



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**History A 4040**

**40402C Elizabethan England, 1558–1603**

***Report on the Examination***

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# 40402C Elizabethan England, 1558–1603

## General Issues

The general quality of the work produced by candidates was very good and impressed the examiners. Most candidates demonstrated a broad knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key issues identified in the syllabus and the people and events specified. No part of the paper was misinterpreted and there were few cases where candidates had failed to provide an answer. Even weaker candidates were able to write at often considerable length on the later parts of questions 1, 2 or 3. While the main issues and trends in the history of Elizabethan England that the paper covered seemed well understood, there were some small specific areas where candidates displayed weaker knowledge and understanding. This was evident in relation to the answers to Question 2. However it is good to see candidates in the examination integrating their knowledge of the period with the historical skills they have learned to demonstrate convincing historical reasoning. The value of the large, colour images used in the paper was evident; they proved stimulating and accessible across the full ability range.

The demands of this paper were broadly consistent with those of the legacy specification. Question 1 and Questions 2 or 3 of Section B offered the opportunity for all candidates to show what they understood, knew and could do. It was noticeable that the more able candidates distinguished themselves on Question 1(e) and on 2(c) or 3(c). In Question 1 of the paper many candidates used knowledge well to support their answers to parts 1(c) to 1(e). In Section B candidates showed a marked preference for Question 2 about the Theatre rather than Question 3 on Puritanism.

## Section A

### Question 1(a)

The majority of candidates successfully comprehended the sources and drew inferences about Queen Elizabeth from these sources. Knowledge of the reign of Queen Elizabeth was not called for but many candidates chose to use their own knowledge in this question. The majority of candidates reached a high level 2, being able to draw more than one valid inference about Elizabeth's prospects. At level 2 candidates were able typically to make comments based on her position in the painting (A) that referred to her marginal place in the scheme of things or 'pushed to one side' as one candidate maintained. It was stated perceptively by another candidate that Elizabeth's position outside the columns in the picture showed that literally and metaphorically, 'she was not in the main frame of the picture'. More able candidates emphasised the future dimension of these sources and it was put well and simply by a candidate who said, 'Elizabeth was going to have to prove herself as Queen'. There were a small minority of level 1 responses that simply paraphrased Source B.

### Question 1(b)

The majority of candidates showed comprehension and drew inferences about the different impression of Queen Elizabeth shown in the Sources C and D to the impression given in Sources A and B. Candidates found the sources easy to deal with in terms of their ideas and language. Candidates were able to reach level 3 through correctly identifying the contrasting impressions in the two sets of sources. Weaker answers often made a simple comparison

between the sources based on what they said or suggested about Elizabeth for this candidates gained reward at level 2. Many candidates assumed that the contrast between the sources was self-evident and so reference to Sources A and B were implicit.

Candidates made observations about the fact that in A/B the impression was one of weakness and inferiority whereas in C/D it was one of power and superiority. Commonly this was expressed in perceptive answers which compared the opulence and authority of the Queen (in C) with the diminutive 'maid-like' quality of Elizabeth (in A). Able candidates juxtaposed the negative prognosis of B with the laudatory assessment in D. There was a frequent observation in answers that D proved B wrong in the belief that 'women aren't really effective rulers'. Some examiners noted once again that many candidates mixed up how and why sources differed in their responses to this question, thus they began answering Question 1(c) during their answer to Question 1(b).

### **Question 1(c)**

In this question candidates had a clear target to explain why there were differences between Sources A/B and C/D. Candidates showed understanding of the skill being tested here and most used the differences between the authors or the time of writing to underpin their answers. The general level of thinking in answers to this question was good and led in the main to level 2 and level 3 marks.

Although this question elicited a full range of responses, at a basic level a number of candidates wanted to explain how the sources were different. A number of candidates largely ignored the provenance of the sources and merely restated how the impression of Elizabeth changed between A/B and C/D. This received level 1 marks (1-2). A common feature of answers at level 2 was to explain differences between the sources as founded on the change in times between the sources were produced. Answers focussed on what Queen Elizabeth had achieved in the defeat of the Spanish Armada but also on her religious settlement. Candidates were good at explaining the reasons why paintings like A and C were produced. The development of the time differences in detail and context usually brought level 3 marks to the candidate (6-7 marks). It was observed by many candidates that the both sources B and D were by authors who were might be enemies of or opposed to Queen Elizabeth; explanations of how who they were, might affect what they wrote, secured the level 3 marks. Level 4 answers usually involved an awareness of the longer time frame from Henry VIII's reign and the impact that the reigns of Queen Elizabeth's half-brother and half-sister would have had on expectations and her contemporaries' assessments of her achievement.

### **Question 1(d)**

Candidates found the source straightforward and it was easy for them to discuss its utility. Most candidates knew that a successful answer to this question involved both content and provenance. While in some previous years candidates have struggled with the latter, on this exam paper the fact that Source E was from 1693 gave most candidates the pointer they needed to make relevant, if simple, comments on its utility.

The vast majority could see that the image displayed the structure of government or a hierarchy; thus candidates were able to infer or explain that everything had its place and was in a simple relationship of power and authority. Candidates noted that in the picture Elizabeth seemed large and central and above the other members of Parliament. Many candidates offered answers to this question that were rewarded in level 2 (3-4 marks). Examiners noted that many candidates at this level based their answers around the content of the source. It was observed that some candidates seemed to lack an understanding of how the Parliaments of Elizabeth's

reign differed from those of today. In the main the better answers focussed on the 'relationship' aspect of the question and explained how stormy the relationship was between Elizabeth and Parliament and that this picture was idealised. Other good answers showed an understanding of how the relationship changed over time. Candidates were very knowledgeable about how frequently Queen Elizabeth called her parliaments and the matters she allowed or forbade them to discuss. Level 3 responses saw Source E as evidence from the seventeenth century when her relationship was idealised. Candidates were keen to select the words 'of glorious memory' in the caption as significant. Noting the date of the source 1693 a few candidates in their answers showed an awareness that this was after the English Civil War and consequent events. The content frequently referred to in these answers related to the elements of Elizabethan government that were not on display in Source E, such as the Lord Lieutenants and JPs. Candidates who used the content and commented on provenance were rewarded with level three marks (5-6). At level 4 there were some very sophisticated answers using the candidates' own knowledge to integrate content and provenance in a very impressive manner, for example in explaining how the concept of the 'great chain of being' fitted the source.

### **Question 1(e)**

There were some good answers to this question and it proved to be a good discriminator. The question was straightforward in its wording. The question did require some thought but then relatively brief, perceptive answers scored highly. Some candidates who confined their answers to a few simple points or general statements about Walsingham and his spy network were limited to level 1 marks. Another common feature of a level 1 response was a detailed narrative account of the misdemeanours, trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. The majority of candidates were able to identify and explain simply some points related to the Privy Council, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the religious settlement, the Roman Catholic plots against Queen Elizabeth, Walsingham and his spy network. Queen Elizabeth's diplomatic skills and use of the idea of her marriage gained frequent mention in this respect. These answers usually received 3 to 5 marks at level 2.

For candidates who were able to give factual support and details about several factors 6 to 8 marks were available. Responses at this level were able to explain in detail the part that widespread public support played, as well as the mixture of toleration and vagueness that sometimes characterised Elizabeth's policy. Detailed mention was also made of the work of the Privy Councillors, the propaganda and the nature of the religious settlement. England's defeat of the Armada was often referred to as a major turning point in ensuring that Elizabeth would not be overthrown. At level 4 candidates tended to evaluate different factors and give some weight to their relative importance.

## **Section B**

### **Question 2(a)**

Many candidates answered this question. It was answered well on the whole with many candidates scoring level 2 marks. Most candidates reached level 2 by showing knowledge of the Globe theatre, the names and themes of the plays written by Shakespeare and the enduring excellence of his work.

### **Question 2(b)**

This question drew many good answers from the majority of candidates who tackled it. Many candidates relied on Source F as a helpful starting point and identified the main reason for the popularity of the theatre, namely Queen Elizabeth's approval and acceptance of it. Although mentioned, candidates often lacked the specific detail that would have merited level 3 using this idea alone. A few candidates were able to expand the point to encompass the travelling bands of players who enjoyed patronage from important nobles. At level 3 the popularity of the theatre was often additionally attributed to the cheapness of the entrance fee, the attraction of the opportunity to socialise, and the entertaining and topical themes of the plays. Candidates who discussed and explained these aspects in detail were usually rewarded at level 3.

### **Question 2(c)**

This question was popular and discriminated well; the question did elicit some detailed and thoughtful answers. Many candidates knew a great deal about the theatre and this enabled them to access level 2 marks. It was less common to see answers from candidates who provided several factors that were simply expressed. Examiners frequently saw candidates who were well versed in the workings of the Elizabethan theatre resulting in high marks within level 2

The responses of candidates at level 3 were distinguished by their ability to appreciate a broader picture of the life and culture of Elizabethan England and explain aspects of it in detail. Some of the better answers focussed on the English Renaissance and the theatre's part in the period. At level 3 and beyond examiners were looking for the emergence of some evaluation of the relative importance of aspects of the period, of which the changes in the theatre were but one. The candidates who reached level 3 and 4 often mentioned, for example, the changes in Science and mathematics, the sense of discovery epitomised by the voyages of Elizabethan sailors, architecture, music, and literature. Many candidates found it difficult to go much beyond the theatre or to recognise that Elizabethans thought they were living in a Golden Age.

### **Question 3(a)**

This was a straightforward question. Candidates clearly knew some details about Robert Dudley and Francis Walsingham. With regard to Dudley, the most frequently referred to aspect of his life was the romantic connection with Queen Elizabeth and the demise of Dudley's wife. As for Walsingham, he was universally associated with Elizabeth's network of spies. At level 2 candidates identified that both men were prominent Puritans and Privy Councillors. They frequently went on to explain Dudley's business in the Netherlands and Walsingham's role in uncovering the Babington plot and the end of the life of Mary, Queen of Scots.

### **Question 3(b)**

Candidates were given a great deal of help by the picture provided. Source G was quite rightly 'mined' by many candidates who used it to comment that Queen Elizabeth punished Puritans or set an example to them and in this way she controlled them. Higher marks were gained by candidates who explained how she used her Archbishops to control any Puritan tendencies in the clergy and would let Parliament know what they could say, discuss and advise her on. When this failed she imprisoned and punished. A few candidates noted that the church settlement calmed the fears of as many 'mild' Puritans as it upset the feelings of the more hard-line ones. However some of the better answers suggested that she did not need to deal too harshly with the Puritans because, due to the presence of a range of Puritan opinion at court and in the Privy Council, they felt that their Puritan voice was being heard by the Queen. Indeed

it was interesting to see one candidate refer to Queen Elizabeth's policy as one of largely 'appeasement' to the Puritans rather than control.

### **Question 3(c)**

The question was straightforward and some candidates enjoyed the opportunity to display their understanding. This was less popular than Question 2(c) but, in the main, better done. At level 1 candidates just had a few simple points to make usually about what the Puritans believed. Most candidates had knowledge and understanding about what the Puritans wanted to achieve from Elizabeth's government. However candidates did not consider how serious a threat the Puritans' desired outcomes posed to Queen Elizabeth and her government. These answers were rewarded at level 2. Also at level 2 some candidates demonstrated awareness of the Presbyterian and Prophesying movements, and in the late 1580s and 1590s the more serious challenge of the Separatists. Whilst these groups of Puritans were identified by candidates, few answers proved convincingly that they understood how the nature of these groups posed a different threat. At level 3 the candidates began to address the 'seriousness' issue properly and directly. Candidates noted that the Puritans had some unattractive policies which would work against them and deter a broader support. Further they were unlikely or able to secure foreign support for their cause unlike English Roman Catholics. Candidates maintained that most Puritans challenged Queen Elizabeth on religion and not her government. Finally many responses noted that the Puritans were a diverse minority albeit with powerful connections. The better answers at level 3 and 4 made a strong argument based on the relative dangers posed by Roman Catholic opposition and the Puritan factions.

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