

Oxford Colleges History Aptitude Test: 2009 Marking Schedule

General Remarks

It is essential to the credibility of the History Aptitude Test (HAT) that, as far as possible, it is marked in a uniform way and to a common set of standards and expectations. The following guidelines have been devised in relation to the published specifications of the HAT. They have been approved by the History Admissions Sub-committee, and you need to follow them closely.

Do not award marks that are not whole numbers as ADSS can only accept whole numbers. Please do not deduct marks for spelling and grammatical errors unless they obstruct the expression of meaning. In reflection on the quality of candidates' expression, give preference to clarity over style. The use of high-quality vocabulary should not be rewarded for itself, but only when it assists the expression of relevant material.

Note that the essay exercise [1(c)] is not intended as a test of candidates' depth of knowledge, and must not be marked as such. Candidates have been advised that no special preparation or revision is required for the HAT, so it is unreasonable to expect them to write with the same depth and/or accuracy on points of detail that we would expect from prepared written work.

Please use the whole of the marking scale.

Marking Guidelines for Each Question

1(a)

This is a specific question intended to test a relatively precise range of skills:

- careful and critical reading
- precision in the handling of concepts
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

In particular, this exercise demands that the candidates pay attention to and think about the text. They should show understanding of the author's words without simply translating or transcribing them.

The author's main points concern two features of the Friant-Kern Canal:

- The fact that it has been precisely designed, engineered and built to deliver a calculated result
- That that result is related to economic productivity (rather than, for example, settlement)

To the author, this reflects a commercially-minded and systematic determination to exploit resources on the part of the people of the West.

For 8-10 marks, candidates will express these points concisely and in their own words – both the artificial/unnatural/ technological aspect of the Canal and the economic/exploitative aims underlying its creation. Answers may or may not spell out how these points bear on the author's view of the West: that is not precisely the question.

For 4-7 marks, candidates will express these two points in a less clear and concise fashion, or (less good) get one, but not the other; they may be unduly concerned with what the author's view of the West is. Answers in this category may extend into a third or (worse) fourth sentence, or use words from the passage (but not excessively, and in a way that helps to answer the question).

For 0-3 marks, candidates will have only a hazy idea, or no idea at all, what it is about the Friant-Kern Canal that helps to illuminate the society of the West in the author's view. They may draw heavily on the language of the text, or write at inordinate length. They may write about the author's view of the West rather than the two key features of Friant-Kern above.

1(b)

The criteria for this question are:

- careful and critical reading
- analytical approach
- precision in the handling of concepts
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

In particular, this question is intended to test the ability of candidates to read the passage as a whole and to construct (in their own words) an accurate account of a key feature of the author's argument. This time, the candidates do have to understand what the author's view of the society of the American West is, in order to grasp the role of nature in shaping that society. There is a central ambiguity in the author's argument: on the one hand, this society is profoundly conditioned by the challenges of the landscape and climate of the West, specifically the lack of water in lowland areas (and implicitly by the size of the terrain); on the other hand, there is very little that is natural about this society – it wishes to command nature, not to live within its constraints. This combination of circumstances makes for a society which is unnatural in a second sense – not communitarian, democratic and at one with nature – but competitive, exploitative, unequal. (The author overlooks the co-operative effort which must have fed in to the creation of the Canal, but would presumably see this as nothing more than a species of economic rationality.)

For 14-20 marks, the candidate will reproduce the central point made above, namely that nature forces the people of the West to take certain steps, such as building canals, but it otherwise plays only a limited role in shaping their society. The society of the West is determined, exploitative, technological, competitive – where it gets these qualities from is not clear, but it is not suggested that they come from nature; rather, they are imposed upon nature, and they are more important than nature in shaping Western society. The best answers will clearly capture both the significance of non-natural factors and yet the fact that nature plays a part, without significant error or embellishment. Weaker answers will put this double point across, but in a long-winded or inelegant way. Answers in this band will be almost entirely in the candidate's own words.

For 8-13 marks, the candidate will see that both nature and non-natural factors are involved in shaping Western society, but will fail to weigh them correctly against each other (candidates who think that nature is more important than a culture of determination and exploitation should get lower marks in this range; candidates who see no role for nature at all in the making of Western society should also get lower marks in the range). S/he will be less accurate than candidates scoring in the top band, and may make errors or introduce extraneous notions (provided that neither of these are so considerable as to raise serious questions about the candidate's understanding of the piece). Answers in this band may be less economically, deftly or clearly written than those in the top band; they may contain more of the original language of the passage, though still amount to much more than a series of quotations.

For 0-7 marks, the candidate may fail to grasp the argument of the passage (eg by finding nature determinative for Western society), may fail to answer the question (eg by saying nothing about nature as a shaping force in Western society), may fail to address the content of

the passage (eg by writing generally about the difficulty of growing cash-crops in dry areas), or may present nothing more than a series of quotations or near-quotations.

Answers must be concise. Deduct one mark for every line over 15, assuming that the candidate's handwriting is normal size (ten words per line).

1(c)

This question relates to the following criteria:

- analytical approach
- coherent argument;
- precision in the handling of concepts and selection of evidence;
- relevance to the question;
- historical imagination;
- originality;
- precision, clarity and facility of writing

It may be helpful to have in mind typical degree class boundaries in assessing this exercise, with the essential proviso that depth and accuracy of knowledge (as distinct from precision in its deployment) are not being tested. Essays placed in the top band will display clarity, cogency, relevance, conceptual power and – perhaps – originality. Essays falling in the larger middle band will answer the question soundly, but lack the analytical flexibility, the perceptiveness, or the argumentative coherence of a top-band answer. Essays in the bottom band will have qualities characteristic of a Lower Second or worse: a hazy or partial idea of the question; material of varying relevance; variable or poor coherence; variable or poor expression.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that this is a difficult question for almost all candidates. None of them is likely to have studied History from this perspective and almost all candidates will have to think on their feet. Markers should therefore be generous in three ways:

- ignoring the shortness of essays in awarding marks. Provided that an essay is a side-and-a-half long, it is acceptable.
- allowing marginal or off-beat examples unless they really cannot be said to constitute the physical or material environment. (Note that there is no requirement for the environment to be natural – we name settlement patterns and landscape as examples, for instance. This means that buildings, the layout of cities, churches or palaces, among other examples, ought to be valid.)
- accepting any reasonable version of 'character', so that a candidate who focuses on the outcome of a particular episode, or the pattern of events, or the identity of a group is considered to be answering the question.

At the same time, hard as the topic is, there are some basic requirements in the question which candidates should be expected to meet:

- One is that they must consider how important one set of determining factors is, which implies at least some comment on, or awareness of, other sets of determining factors.
- Another is that they are supposed to be discussing what is determinative, as opposed to incidental.

The assumption this year is that there will be a small number of really good answers, a significant number of fair answers, and a small number of really poor answers. The marking bands are thus as follows:

For 30-40 marks, candidates will write a relevant, well-organised answer, which analyses the role of the physical environment in one particular historical event/process/movement, weighing it up against other factors. Weaker answers in this range will pay little (but still some) attention to other factors, but will nonetheless provide an effective and coherent analysis of the environmental element. Answers will be clearly written and competently-argued, with material clearly marshalled to support an interpretation/argument.

For 20-29 marks, candidates will have made a serious effort to identify the role of the physical environment in the character of one particular event/process/movement. They may pay no attention to other factors at all (but still provide an account of how environmental factors produced a given result), or they may not offer much guidance on the weighting of environmental and non-environmental factors (but they will at least separate these). Towards the bottom of the range, there may be some slippage away from the 'physical' environment, but a candidate must have started with a reasonably good sense of this in order to be in this band. Answers in this band may be less clearly-written or less well-organised than those in the top band, but they must still broadly answer the question.

For 10-19 marks, candidates may only have a limited sense of 'physical' environment, drawing indiscriminately on factors which we would consider physical and others – the economy (abstractly conceived), the political structure, culture – which we would not. They may not restrict themselves to one particular episode, or do much to discriminate between environmental and other factors (the weakest answers in this range will just be a list of factors, but will include some more or less plausible attempt at the 'physical environment'). Essays in this category may be poorly-adapted prepared essays written for another purpose, but just about fitting this one; they may be poorly-written and/or poorly-argued (including highly descriptive) while still making a reasonable attempt at the question. Reasonable essays which are shorter than 1.5 sides may belong in this category.

For 0-9 marks, candidates will have entirely failed to consider the role of the physical environment in shaping history. They may have completely failed to understand what the physical environment is, or been unable to think of an example; they may have written little or nothing. Better answers in this range will have made fleeting nods towards the question (e.g. by saying that the distance of the North from London was a factor in its religious conservatism and therefore a cause of the Pilgrimage of Grace); worse ones will treat as 'physical environment' frameworks which are essentially cultural or political or economic (e.g. German political culture as a fundamental cause of Hitler, e.g. the agrarian nature of the American South as a cause of attachment to slavery [devoid of any consideration of why the South was like that]). Poor essays which are shorter than 1.5 sides may belong in this category.

Unusual ingenuity in adapting a topic to the demands of the question may be rewarded by an additional 3-5 points.

2. The question relates to the following criteria

- Careful and critical reading
- Historical imagination
- Originality
- Precision, clarity and facility of writing

Note that candidates are NOT expected to write a cogent or structured piece of writing about the source, though they are expected to express themselves clearly and accurately.

A number of points in answer to the questions can be derived from this document.

- Thomas takes it for granted that God works miracles, and that he does so pre-eminently at certain sites. Why God chooses these sites is less clear: is it because of the naturalism and beauty of the image, or because of the sculptor's devout approach to the task of creating the crucifix? Is it because of the location of the image in a monastic church, or is it because of the devotion of those who come to it?
- Thomas regards access to the miracle-working crucifix as a public benefit. But such access has ancillary advantages: it will increase the religious devotion of the community, and it will be financially advantageous to the monastery.
- These latter two advantages lead the monks to agree to permit access to the image to women. But this egalitarian motive comes with a good deal of gendered suspicion. The women must be of good repute, and are permitted access only to buildings and at times when they will not disturb the monks.
- Issues of gender are, however, inflected by social status. Greater access, though still limited, is permitted to those upper strata women who are either associated with the patrons of the monastery or are themselves patrons.
- But the scheme fails. Women flock to the image, but their devotion is questionable, and the monastery is the loser by its admission of women, because they expect the monks to provide hospitality. Thomas appears to imply that the measure of devotion of the women who visit in such numbers is the limited extent of the gifts that they offer.

For 21-30 marks, candidates will show that they have read the text closely, accurately and thoughtfully, and they are correspondingly able to say something about a number of the issues raised above. Their imagination will be engaged by a world in which women are members of the christian community, yet are excluded from active participation in all its manifestations, even women of higher status. They will be intrigued by the tone of Thomas's remarks. He believes in miraculous interventions, and that these are encouraged by the holiness of the artist or the devotion of the faithful. Yet he is frank in his acceptance of status as a determinant of access to the sacred, and that such access should redound to the profit of the monastery. And there is a frankly misogynistic tenor to that which he writes. The final sentence, which appears to equate devotion with giving in a very crude way might be particularly analysed. And can they make anything of the artist's model, or the obligation to provide hospitality? (Speculations – for example, of the reasons why women 'flock' to the crucifix – are appropriate provided they are reasonable ones to make from this extract).

For 12-20 marks candidates will have made some sense of the text and touched on some of the issues raised by it, but their judgements and speculations, though relevant, may be less penetrating, less clearly expressed, or less sustainable from the text. In particular, they may

not make enough of the tone and inflection of the writer. Weaker answers in this category may invoke external knowledge at the expense of a close engagement with the passage.

For 0-12 marks, candidates will more or less have failed to interpret the text, writing comments that simply reproduce what is in it, or draw substantially upon extraneous material at the expense of proper engagement with the passage. Answers in this category may be short, or poorly expressed.