

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y106/01 Summer 2022 series

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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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper Y106 series overview

Y106 is one of thirteen units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about fifty years through an Enquiries or source-based option and an essay. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates have to answer a compulsory source questions based on four written primary sources. The question requires them to use all four sources to assess the validity of a view. In Section B candidates are required to answer one essay question from a choice of two.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to be able to consider both provenance of the sources and apply contextual knowledge to them in order to reach a judgement about the sources in relation to the issue in the question.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considered the provenance of the sources and used relevant contextual knowledge • clearly linked the contextual knowledge to the source being discussed to show whether the view of the source was valid or not • reached an overall judgement as to the extent to which the sources supported the view in the question • in answering the essay question, discussed at least two issues in depth • gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic • reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question • made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not consider both the provenance and use contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources • wrote an unbalanced response in their treatment of the sources, with very little consideration of one of the sources • reached a judgement based on their knowledge rather than on the strength of the sources or did not make a judgement at all • showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay • were unable to support their response with relevant material • did not focus on the precise wording of the question • made unsupported comments and assertions about issues.

Section A overview

The Enquiry section in this unit examines the period from 1553 to 1558 and the issue of how far the succession created political instability. The question requires candidates to critically assess evidence and reach judgements. The critical evaluation of sources is the central theme in this section with all marks awarded against AO2.

Question 1

Mid Tudor Crisis 1547–1558

- 1 Using these four sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that the issue of the succession never seriously threatened political stability in the years from 1553 to 1558.

[30]

There was considerable variation in the quality of responses but most candidates were able to access the sources and explain them. Most responses were also able to use some contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources, particularly Sources A and B, but were less secure when considering C and D.

Provenance provided a greater challenge and some candidates were able to use the provenance of the sources to reach a judgement either about each source or overall. Many conclusions were simply a summary of the sources or a conclusion based solely on contextual knowledge of the period.

In discussing Source A many were able to comment on the date, that it appeared there was no instability as the Privy Council appeared to support the plan to exclude Mary and that they issued this in response to Mary's letter. However, stronger responses took this further and commented on the fact that Mary was challenging the Devises and therefore was creating instability or that once Northumberland left London the Council changed their mind, arguing either that this decreased instability or increased it, while others commented on the potential for civil war.

In discussing Source B many suggested that it showed there was instability because Jane Grey stated that Mary was illegitimate and therefore not Queen, while others argued that because Mary did not want the throne, instability would be avoided. Unfortunately, there were a considerable number who did not pick up on the date of the source and see that it was written when Mary was on the throne and Jane was imprisoned and possibly downplaying her role to save her life following the execution of Northumberland. Some argued that this showed that even if there had been instability it had not lasted long as by August Mary was on the throne. There was much that could have been discussed using these two sources and either argument for stability or instability could have been pursued. Some also suggested that religion was causing the instability and again this was credited.

Many found Sources C and D much more challenging in terms of applying contextual knowledge and considering their provenance. In discussing C the stronger responses commented on why there was an addition to Mary's will, noting the phantom pregnancies or commenting on the Marriage Treaty that prevented Philip from ruling. This was then often linked to the disquiet caused by the Spanish marriage and how the addition to the will would prevent instability. This was often developed with candidates commenting about the triumph of legitimacy in both 1553 and 1558, suggesting instability was not an issue as many of the gentry and nobility would have been secured with land titles if it had been overridden.

In discussing Source D responses often commented on the fact that the Privy Council had to persuade Mary to name Elizabeth and that Mary did not mention her by name, suggesting she named her reluctantly, suggesting instability. Other responses put forward that this source showed religion was the issue in causing the potential for instability, while other argued that this was soon resolved, Elizabeth came to throne peacefully and she was able to overcome any challenge caused by religion through her religious settlement.

Exemplar 1 provides an example of a conclusion where the response starts to make a judgement about the sources in relation to the question. There have been a few brief interim judgements but as neither they nor the conclusion are developed it remained at the bottom of Level 6.

Assessment for learning



Although this may sound obvious, this section is source-based and therefore responses need to be driven by the sources and not contextual knowledge. Contextual knowledge should be a tool to evaluate the sources.

Misconception



Source B was written when Mary was on the throne and this may impact on the purpose of the Source. It is important candidates have a secure understanding of the chronology of the period.

Exemplar 1

Moreover, the source's date further increases the weight, as its discussion of all the events of the 1558 succession, including the developments in Mary's will as she would eventually formally name Elizabeth as heir, enable it to provide a holistic, well-versed account that engages with all aspects to better reflect, candidly, the issue of succession and its impact on political stability. Thus, as the source's accurate knowledge and stellar provenance sustain its argument in favour of the view in the question, the source is one of incredibly high weight.

Section B overview

Two essays are set, each from a different Key Topic. The questions set require candidates to analyse the causes and consequences of major historical issues.

Question 2*

England 1485–1547

2* 'The power and influence of the nobility was the most serious domestic challenge to Henry VII's rule.' How far do you agree? [20]

This was the more popular question and candidates were able to discuss a range of issues, including the named factor. Discussions often centred around the nobility, finance, claim to the throne, Yorkist threat and other rebellions. The strongest responses identified criteria against which to judge 'serious threat', while weaker responses explained threats without assessing their seriousness.

A number argued that securing the throne, given Henry's weak claim, was the most serious challenge. These responses were able to explain why this was such a problem, often linking it to the legacy of the Wars of the Roses, Henry's weak claim and the power of the nobility, who had become accustomed to the removal of monarchs using their private armies. In discussing the nobility some argued that this was less of an issue because of the number who had been killed or because of Henry's policies. These responses included discussions of factors such as, again, the challenge of securing the throne, the dating of his reign, his marriage and calling of Parliament. In discussing the challenge of the nobility, many made reference to the fact land equalled power and that this issue was reduced by Henry early in his reign through an Act of Resumption. Some argued that the nobility were the most serious challenge as Henry had to continue taking action against them throughout his reign, noting that Acts of Attainder and Bonds were in place for the whole period. Others put forward that Henry's policies were so unpopular that if he had not died the prospect of civil war was not unlikely.

In arguing that rebellion was the most serious challenge responses often focused on the Pretender rebellions and commented on Simnel drawing Henry into a battle that had the potential to go either way, while he was unable to crush Warbeck, despite his limited support.

There were many issues that could be considered and Exemplar 2 is an example of a developed judgement in the conclusion that weighs up the challenges having made some brief interim judgements at the end of some of the paragraphs and therefore reaching Level 6.

Misconception



A number of candidates did not understand the term or the need to focus on domestic issues and wrote about foreign challenges.

Exemplar 2

	<p>In conclusion, the power and influence of the nobility was not the most serious domestic challenge to Henry VII's rule because he effectively dealt with them and reduced their power and influence, curbing them strongly and using the policy of 'ability not nobility', which reduced their influence. Although it could be argued that this harsh treatment caused long-term resentment, especially in the last years of his reign the fact that there was no tangible opposition or reaction provoked suggests there this was not the most serious domestic challenge. Instead, it was Yorkist threats that were the most serious domestic challenge because it directly threatened Henry VII's position on the throne - especially the the 1487 Battle of</p>
	<p>Stake as he was forced into battle. Yet this challenge did become less serious as the reign progressed ^{not} because Henry VII dealt with them more effectively such as the 1492 Treaty of Etaples ensuring France wouldn't back a Yorkist claimant and Henry's use of spies ^{was} able to find discover and stop challenges before they became serious, such as Stanley's involvement in the Warbeck plot, therefore the Even the 1497 Cornish and 1489 Yorkshire rebellions were mere inconveniences rather than serious domestic challenges. The power and influence of the nobility had been greatly curbed and reduced, preventing it from being a serious domestic challenge, but which is why Yorkist threats, which which had the ^{most} potential to threaten Henry's authority and claim to the throne was the most serious domestic challenge to Henry VII's rule.</p>

Question 3*

3* Assess the reasons for Thomas Cromwell's fall from power.

[20]

Although this was less popular than Question 2, the quality of the responses was often very good with many able to weigh up the importance of the factors discussed and therefore access at least Level 5. However, it is worth noting that candidates who reach a judgement but do not display a good range of supporting knowledge will not reach these higher levels.

Most responses commented on the following factors: the marriage of Henry VIII to Anne of Cleves, Cromwell's religious beliefs and the rise of the Howard faction. In weighing up the factors, candidates often pointed to Cromwell's promotion to the Earl of Essex to show that the marriage was not the most important factor. When discussing religion, some argued that Henry did not remove Cranmer, who shared reformist views and was also married, therefore religion was not the most important factor. They concluded that it was the opportunism of the Howard/Conservative faction that was the most important factor. These responses explained how the Duke of Norfolk used Catherine Howard to appeal to Henry and how this provided their opportunity to remove Cromwell.

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