A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505
For first teaching in 2015

Y306/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

Contents

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y306/01 series overview

Y306 is one of twenty one units for the revised A Level examination for A Level History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an Interpretation option on a named in-depth topic and two essays. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in-depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the Interpretation. In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period, explaining similarities and differences between the events they are discussing in order to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons made may be either between periods within the topic or between regions. The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Candidates who did well:	*Candidates who did less well:*
- showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question - were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words - were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge - in answering the essay questions, covered the whole period in a balanced way. - adopted a thematic approach - made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic - explained the links and comparisons. - supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question - demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the different command verbs e.g. identify, describe, explain and discuss.	- showed a limited understanding of one or both of the interpretations - did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation - did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation - in answering the essay adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach - did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph. - did not cover the whole period - did not focus on the precise wording of the question - made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

Section A overview

To do well on Section A, candidates need to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

Question 1

1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the causes of the Pilgrimage of Grace. **[30]**

Responses showed that candidates had a clear understanding of the two interpretations, with most able to explain that Interpretation A focused on the economic causes of the Pilgrimage, while Interpretation B was focused on religious issues. Most responses were able to at least explain the issues raised in the two interpretations and offer some evaluation, although this was usually much stronger in relation to Interpretation B. In evaluating Interpretation A, there was some knowledge of the economic situation at the time, with responses making reference to the subsidy in peace time, the problem of entry fines and rising prices. The strongest answers were able to link some of these issues to the rebel demands, with some considering issues such as enclosure in particular regions. There was also some reference to the Statute of Uses, although a number were confused as to its actual impact. Responses were also able to link the impact of the dissolution of the smaller monasteries to the economy. Concerns about coin leaving the north was also discussed and some used the desire of the Pilgrims for a Parliament in the North to consider regional grievances and distrust of the London government. The latter point was sometimes linked to Henry's appointment of men from the South to roles in the North, which was used to suggest he was not concerned about the region. In evaluating Interpretation B, candidates showed a far greater command of contextual knowledge to support their argument. Most were able to discuss the timing of the rebellion coinciding with the dissolution of the smaller monasteries or the arrival of commissioners in Lincolnshire which sparked rumours of attacks on parish churches, making specific reference to Louth and its spire. In many responses, candidates stressed the number of articles that referred to religious grievances or commented about the banner of the Five Wounds or the Pilgrim Ballad to emphasise the importance of religion as a grievance. Responses were also often able to show that there were a wide range of reasons for opposition to the Reformation and a number were able to explain why opposition had not manifested itself until 1536, despite changes being introduced earlier. Some responses were also able to comment on the wide variation of the religious demands, with comments about particular Saint's days being quite frequent, although most focused on Lincolnshire and the attack on the parish church at Louth.

There were a significant number of responses where there was too much focus on what was missing from the interpretations and this will not score highly. It is important to focus on what is there as historians will not consider every issue in the relatively short number of words provided. Similarly, candidates should avoid commenting on the author and provenance of the interpretations.

Section B overview

To do well on Section B candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period, explaining similarities and differences between the events they are discussing in order to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons made may be either between periods within the topic or between regions. The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2

2* To what extent did the causes of rebellion change during the period 1485 to 1603?   **[25]**

This was the most popular of the three essay questions and produced a wide range of responses. The strongest answers focused on the extent to which the causes of rebellion changed over the period, adopting a thematic approach following an overview which established a clear thesis. Many argued that there was considerable change with dynastic and taxation rebellions dominating Henry VII's reign, while taxation continued under Henry VIII religion replaced dynastic. Many argued that further change was then seen under Edward with the emergence of social and economic issues, although religion continued to be a factor. Mary's reign presented the greatest challenge with some seeing the continuation of religion as the main cause, while others argued that it was a return to dynastic issues that would continue under Elizabeth. Ireland provided a useful point of contrast for some, with responses arguing that there was continuity, with rebellions seeking to reduce or remove English interference. However, other responses adopted a different approach and argued that there was no real change in the causes as dynastic or factional unrest was present throughout and that economic issues were also continually present. In arguing for continuity many considered that there were more subtle changes as dynastic rebellions became more about securing the throne than removing the monarch, while economic rebellions changed from taxation to enclosure. Both approaches provided candidates with the opportunity to make comparisons and show continuity and change over the period and therefore access the higher levels. However, weaker responses tended to adopt a more chronological approach and simply explain the causes of rebellion under each monarch with little attempt to focus on the extent to which the causes remained the same. There were also a number of responses that either asserted a rebellion was caused by, for example, dynastic issues without providing any evidence. Although this is a thematic paper where overview is important, responses and arguments must still be supported by precise evidence. There were also a number that drifted from cause to the seriousness of the unrest, which would have been better suited to Question 3.

Question 3

3* 'Rebellion never seriously threatened the Tudor monarchy.' How far do you agree?   **[25]**

There was a good range of responses to this question. The strongest adopted a thematic approach and compared rebellions across a range of issues, such as aims, location and size. Less strong responses adopted a rebellion by rebellion by rebellion approach and did not make comparisons, simply explaining why a particular rebellion was or was not a threat. In adopting a thematic approach most argued that the aims of a rebellion made it more or less threatening, usually considering that dynastic challenges particularly under Henry VII and Mary Tudor were threatening, particularly as the Lady Jane Grey affair did remove Mary for nine days. Responses also argued that Simnel was a serious threat as he was able to draw Henry into battle within a year of his coming to the throne and that the outcome could easily have been the same as Bosworth. These rebellions were often compared with grievance rebellions, such as taxation, which were seen as less threatening as the monarch could make compromises without losing his throne. In discussing location responses discussed whether location within London made a rebellion more threatening than in the peripheral regions or Ireland because of the problem of putting down, for example, Tyrone's rebellion. Many argued that London was crucial and therefore suggested that this made Wyatt's rebellion quite serious while Essex's rebellion, while located in London, was less serious because of numbers. This often led to a discussion of numbers with many arguing that the decline in numbers taking part meant rebellions became less serious over time, while others suggested that numbers were not of paramount importance as the Pilgrimage of Grace was not threatening, despite being the largest because of its aims. Some argued that that because the regime was never toppled, despite the challenges it faced, that it was never seriously threatened and that measures taken by the various monarchs was crucial in this. Responses also discussed issues such as leadership and foreign support and the extent to which they made a rebellion threatening. The question provided opportunities for candidates to make comparisons and links over the period and this was certainly seen in the strongest answers.

Question 4

4* How important were local officials in maintaining political stability in the period from 1485 to 1603?
        [25]

This was the least popular question in this unit. Although candidates were able to identify a number of reasons why political stability was maintained, evidence of synthesis and comparisons was less developed. The strongest responses focused on the issue of political stability and not simply on putting down rebellions. Knowledge of the role of local officials was variable. Many were able to comment about the role of JPs and how they developed over the period, often seeing them as crucial in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign when there was social and economic hardship. However, many struggled to comment on other local officials and the role, for example of churchwardens or poor law officials. Most were able to write about the role of other groups, usually the monarch, parliament, regional councils or the nobility. However, there were some who were able to make links between these institutions and groups and explain how local officials were crucial in implementing and upholding the decisions made at the Centre. Some of the stronger answers commented on the role of nobility with considerable success, stressing that not only were they often responsible for implementing laws that would help create stability, but that they also acted in ways that undermined stability and this provided a useful point of comparison. Similarly, some pointed to the Church and clergy as a means of upholding stability through preaching and the use of homilies, but also noted how some clergy and monks created instability through encouraging unrest in 1536 and 1549.

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