

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y302/01 Summer 2023 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 Y302/01 series overview

Y302/01 is one of twenty-one units for Paper 3 of the revised A Level examination for GCE 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.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • covered the whole period in a balanced way • adopted a thematic approach • make links and comparisons between aspects of the topic • explain the links and comparisons • support their arguments with precise and relevant examples • reach a supported judgement about the issue in the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 King Alfred's response to Viking raids. [30]

The vast majority of candidates were able to, at a minimum, identify and explain the differences between the two interpretations. Candidates mostly recognised that Passage A suggests that Alfred's creation of a navy was his most significant/successful response to Viking raids, whereas Passage B focuses on his use of fortifications.

Stronger responses provided specific examples or evidence to support or challenge the passages. Candidates were able to use a wide variety of evidence in order to do this. For example, utilising knowledge of prior attacks on England and France by sea to support the significance of Alfred's naval endeavours, or the continued use of burghs by Edward and Aethelflaed after Alfred's reign to support the notion that fortifications were significant. As long as contextual knowledge was clearly linked to the interpretation, it could be credited as valid evaluation.

Many candidates struggled to provide relevant contextual knowledge to support their evaluation, relying heavily on information that was provided by the passages. Some candidates described Alfred's other responses to the Vikings, such as warfare or Danegeld, but did not link this to the interpretations in the passages. Evaluation cannot be credited unless it is relevant to the question and supported by knowledge not shown in the passages. Less successful responses were sometimes also critical of the passages for their lack of detail, or concluded that Passage B was more convincing due to its inclusion of specific dates and examples. Lack of evidence/examples within the passage itself is not a valid weakness of the passage, as candidates should be using their knowledge to support or challenge the argument presented.

Assessment for learning



Candidates must seek to use knowledge in addition to that provided by the passages themselves. However, remind candidates that evaluation by omission, listing what the passage has failed to take into consideration, is not often credited as valid evaluation. Knowledge must be clearly linked to the interpretation and question in order to be relevant.

Exemplar 1

		<p>Passage A convincingly explains the reasoning behind Alfred's reorganisation of Anglo-Saxon coastal defence, asserting it was conceived following a 'careful examination of the problems and solutions of the past'. This is convincing because it precisely acknowledges a plausible reason as to why Alfred was pre-occupied with coastal defence, as raids as early as 793 in Lindisfarne demonstrate the threat which Vikings' riverine expeditions on the coast caused. In 793, Vikings pillaged St. Cuthbert Church, the Anglo-Saxon chronicle states 'Heathens miserably destroyed God's church with plunder and slaughter', which led to a cultural shock as the sanctity of the church was now questioned. Similarly, in 851, the 'Codex Aureus' ('golden book'), which was a Latin copy of the Gospel was stolen and ransomed from Canterbury, the ransom was paid for by the Earl Ealdred of Surrey. Thus, Alfred's fortification of 'burhs' and towns along the coast, as well as the implementation of a garrison, is sensibly explained by Passage A, because it thought mentions the contribution</p>
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that past Viking raids on coastal sites had on influencing Alfred's response. Therefore, Passage A is convincing in establishing a foundation upon which it argues that Alfred's response to raids focused on coastal sites. Passage A convincingly argues that 'combating Viking naval power was the key to maintaining peace'. This is convincing because the Vikings were highly skilled craftsmen, who manufactured lethal warcraft, such as the Oseberg ship, which had chimer-built ~~vessel~~ ^{planks} and shallow draught vessels which facilitated riverine activity through even shallow waters such as the Lea, Thames, and Ouse. ~~There~~ ~~technol~~ Similarly, the Frøstad ship had raised planks to facilitate archery whilst on the river. These technological advancements demonstrate Viking riverine capability which probably threatened Anglo-Saxons as they were not accustomed to it. Passage A's explanation corroborates and justifies Alfred's establishment of the Danelaw in 878, following the Battle at Edington. Alfred 'combating Viking ~~power~~ naval power' to 'maintain peace', may reference Alfred's ~~per~~ establishment of Wessex in ~~the Danelaw~~ which he distinguishes from the Danelaw ('Up the Thames, then up the Lea, then along the Lea to its source, then down to Bedford Street, then along the Ouse, to Watling Street'). Alfred's attempt at maintaining peace in the face of Viking naval strength may have led to his decision to establish a geographical border between the 'Anglecynn' and the Viking raiders, perhaps an

	<p>appeasement of Viking endeavour to settle. Thus, passage A is convincing in arguing that Alfred's defences against the Vikings stemmed from his desire to combat naval power, as this can be recognised as a precise reason for his defensive measure in 878, in which he established the Kingdom of Wessex, conceiving the 'Danelaw' ('Dnegar lib'), creating a stark distinction of his kingdom against the Vikings, and thus protecting it from naval raids/activity, as the Vikings had the remnants of Alfred's kingdom. Passage A dubiously argues that the success of Alfred's defences, might be judged from the relative absence of recorded small raids in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The reason this argument is dubious is because it is written by the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, and therefore, may possess biases against the Vikings, for the chronicle serves a religious purpose. Therefore, passage A may potentially be considered flawed due to its overarching judgement that Alfred's defences were successful, since it uses a questionable source to corroborate this argument. Nonetheless, despite this potential weakness, it is not plausible to observe a decline in Viking raids following the establishment of the Danelaw, as the Vikings assimilated into culture, creating a syncretic hybrid culture, as observed through art pieces such as the Bonderup ^{cross} found in Norway which combined Anglo-Saxon (Winchester) art style and the Scandinavian 'Kingerike' design. Therefore, passage A overall proves This demonstrates how passage A</p>
as well as the fact that 80% of DNA from Wirral have distinct Norwegian markings,	

		<p>is convincing in asserting that Viking raids declined over-time, because there is evidence to suggest that the Vikings eventually assimilated into Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting that Alfred's desire to reduce Viking naval activity and raiding were successful in the long-term, as his establishment of the 'Danelaw' arrested Viking interest from raiding to settling. Overall, Passage A is convincing as it provides a well-rounded explanation for the Alfred's response to Viking raids, establishing a foundation which supports his the over-arching judgement, which is that Alfred's coastal defence of England was strong. Thus, passage A provides a well-balanced and justified explanation.</p>
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This exemplar shows some very good evaluation of Passage A. Although it is not a requirement that candidates explore both weaknesses and strengths of the interpretations, this response does both successfully, using contextual knowledge and clear evaluative language. The contextual knowledge showcased in this response is not always specific to Alfred's reign, nevertheless, the candidate has linked the knowledge clearly to the interpretations in the passages and remained focused on the question throughout. This demonstrates how it is possible to call on a wide range of evidence to successfully evaluate the interpretations. Due to the detailed knowledge shown and the consistent focus on the question, this response was given Level 6, 27 marks.

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 period within the topic or between regions. The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

Question 2*

2* 'Scandinavian land and climate was the most important factor in the development of Viking society throughout the period from c.790 to 1066.' How far do you agree?

[25]

This was a popular question, with candidates identifying a wide variety of factors that led to the development of Viking society, such as seafaring, raiding, trading, or religion, in addition to Scandinavian land and climate itself. All were valid approaches, although it should be noted that responses that only explored land and climate, or did not address land and climate at all, could only achieve Level 3 for partial focus at best. A wide interpretation of 'development of Viking society' was accepted, however, valid approaches included how factors affected population growth, centralisation of power, rituals and customs, the role of women, trading and professions.

The more successful responses were able to provide specific examples in support of the arguments made, explaining change or continuity across time and drawing on examples either from within Scandinavia, or from across regions more widely. Both approaches were successful if supported by evidence from across the period. Similarly, some responses concluded that land and climate was critical to development as it led to other factors such as seafaring and raiding, while others concluded that land and climate may have been important in the early part of the period but became less so as the period continued and other factors had more impact. Either conclusion was valid if well supported.

Less successful responses tended to be generic and vague, and many candidates did struggle to support broad arguments with specific evidence. Some responses also simply described the land and climate of Scandinavia and how it shaped early Viking society, without really exploring how Viking society developed over time, and so could not demonstrate the skill of synthesis or fully address the question.

Assessment for learning



Remind candidates that synthesis can be shown in two ways: comparing change/continuity over time, or differences between regions. When making comparisons, candidates do need to demonstrate their point using examples, which should be drawn from different regions or time periods in order to fully meet the demands of the question and access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 3*

3* 'Warfare was the only effective way of dealing with troublesome Vikings in the period from c.790 to 1066.' How far do you agree?

[25]

This was a popular question, and many candidates were able to answer it well. Candidates usually identified the use of Danegeld, diplomacy, and assimilation alongside warfare as effective ways of dealing with troublesome Vikings.

More successful responses took a thematic approach, taking each 'method' of dealing with Vikings in turn, and providing examples where this approach had been successful or less successful across the period. The most successful responses drew on evidence from across regions. Less successful responses took a chronological approach, with three paragraphs focused on 'the early period', 'the middle period' and 'the later period' respectively, or considered events in isolation, such as exploring Alfred's response to the Vikings in England in one paragraph, and the French response in another. These approaches were weaker as they typically did not allow candidates to show synthesis.

A small number of candidates interpreted 'troublesome Vikings' to mean 'rebellious' Vikings in Scandinavia. This was a perfectly reasonable approach and was credited accordingly.

Some candidates chose to structure their response around the themes of social/political/economic methods of dealing with troublesome Vikings. In practice, this often meant that paragraphs focused on examples of assimilation, treaties, and Danegeld, with warfare considered separately, and where this was the case, the responses remained focused on the question. However, some candidates struggled to make a social/political/economic structure relevant to the question, and so some responses suffered from a lack of focus and clarity.

Assessment for learning



Although many thematic questions can be tackled by looking at social, economic, and political themes, this may not be suitable for every question. Encourage candidates to look carefully at the wording of the question and to choose the themes they discuss accordingly, rather than try to make a pre-planned structure fit the question asked.

Exemplar 2

		Warfare Warfare was the most effective and direct and effective way in dealing with the Vikings. This is because, from due to the increased frequency of Viking raids, leaders (such as Alfred the Great) were able to formulate plans and defenses for countering the Viking threat. It SBS saw the
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arrival of the "Great Heathen Army" ~~to~~ to
 England, and later, in 878, the "Great Summer
 Army". ~~The Vikings saw a~~ These two dates are
 significant as they show a turning point in the
 size of the Viking raiding parties, moving away
 from small groups that were attacking monast-
 eries to larger groups likely aiming to occupy
 land. In response to these Viking raids, Alfred
 created a ~~small~~ naval fleet in order to battle
 the Vikings at sea, and a relay system ~~in~~
 and militia armies made up of civilians who
 were ~~recruited~~ called upon every two weeks. These
 plans by Alfred contributed to Guthrum's loss
 of London in 885, ~~as well as~~ as well as the
 ratification of the Treaty of Wedmore (which was
 broken by A Guthrum in 885) and the Treaty of
 Alfred and Guthrum (which was crucial in the establish-
 ment of the Danelaw). ~~The Treaty of Alfred and~~
~~Guthrum~~ As a result, warfare was ~~the~~ the most
 effective way of dealing with ^{the} Vikings.

This is a good example of a Level 4 response that shows relevant knowledge and analysis, but no synthesis. This paragraph supports the argument that warfare was effective with good knowledge of the conflict between Alfred and Guthrum. The evidence presented is all drawn from the 860s-880s and is focused on England. Without any comparison to earlier/later examples of warfare, or examples of warfare in other regions, it has not been possible for the candidate to show awareness of change or continuity over time. This approach was largely consistent throughout the response. Therefore, although the arguments made are valid and the evidence presented relevant, the response cannot reach Level 5 as it has not demonstrated the required skill of synthesis. This was given Level 4, 14 marks.

Question 4*

4* To what extent did rituals and codes of conduct change in Viking culture in the period from c.790 to 1066?

[25]

This was a less popular question, although candidates who did opt to answer this question were often able to produce good responses. It was possible to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme by mainly focusing on the changes brought by Christianisation of Viking society, including burial practices, and ways of worship. However, the strongest responses considered the changes brought by Christianisation alongside other developments and areas of continuity in Viking culture, for example, the role of poetry and sagas in Viking culture, or the code of honour and warrior culture.

Candidates were often able to provide specific examples of change and continuity across the period within these themes, and reach judgements about the extent of change to rituals and codes of conduct overall.

Exemplar 3

		In regards to burial rituals and codes of conduct, there have been clear changes. through
		The abandonment of beliefs in afterlife and
		the typical code of conduct for burials according
		to horn sidr (the Old ways) convey how these
		changes occurred given that a greater number of
		excavated excavated burials show that in the later
		parts of the Viking Age, Christian burials and codes
		of conduct were followed more so than what had
		been seen at the beginning of the Viking Age. For
		example, at the beginning of the period, there
		is clear evidence of burial rituals and codes
		of conduct being adhered to in accordance to the
		beliefs of horn sidr. This seen through the Oseberg
		Ship where two women were laid to rest.
		Within this burial, there is evidence of grave goods -
		specifically related to the horn sidr - and a tapestry

4. continued depicting Odin and hung men. This shows how at the start of the Viking Age, it was expected to perform burial rituals making clear links to gods and of horn sides. Similarly, Ibn Fadlan describes ~~the~~ a Rus ship burial in which a Viking chieftain dies, and a slave woman is sacrificed in order to go on the ^{burial} ship with the chieftain. This suggests that at the beginning of the period these forms of sacrificial rituals were done and expected. This however, changed over time. This is clear through the grave burials uncovered in Sigetuna from the 11th century as well as graves in Oslo found from c. 1000. Both of these sites show Christian-style graves which greatly contrast from the rituals and codes of conduct seen in the beginning of the Viking Age. For example, at

Sigetuna burials were found with people wearing white baptismal clothing and having crosses buried with them. Similarly, runestones would typically make reference to their belief in heathen. As seen with ~~the~~ Ivar's in Ireland (873) in which it states he "rested in Christ", as well as ~~the~~ Therefore, there are clear changes over time in relation to the rituals and codes of conduct at burials, also there was a reduction in cremation and ship burials and more ~~burials~~ instead people were being buried. Thus, therefore, comes how rituals and codes of conducts change over time.

This response shows some supported comparisons with some specific knowledge. The paragraph chosen focuses on burial rituals, and explains how these changed over time, giving specific examples in support. There is a clear focus on the question throughout the paragraph. The rest of the response was of a similar quality, explaining changes in methods of worship, and changes to feasting rituals (including the role of sagas), before reaching a basic judgement that due to Christianisation, there was a lot of change. Some of the arguments made were simplistic, but they were well focused and well supported, showing enough skill to reach Level 5. To reach higher in Level 5 or Level 6, the response would have developed the synthesis and judgement further, perhaps assessing whether change occurred gradually or suddenly, occurred due to key turning points, or whether change differed between regions. This was given Level 5, 18 marks.

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