Edessa but struggled to find other significant events apart from the fall of Jerusalem. A minority of candidates offered a narrative about the growth of Muslim power, Nur ad-Din and Saladin.

8HI0_1A_Q05

Question 5 asked candidates to use the extracts and their own knowledge to consider the view that the Fourth Crusade failed because the Venetians gained control of it. At the top end candidates saw two differing historical interpretations, while at the bottom end a simple argument of Venetian guilt versus a defence of Venice predominated. Successful candidates understood that extract 1 was a powerful argument against doge Dandolo and one that linked his alleged personal failings to important issues that spelt disaster for the crusade. This provided an opportunity for an often highly enjoyable exposition of Dandolo's motives. This also provided an important framework for the analysis of extract 2. Most candidates were able to understand the importance of the evidence concerning the nature of the Venetian fleet, although only a minority took up the case of the Venetians as sincere crusaders in their own right. At the top end the extracts were successfully interrogated. Less successful candidates tended to get mired in the emotive language used in extract 1, and made their critique one of the utility of the evidence in the extract rather than interpretation. At the bottom end candidates denounced the sources for being secondary and preferred an explanation of the failure of the Fourth Crusade based on their own knowledge.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A/B responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question
- Sufficient consideration given to the issue in the question (e.g. main factor), as well as some other factors
- Explain their judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate their reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic they are writing about in order to justify their judgements
- Focus carefully on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Give consideration to timing, to enable themselves to complete all three question with approximately the same time given over to each one
- An appropriate level, in terms of depth of detail and analysis, as required by the question – e.g. a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions.

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Pay little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. write about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempt to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked – most frequently, this meant treating questions which targeted other second-order concepts as causation questions
- Answer a question without giving sufficient consideration to the given issue in the question (e.g. looking at other causes or consequences, with only limited reference to that given in the question)

- Answers which only gave a partial response, e.g. a very limited span of the date range, or covered the stated cause/consequence, with no real consideration of other issues
- Assertion of change, causation, sometimes with formulaic repetition of the words of the question, with limited explanation or analysis of how exactly this was a change, cause, of the issue within the question.
- Judgement is not reached, or not explained
- A lack of detail

Section C responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question, as opposed to seemingly pre-prepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification
- Thorough use of the extracts; this need not mean using every point they raise, but a strong focus on these as views on the question
- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits
- Careful use of own knowledge, e.g. clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources, confidently using this to examine the arguments made, and reason through these in relation to the given question; at times, this meant selection over sheer amount of knowledge
- Careful reading of the extracts, to ensure the meaning of individual statements and evidence within these were used in the context of the broader arguments made by the authors

- Attempts to see beyond the stark differences between sources, e.g. consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or attempts to reconcile their arguments

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Limited use of the extracts, or an imbalance in this, e.g. extensive use of one, with limited consideration of the other
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations
- Using the extracts merely as sources of support
- Arguing one extract is superior to the other on the basis that it offers more factual evidence to back up the claims made, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered
- Heavy use of own knowledge, or even seemingly pre-prepared arguments, without real consideration of these related to the arguments in the sources
- Statements or evidence from the source being used in a manner contrary to that given in the sources, e.g. through misinterpretation of the meaning of the arguments, or lifting of detail without thought to the context of how it was applied within the extract
- A tendency to see the extracts as being polar opposites, again seemingly through expectation of this, without thought to where there may be degrees of difference, or even common ground