

**AS LEVEL**  
*Candidate Style Answers*

# HISTORY A

H105  
For first teaching in 2015

## Unit 2 Part II Interpretation Question

Version 1



## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Y231 – Interpretation</b>	<b>4</b>
High level answer	4
Medium level answer	5
<b>Y232 – Charlemagne Interpretation</b>	<b>6</b>
High level answer	6
Medium level answer	7
<b>Y233 – Interpretation</b>	<b>8</b>
High level answer	8
Medium level answer	9
<b>Y234 – Genghis Khan and the Explosion from the Steppes c.1167–1405.</b>	<b>10</b>
High level answer	10
Medium level answer	11
<b>Y235 – Exploration</b>	<b>12</b>
High level answer	12
Medium level answer	13
<b>Y236 – Spain 1469–1556</b>	<b>14</b>
High level answer	14
Medium level answer	15
<b>Y237 – The German Reformation and the rule of Charles V 1500–1559</b>	<b>16</b>
High level answer	16
Medium level answer	17
<b>Y238 – Philip II 1556–1598</b>	<b>18</b>
High level answer	18
Medium level answer	19

## Introduction

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCE History A specification and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by senior OCR examiners, with the support of the Subject Specialist, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a **'HIGH LEVEL'** or **'MEDIUM LEVEL'** response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

## Y231 – Interpretation

*'The rapid growth of trade in Mecca in the late 6th and early 7th centuries was the ultimate cause of the rise of Islam.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The interpretation puts forward the view that the growth of trade in Mecca was the crucial factor in the rise of Islam. This interpretation does not argue that there were not other factors but it does suggest that trade was ultimately responsible for the growth of Islam in the late 6th and early 7th centuries. The interpretation also suggests that among a possible range of economic factors it was trade and the role of Mecca that was crucial, thus making the interpretation very specific when explaining a prime reason for the growth. Other interpretations have suggested that other economic factors, or social, political, religious and military factors have played crucial roles with different interpretations putting emphasis on different factors.

There is much to support this view because it should be remembered that a major reason for the growth of Mecca was trade and this was aided by its geographical positioning which allowed it to take advantage of links with the Sasanian and Byzantine empires. The importance of trade is further reinforced because the area was important for because of gold and silver mines and it was located on trade routes. The city had become what has been called the 'Meccan commonwealth' and this allowed it to dominate and run a commercial and diplomatic network which saw caravans organized in Mecca travel to Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Thus by the time of Muhammad it was the leading commercial organization in the north and west of Arabia. However, the interpretation ignores the fact that Mecca was also identified with a religious shrine or sanctuary and therefore to separate religion and trade is rather surprising.

However, the interpretation ignores the fact that ultimately Islam was a religious message and was, at least initially, very dependent upon Muhammad and his religious message and therefore any explanation for the rise of Islam cannot ignore that. It is also important to note that the regions that initially adopted Islam were accustomed to monotheistic religions and that may explain why they were willing to adopt Islam as it fitted in with their traditional religious outlook. However, it is also important to consider the role of military factors, which the interpretation ignores. It was, after all, military victories that helped ensure the spread of Islam as other neighbouring areas were subdued through battle, although some were persuaded to convert through diplomatic initiatives. Moreover, the interpretation emphasises the role of Mecca and ignores the importance of Medina and Muhammad's time there and the influence that had.

### Examiner commentary

- The response shows a clear understanding of the interpretation and picks up on the main line of argument it is putting forward, with some explanation of 'ultimate'.
- The response is aware of how the interpretation fits into the wider debate about the reasons for the rise of Islam.
- The response shows some detailed knowledge, particularly about developments in trade, but is also able to link the material directly to the interpretation.
- Own knowledge is directly linked to the interpretation, allowing evaluation, and is not simply imparted.
- The response is aware of a range of issues that were important in the rise of Islam.

### Medium level answer

The interpretation was written by F Robinson in 1988 in History Today. In this interpretation the writer says that 'the rapid growth of trade in Mecca' was 'the ultimate cause' of the rise of Islam. The interpretation is stressing the role of trade in the rise of Islam, but it does not say that other factors did not play a role in the rise, simply that trade was the most important cause. The interpretation does not say what the other causes, even if they were less important were and ignores other economic factors and the importance of fighting in the spread of Islam or the role of Muhammad and his religious ideas.

Mecca was important for trade and had grown in this period. It had developed a control over some of the caravan routes and there had been trade with the neighbouring empires. Mecca relied heavily on trade and had to import many of its goods as the area was not suitable for farming due to the climate and land. Mecca was also important because it had a religious shrine and this may also help it to become important. It became the most important trading centre in the region during this time and this may have helped in the rise of Islam as it dominated the area and could impose its views.

Muhammad also started out in Mecca before he was forced to Medina. He had received a series of revelations at Mecca and that was important in the rise of Islam, but he then went to Medina in 622 where the Constitution of Medina was issued. Muhammad's message was religious and had nothing to do with trade or economic factors. The military victories were also important in the spread of Islam as they helped spread it to other areas that they were able to conquer and could impose the religion there. The conquered areas had little choice but to accept Islam so that was important. Some of the regions may have thought it was better to accept the religion than try and fight and be beaten. It was also easier to dominate the area as the Byzantine Empire and the Persian had collapsed which meant that opposition was much weaker and Islam appealed to some of these people.

### Examiner commentary

- There is a sound understanding of the interpretation and its emphasis on 'ultimate', but is aware also that other factors could play a role.
- There is sound knowledge of trading and some economic developments in the region, but the material is imparted and not directly linked to the interpretation to show in what ways it could support the given view.
- The response is aware that there were other factors, but as with trade does not directly link the material to the interpretation but imparts the knowledge.
- Analysis and evaluation are limited and it is often implied.

## Y232 – Charlemagne Interpretation

*'Charlemagne's own cultural aim was fairly simple: increased rates of literacy which would make for better government.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The interpretation is part of the wider debate that surrounds the motives behind the cultural developments that took place during Charlemagne's reign, which are often referred to as a Renaissance. This interpretation is putting forward the view that for Charlemagne the aim was to raise the literacy lands within his realm so that he had better administrators who could run and manage the Empire. The interpretation is also putting forward the view that Charlemagne was involved in these cultural developments. This interpretation is also suggesting that his motives were solely secular, whereas others have suggested that the motives were either religious or a mixture of the two. There are also some interpretations that argue that the revival of learning that took place was for its own sake or was encouraged by Charlemagne because it would enhance his reputation.

There is certainly some truth that the revival in learning was to produce 'better government' as by reviving learning Charlemagne would have available better administrators who could help to govern a realm that was expanding and by having educated administrators it would ensure that the state was run more efficiently and that the royal will was implemented. This was also needed because, according to the contemporary Monk of St Gall 'the pursuit of learning had been almost forgotten throughout the realm' and the lack of court scribes who could write and understand Latin was crucial so that they could act as clerks. Obviously by reviving learning among the clergy it would provide him with not only educated administrators, but also it would be a relatively cheap process and reduce the costs as cathedral and monastic schools were available and it would be the church that funded such schools and paid the priests. This desire to improve the administration is further reinforced by Charlemagne's desire to see an educated class among the lay nobility, in the Palace School, for example, who would also be able to help with administration.

However, the interpretation does not take account of other motives that may have influenced both Charlemagne and the cultural developments of the period. It is undoubtedly true that lay culture was almost dead, but monastic and cathedral schools were available. Charlemagne may have wanted to see the revival of learning take place as it would enhance his reputation, but also because he simply thought that people should be educated for its own sake or whether he wanted to see a general improvement in society. Although there was some desire to improve lay education, much of the focus was on the revival of learning among the clergy and therefore the motive might have been to create a consciously Christian state, which the interpretation does not consider, and not simply to improve administration.

### Examiner commentary

- There is a very good understanding of the debate and how the given interpretation fits into the wider debate about the motives for the cultural developments.
- The interpretation is clearly evaluate and detailed own knowledge is applied to the interpretation, particularly in support of it.
- The response does evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of the interpretation.

### Medium level answer

Williams, in his book *Emperor of the West* written in 2010 says that Charlemagne's cultural aim was to increase literacy rates so that his government could be improved. Other interpretations have offered different views as to why he was concerned to improve literacy rates and many have seen the improvement as a Renaissance in learning, whilst others have questioned that view. According to Williams raising learning to improve government was the clear aim of Charlemagne and there is much to support and challenge that view. In the next paragraph I will show what there is to support the interpretation and then what there is that can challenge it.

The rise in rates of reading and writing would mean that there were more people available to run the government. This was important because Charlemagne had conquered more land and expanded his empire and therefore he needed more people who were able to act as administrators. The church provided many of these people through their schools but also some lay nobility were educated and could therefore help in running the state. Without having these people the government would not have been as good and so the interpretation is right to say it would have been important to Charlemagne.

There were other reasons for cultural developments during this period. The cultural achievements under Charlemagne would help to increase his reputation, he seemed concerned about this as he was also crowned Emperor by the Pope in 800 and therefore his reputation seems to be an important issue for him. He would appear to be a good ruler and with education doing well the number of clergy would increase which would also be good and popular with the Pope and help make his state appear to be very religious which may have been one of his aims. Therefore religion and improving his reputation were important to him. When people could read and write Charlemagne would also have people available who could carry out his wishes, which would be helpful now that the Empire had grown considerably. There were therefore many reasons why he wanted culture to develop.

### Examiner commentary

- There is some understanding of the debate about cultural developments under Charlemagne
- The supporting knowledge is very general and is not closely linked to the interpretation in order to evaluate it, but evaluation and analysis is rather implied.
- Analysis is limited and there is much description, with little evidence of evaluative terminology.
- There is no precise reference to any changes that were implemented or any developments that did take place.

## Y233 – Interpretation

*'It was the idea of liberating the Christians of the Levant and the city of Jerusalem that stirred the hearts and minds of those that planned the expedition [the First Crusade] and those who took the cross.'*

Jonathan Phillips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, 2002

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The interpretation puts forward the view that freeing the Christians in the Levant and the Holy City of Jerusalem from Muslim rule was the most important reason for the First Crusade, for both those who planned it and those who took part, as it argues that this 'stirred the hearts and minds'. It suggests that religious reasons were therefore the most important motive of those involved in the First Crusade. This view contrasts with other interpretations that have stressed either political, social or economic motives as being the most important reason. These views stress less altruistic reasons and look less at the spiritual and religious motives behind the First Crusade and instead emphasise the materialistic gains that could be made by partaking in the movement.

It is true that religion and the desire to free the Christians from Muslim rule was important. Religious motives were important to many who took part and the Crusade took place during a very religious age and many people were concerned that Jerusalem was controlled by Muslims who had prevented Christians from visiting the holy sites there and that some Christians had been murdered by Muslims. This was an important factor and was certainly played on by Urban in his speech at Clermont. The interpretation is also correct to stress the importance attached to Jerusalem by Christians because of the many religious sites there associated with Christ's death and many wanted these under Christian control and therefore were motivated to take part because of this. The concept of crusade and the granting of the remission of sins for those taking part would also have been very important to many participants as they were terrified of the prospect of going to hell, which would have seemed very real to them and therefore the opportunity to obtain remission for past and future sins would have been a great motivator. This would have been particularly true for many members of the knightly class who had been involved in battles with fellow Christians in Europe and therefore the interpretation is right to suggest that this opportunity might have inspired many to take part. The interpretation may also be correct to stress the importance of religion as a factor because during this period pilgrimages had become very popular and many would have seen this as a pilgrimage to the most important Christian centre, but which also provided the opportunity to free fellow Christians in the Near east from Muslim rule. They would therefore have seen it as their religious duty to partake in such a venture, but would also have viewed the killing of Muslims as justifiable. Moreover, the interpretation is correct to stress the religious nature of the Crusading movement as many people left land in the hands of the Church whilst they were away on crusades as has been shown in the study of numerous charters drawn up by those who went on the Crusades, suggesting that the interpretation is correct to stress the religious element.

However, the interpretation ignores the political and economic factors that may have influenced both the Papacy, in calling for the Crusade, and those who responded to Urban's call. The interpretation does not place the Crusade in the context of the appeal from the Emperor, Alexius Comnenus, in Byzantium to the Pope for help protecting the Byzantine Empire against the Turks following his defeat at Manzikert. It also ignores the fact that Pope could exploit this appeal to strengthen his own position both, following the schism with the Eastern Church in 1054, and assert his authority over the eastern Church. There were also possible political benefits for some of the leaders who took part, which are not considered, as they could acquire land in the east and establish their own settlements, which may have appealed to those who had not inherited land in Europe due to primogeniture. Linked closely to this were the economic benefits that might be gained, which the interpretation does not consider. The importance of this as a factor is given further credence by the number of stories that were circulating in the west that the area was the 'land of milk and honey' and this might have also motivated both knights and others to go as they saw the chance to improve their economic position. Even if they did not acquire estates some also saw the chance to gain booty and therefore economic factors, which are not discussed in the interpretation were important for many.



## Examiner commentary

- The Interpretation is placed in the wider context of the debate about the motives of those who called the Crusade and those who went on them.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the Interpretation are considered.
- The supporting knowledge is detailed and accurate.
- The Interpretation is evaluated and there are clear examples of linking own knowledge to the actual Interpretation to do this.

### Medium level answer

This interpretation was written by Jonathan Philipps in 2002. In it he suggests that it was the desire of those who called the crusade and those who went on it to free the Christians in the Levant and the Holy City of Jerusalem from Muslim rule, describing how it had 'stirred the hearts and minds' of people. Historians have disagreed about the motives of those who called for the crusade and those who went on it. Whilst this interpretation by Phillipps stresses the religious element of the Crusade other historians have argued that social, political and economic factors were more the most important factor in the launching of the crusade and the reasons why people responded to the Pope's call. This can be seen in the establishment of the Crusader Kingdoms which followed the First crusade and show that some people wanted land and to establish kingdoms, but others settled there, suggesting they were more concerned with making gains from the crusade. This was seen with the example of men such as Bohemond who established the Kingdom of Antioch. Even the Pope may have hoped that if the crusade was successful it would make his power greater and therefore his motives may not have been just religious.

Phillips mentions the liberation of Christians as the main motive of those who called and went on the Crusade. This was very a religious age and people went on pilgrimages to religious sites and as Jerusalem was the holy city for Christians people would go on pilgrimages there and so his view may be right. The Muslims had captured Jerusalem and were not treating Christians very well with stories of large numbers being killed and therefore Phillipps may well be right. The Pope had also offered the remission from sins for people who went on the Crusade and this would encourage people to take part and may explain why so many went on the First Crusade.

However, there is another view which says that political and economic factors were the reason for the Crusade and why people went on it. Christendom had split between the East and West and the Pope may have hoped that the Crusade would help him reunite it. He might therefore increase his power. He was also responding to a request from the Emperor who wanted help fighting the Turks having been beaten by them. He feared that the Turks might continue their advance and threaten Byzantium.

There were many knights and ordinary people who responded to the Pope's call for a Crusade. Some of them hoped to gain land or wealth, having heard that the Levant and the area around Jerusalem was very wealthy so that might have encouraged them to go. They might have hoped to gain land, perhaps as a knight to rule over, or as a peasant to farm, particularly if they did not own land in Europe. The interpretation does not consider these interpretations and focuses on just religion, which might just be one of the causes as this shows there were other motives.

## Examiner commentary

- There is some explanation of the Interpretation, although in places it is little more than a summary or re-written in the candidate's own words.
- There is some own knowledge linked to the Interpretation to show the strength and weaknesses, but the knowledge is often generalized and described, whilst the link to the Interpretation is quite weak.
- In places the answer tends to describe the reasons and motives why people went on Crusades rather than use that knowledge to evaluate the Interpretation.
- The evaluation is not developed, but there is some basic attempt.

## Y234 – Genghis Khan and the Explosion from the Steppes c.1167–1405

*'Mongol military superiority was due to their overwhelming numbers.'*

Per Inge Oestman, *The Mongol Military Might*, 2002

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The Interpretation puts forward the view that the military success of the Mongols was due to the size of the armies that they were able to raise, which according to the quotation were obviously far superior to those of their enemy, hence the use of the word 'overwhelming.' It suggests that it was the sheer size of their forces, rather than other factors that enabled them to dominate such large tracts of land and establish such a large empire. This contrasts with other interpretations that have placed the emphasis on Mongol tactics in bringing about victories, the leadership of Genghis Khan in particular and the idea of Heaven's Order and Heaven's Will which drove the armies on and inspired them when they were under pressure and the weakness of many of the enemies they encountered in both Asia and Europe.

It is true that in many instances the sheer size of the Mongol armies was important and might be considered to be more important than other military factors. This was important because in many incursions and battles the size of the Mongol force was far greater than those of their opponents and they had been able to increase the size of their force by using vassals from conquered territories who were willing to fight for them in order to be rewarded. Pressure was put on the conquered lands to supply men and this helped to swell the size of the force and outnumber the enemy. The interpretation is right to stress this as by 1211 they were able to raise a force that numbered over 100,000 warriors and 300,000 horses, the sheer scale of which, along with an elite bodyguard of 10,000 men, was sufficient to allow victories as far apart as Hungary and Baghdad.

However, the interpretation does not consider other important military factors and is limited because there were some instances where the Mongol army was outnumbered and therefore success must have been due to other military factors, such as the belief in Heaven's destiny which inspired them. The interpretation ignores issues such as the skill of the Mongol horsemen and the mounted archers who moved at speed and were able to terrorise the enemy. The Mongols also used terror and psychological warfare to win battles, with threats of slaughter if the enemy did not surrender or the reduction of outlying areas, which made the task of conquest that much easier. The Interpretation also focuses on just one element of military factors and does not consider other non-military issues such as the weakness of many of the neighbouring states which had divided or weak leadership and allowed the initial Mongol successes to be achieved relatively easily. This was exploited by the skill of Genghis, who was adaptable and willing to learn from other systems to develop his Empire, as was seen by his willingness to employ a Chinese prince to establish a system of taxation and administration which undoubtedly helped bring about the conquest of China. Not only this, but the interpretation does not consider Genghis' character and determination to succeed and his vision of the Empire which inspired him.

### Examiner commentary

- The Interpretation is placed in the wider debate about the reasons for Mongol success and the size of the Empire that was established.
- The response considers both the strengths and weaknesses of the interpretation.
- The supporting knowledge is sound, although it would benefit from a little more precise detail, as is seen at the end with the example of the Chinese prince.
- The Interpretation is evaluated and own knowledge is linked to the Interpretation to do this.

### Medium level answer

The Interpretation was written by Per Inge Oestman in 2002. He puts forward the view that the military success of the Mongols, which brought about the establishment of their very large kingdom was due to the size of the armies that they were able to raise. He suggests that these forces were 'overwhelming' and it was this that brought them military 'superiority', success and victories. Not all historians who have studied the Mongols would agree with this view. Some would argue that there were other factors that brought about their military superiority. They might argue that the success was due to the weakness of their opponents which made it much easier for them to win, other have suggested that the Mongol tactics are what won them battles, whilst others have suggested that the leadership of Genghis Khan was crucial.

Oestman mentions overwhelming numbers in his interpretation. The Mongol forces were massive. They used people from the lands they conquered to fight in their armies and this helped to make them even bigger as demands were put on these conquered areas to supply men, but there were also the promises of rewards if they fought for their new masters. Not only were the forces large but each man had several horses which provided both remounts and meat. The advance was possible as well because much of the land over which travelled was grass and this provided food for the horses so they could keep moving. The availability of grass meant that they could large numbers with them as there was enough food to feed the large number of horses which were needed for the size of the force.

However, there is another view which puts greater emphasis on other military factors. The Mongol horsemen were very skilled, they had archers who could ride at speed and fire arrows which had a terrifying impact on their enemies. This was part of a policy of terror which they used, with areas laid to waste as a warning to those who did not surrender. It was not just the numbers that were important as they were at times outnumbered and therefore factors such as the weakness of the enemy or the leadership of Genghis were important. The neighbouring areas from which the Mongols began their conquests were weak and offered little resistance to the advance, which helped in the early conquests, as did the belief that they were destined to conquer large areas and this inspired them to victories.

## Examiner commentary

- There is some explanation of the Interpretation, although in places it is little more than a summary in the candidate's own words.
- There is some own knowledge linked to the Interpretation to show the strength of the interpretation, but the knowledge is often described and the link to the Interpretation is quite weak, particularly in dealing with the weakness of the interpretation.
- In places the answer tends to describe what the Mongol armies did rather than use that knowledge to evaluate the Interpretation.
- The evaluation is not developed, but there is some basic attempt.

## Y235 – Exploration

*'The death obsessed and inward-looking Aztec civilization sowed the seeds of its own destruction.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The collapse of the Aztec empire in the sixteenth century is the centre of the debate. The debate concerns the extent to which it was Aztec weaknesses, which is the focus of the interpretation in this question, or whether it was due to strength or even luck of the Spanish Conquistadors, led by Cortes who were able to defeat and conquer them. The interpretation puts forward a very negative view of the collapse of the Aztec Empire in which the seeds of its collapse are identified as being 'death-obsessed' and 'inward-looking.' However, the interpretation does note that these are the 'seeds' and are not claimed to be the only cause of its collapse.

The Interpretation is valid in so far as the Aztec system and culture did help to bring about their demise against the Spaniards. The focus on 'death-obsessed' has some validity as the Aztec belief system did focus on the ritual sacrifice of prisoners, and this resulted in some tribute states supporting the Spanish forces which made their conquest that much easier, given the Spanish lack of numbers. The culture of the Aztecs was inward-looking and the interpretation is correct to suggest that this played a role in their defeat. The Aztecs believed in fate and therefore their initial assumption was that the Spanish invaders were gods and this led to a slow reaction from them, allowing the Spaniards to establish a foothold in the Empire, from which it was impossible for the Aztecs to recover. Moreover, their culture and attitude towards warfare, which was very ritualistic made it impossible for them to be able to challenge the military might of the Spanish. This inward-looking nature was also seen in their attitude towards their leader Montezuma, in whom power was centralized, which meant that following his capture the state lacked leadership and was unable to organize itself to resist the Spanish. It is therefore true to suggest that Aztec weaknesses played at least some role in their defeat.

However, the interpretation does not consider the strength or nature of the force they were facing. It ignores the determination and ruthless leadership qualities of Cortes, which did much to drive his men on. It also fails to consider the military technology and weaponry available to the Spaniards, which made Aztec resistance much more difficult. This was particularly true with their use of firearms and horses which gave them a distinct advantage. The Interpretation focuses on the 'inward-looking' nature of Aztec culture and this could be linked to their attitude towards subject peoples and this was important as the Spaniards were able to develop alliances with them which helped boost the size of the Spanish force. However, the interpretation ignores the luck that Cortes had, or rather the misfortune for the Aztecs, in terms of the diseases that the Spaniards brought with them that did much to weaken the Aztecs and make resistance to the invaders even more difficult. Therefore the interpretation certainly puts forward a partial view and helps to explain why it was easier for the Spaniards but there are other factors as well.

### Examiner commentary

- There is a very good understanding of the Interpretation and its meaning.
- The response does discuss the complexities of the Interpretation and explains the key phrases 'death-obsessed' and 'inward-looking.'
- The interpretation is analysed and evaluated with knowledge used and not simply imparted.
- The depth of knowledge is good, accurate and relevant to the question.
- The response is able to link other interpretations to the one provided to give a balance to the response.

### Medium level answer

Stanley wrote his interpretation in 2011. He puts forward the argument that the Aztecs were responsible for their defeat and does not credit the Spaniards with any role in their victory. He says that the Aztec defeat was the result of their obsession with death and because they were inward-looking. He does not say anything about the Spanish forces they faced, the leadership of Cortes or the diseases that they brought with them which killed large numbers of Aztecs and therefore made it more difficult for them to resist.

The Aztecs believed that Cortes and his forces were gods and did not at first resist them and this must have made it much easier for the Spaniards to conquer them. The Spanish were able to capture the Aztec ruler Montezuma and once this happened there was far less resistance as the Aztecs did not have anyone else who was able to lead them. The Aztecs had also been harsh in their treatment of tribute states and the subject peoples of the Aztecs. This meant that these people were willing to support the Spanish, which also made it much easier for them to conquer the Aztecs. The Aztecs were also unable to cope with the Spanish war machine and this meant that they were easily defeated, although some say resistance did go on.

Cortes was important in defeating the Aztecs, the interpretation does not mention him. He gave the Spanish forces leadership and his ruthless nature drove them on. He got alliances with tribute states and subject peoples which helped his army as did the weapons he had available, particularly guns and horses which frightened the Aztecs who were not used to them. The Aztecs were also weakened by the diseases that the Spanish brought with them. These diseases killed many and weakened the Aztec population which made it much harder for them to resist the Spanish. Some say that the Aztecs were not easily defeated and that they continued to resist the Spanish and did not see Cortes and his soldiers as gods therefore fought from the very start, this does not agree with the interpretation.

### Examiner commentary

- There is a limited understanding of the Interpretation, the key phrases are not clearly explained and only considered in passing.
- The Aztec weaknesses are described and the knowledge is not used to evaluate the interpretation, but is simply imparted.
- Much of the answer is descriptive and there is only limited analysis – the last point could have been picked up and developed as it challenges the given interpretation.

## Y236 – Spain 1469–1556

*'There is little evidence that either of the Catholic Monarchs aspired to achieve a unitary state. They never used the title 'King of Spain' and they recognized the limits of their power outside their own kingdom.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations you have studied.

### High level answer

This interpretation puts forward the view that under the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, Spain was not a united country and suggests that Aragon and Castile retained their independence. It also suggests that both monarchs were aware of this and that their powers were limited outside their own states. Some interpretations have developed this view and argued that it was only under the rule of Charles I, who succeeded Ferdinand in 1516 that Spain became united as he was ruler of both Castile and Aragon. However, other interpretations suggest that Spain was united under the two monarchs, although the degree of unity is also a matter of debate, with some interpretation arguing that there was unity in areas of government, whilst others have argued that it was only in areas such as religion, where a common Catholic faith united the country.

The interpretation is correct to suggest that there is little evidence to support the view that either monarch 'aspired' to achieve a unitary state. This is made clear by the fact that Isabella could not inherit Aragon and therefore she prevented Ferdinand from inheriting Castile and bequeathed her kingdom to Joanna and her son, Charles. Ferdinand also, in his will of 1512, granted Aragon to Ferdinand, the younger brother of Charles and only changed his mind in 1516. This division was also reflected in the administration of Naples and the New World, with Naples under Aragon and the New World under Castile. Even trade with the New World was granted solely to Castile, further reinforcing the view in the interpretation that unity was not contemplated. It would therefore be correct to suggest that the only unity was personal and brought about by the marriage. Neither Ferdinand nor Isabella aimed to unite the country, as seen on the death of Isabella. The lack of unity was also reinforced by different the customs and traditions of the kingdoms. The representative of the estates in Aragon particularly resented outside interference, further reinforcing the view about the lack of unity.

However, the interpretation ignores elements of unity that were present. This was at both a personal level and institutional level. The interpretation does not take account of the personal unity seen in the intertwining of their own symbols or in the fighting to bring Granada under Spanish rule. However, perhaps the clearest challenge to the interpretation is in religion, not only did the monarchs promote Catholicism, but the Inquisition was a common institution in the two kingdoms and it was subject to the Castilian Suprema. However, this view could be challenged as Ferdinand was more pragmatic in his attitude and less willing to persecute non-Catholics than Isabella. Despite this limitation, there were signs that by 1516 unity was close and the view ignores the growing administrative developments that were centered on Castile and the growing permanence of the royal court at Valladolid, where Ferdinand spent much of his last years and becoming an administrative centre.

### Examiner commentary

- The response is aware of the wider debate about the degree of unity in Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella and goes on to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of the interpretation.
- It analyses both elements and uses own knowledge to evaluate the view.
- The supporting knowledge is very detailed and this makes the argument and evaluation convincing.
- There are also some subtle challenges to the view under discussion, where the religious unity is debated.
- A very thorough response.

### Medium level answer

The interpretation was written by Geoff Woodward in 1997. He says that there is little evidence that the monarchs wanted Spain to be united and that they did not consider themselves to be Kings of Spain as they never used the title. He also says that their powers were limited outside their own kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Historians have disagreed over whether Spain was unified during the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella. Some other interpretations have said that Spain was unified by the Catholic monarchs, but others have said that unity took place only when Charles I came to the throne after the death of Ferdinand. There are some interpretations that have considered different elements of the unity and focused on religion, politics or economics and have argued that Spain was united in some areas but not others. There is a great deal of debate about the topic.

Woodward mentions that there was a lack of desire from the two monarchs to achieve unity. It was their marriage that brought unity to Spain and even the marriage had been opposed by Isabella's father and had therefore taken place in secret. The two kingdoms were proud of their independence and traditions and wanted to preserve them and the functioning of the institutions of the two kingdoms was different. There were economic barriers between the two countries. When Isabella died the crown passed to Joanna, not Ferdinand and it was only after her death that Ferdinand took control. In foreign policy the two countries had different interests, with Aragon in Italy and Castile in the New World.

Woodward does not mention religion. The two kingdoms fought against the Moors in Granada and conquered it in 1492. They were also keen to make Catholicism the sole religion in the peninsula and introduced the Inquisition. The Inquisition was to identify and remove those who were not following Catholicism. They did do much to bring about unity and so by the end of their reigns Spain was more united as more lands, such as Granada were under their rule. They also intertwined their symbols and helped each other as Ferdinand helped, at the start of their marriage to prevent the defeat of Isabella and ensure that she kept her throne. They often travelled about together and were in each other's lands.

### Examiner commentary

- The response is aware of the different views and hints at the debate, but tends to describe the views.
- The knowledge, which is quite sound is not linked closely to the interpretation and is imparted.
- If it had been linked and used to evaluate the interpretation it would have been a much stronger response.
- The knowledge is imparted and although quite sound would benefit from being a little more precise in places.
- There needs to be more analysis if the response is to reach the higher levels.

## Y237 – The German Reformation and the rule of Charles V 1500–1559

*'Because the demand for the Reformation found its most ready response in the towns, it has been said that the reformation was an 'urban event'.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

This interpretation puts forward the view that most important reason for the Reformation were the urban areas within the Holy Roman Empire, that is the imperial cities and towns. It argues that it is within these centres that the message of the reformers found the 'most ready' response due to a variety of reasons including religious, social, political and economic factors. The interpretation in stressing 'most ready' response does not rule out the role played by other factors in the spread, but it does see the towns as being the most important. However, other interpretations argue that the reformation was not simply dominated by the towns and that the reformation found a 'ready' response in other areas, with widespread support for the religious changes brought about by the reformation both within the countryside and from the princes who rule the numerous states that made up the Holy Roman Empire.

The interpretation rightly stresses the role played by urban centres as in many instances city magistrates and authorities adopted Luther's message to avoid social protest, as in Strasbourg, but it also gave the authorities the opportunity to increase their own power and influence and was therefore adopted by some for self preservation and the maintenance of their own power and authority. The interpretation is also correct because in anumber of towns and cities reformers, often led by a local priest, persuaded the rest of the population through sermons that Luther's ideas should be adopted and these ideas were often reinforced by the pamphlets that appeared. The number of imperial cities which had adopted Lutheranism by the end of the 1520s is further evidence that this was an urban event, with some 50 out of 85 adopting it, because it gave the cities the chance to regain their sense of community and independence which had been eroded by the imperial government and papacy in the Middle Ages.

Although there is no doubt that the towns and cities were important in the spread of the reformed faith, other groups were also 'ready' to adopt it and this is ignored by the interpretation. Most importantly, the interpretation ignores the crucial role played by the princes, particularly Frederick the Wise, who protected Luther at the very start and without whose protection there would not have been a reformation. It also ignores the fact that many peasants were 'ready' to adopt Lutheranism as was seen in the Peasant's War as they believed that the ideas offered the chance to improve their social position. Moreover, there can be too much stress on the role of the towns as some towns were less than willing or 'ready' to accept the reformed religion as it soon developed radical tendencies which threatened civic authority. The interpretation also fails to consider the chronology of the reformation as after the 1530s it could be argued that the Princes played a more important role, both in preserving and expanding Lutheranism.

### Examiner commentary

- The response explains the interpretation and understands the importance of 'most ready', which is important in understanding that it is not simply saying it was just an urban event.
- The response considers both the strengths and limitations of the interpretation and they are evaluated using some detailed own knowledge.
- The own knowledge is clearly linked to the interpretation and not simply imparted.
- There is a realization of how the nature of the reformation could be seen to change over the period.



### Medium level answer

Scribner, writing in 2004, wrote that the reformation was an urban event. This means that he believes there was a lot of support for the Reformation in the towns of Germany. He says that there were many people within the towns of Germany who welcomed the reformation, but he does not say why they did. There are some other interpretations that say the reformation was not just an 'urban event.' These interpretations describe the role played by princes in the Reformation and how people like Frederick the Wise protected Luther by taking him to Wartburg castle and stopping the emperor Charles V from seizing him. They also consider the princes and their role in fighting Catholic forces which helped to stop Lutheranism from being crushed.

Scribner says that it was an urban event and that many people in the towns of Germany wanted religious changes. The Catholic church was unpopular with many in Germany and the printing press spread the view that the Catholic church needed reform and these views were read in towns. Town governments often supported Luther's ideas for a number of different reasons. Towns sometimes supported Lutheranism for religious reasons, but often it was for political, social or economic reasons. Those who ruled the towns took up Lutheranism and used it to help them keep their power.

Although Scribner says it was an urban event it was not just an urban event. There were a number of princes who took up the reformation. I have already mentioned the role of Frederick the Wise, but he was not the only prince who adopted Luther's ideas. The princes also formed the Schmalkaldic League, this was a military alliance of Lutheran states and was formed in 1531. This helped in its early years but was defeated in 1547 at Muhlberg. There were other princes such as Philip of Hesse who supported Lutheranism and so the princes were important in promoting Lutheranism, although some were concerned about fighting against the Emperor who they believed God had appointed. There were also some princes who remained Catholic and fought against the Lutheran princes. Some peasants also liked Luther's ideas as they thought he was encouraging social changes.

### Examiner commentary

- The response has some understanding of the interpretation and realizes that it does not explain why people in the towns supported the Reformation.
- It is aware of some reasons why the reformation might be popular in the towns, but the knowledge is not clearly linked to the interpretation to evaluate it. Knowledge is therefore imparted rather than used.
- The knowledge is variable in depth, there is an awareness of some of the Princes and their role, but little specific on the towns or peasants – the latter appears to be an afterthought.

## Y238 – Philip II 1556–1598

*'A global strategic vision clearly underlay initiatives undertaken by Philip's government.'*

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation of Philip II's foreign policy, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

### High level answer

The interpretation puts forward the view that Philip had a global vision for his foreign policy, which was both expansionist and therefore aggressive as he sought to increase both his influence and the size of the empire over which he ruled. This interpretation therefore implies that Philip had a plan and that foreign policy actions were directed towards this aim of increasing Spanish power and dominance both in Europe and beyond. However, other interpretations have challenged this view and have argued that Philip's foreign policy was defensive and that he simply wanted to protect the lands he held and not expand. These interpretations also argue that Philip's policy certainly could not be seen as aggressive in the early years of his rule and that when he did take action in the later years he was reacting to events and was not proactive. Some interpretations also stress the importance he gave towards protecting the Catholic church and that the actions he undertook, as in France, were for this goal and not because he sought domination.

The interpretation has many strengths. It does appear as if Philip had a 'Grand Strategy' which both expansionist and aggressive. This is given particular credence if one looks at the acquisition or conquest of Portugal in 1580, which not only gave him control of that country but also the Portuguese Empire in the Americas and the East. However, it was not just here that a 'Grand Strategy' can be seen as he also sought to dominate Northern Europe, giving further weight to this view. Philip sought to conquer England with the Armada and also became involved in France during the 1580s and 1590s. There is little doubt that Philip wanted to expand as he acquired territories adjacent to dynastic lands through purchase and refused to surrender conquered lands.

However, there are limits to this as the first part of his reign did not see this expansionist approach, which began only with the acquisition of Portugal in 1580. Moreover, the view that he had an imperial vision also ignores the fact that the power of Spain worried other nations and many of his actions were therefore defensive not aggressive. This was certainly true of the Armada as England had been provoking Spain in both the New World and the Netherlands, by giving the rebels aid, and therefore he was reacting to events and trying to prevent his position in the Netherlands from being undermined. Similarly, in France he was concerned that Protestantism might be victorious which, given events in the Netherlands, would be dangerous for Spain and therefore only intervened because of that and not because he wanted to dominate Northern Europe.

### Examiner commentary

- The response has a clear understanding of the debate and is able to place the interpretation in the wider context of the debate as to whether Philip II had a 'Grand Strategy'.
- The arguments for and against the Interpretation are analysed and evaluated.
- The evaluation depends upon the use of detailed and accurate knowledge, which is closely linked to the interpretation.
- The discussion of the strengths and limitation of the interpretation is balanced and supported.

### Medium level answer

Parker's view in his book *The Grand Strategy*, which was written in 2000 is that Philip II had a 'global strategic vision'. This means that he had vision of conquest and domination that was not limited to Europe but would also include the New World and other lands that had been discovered in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This meant that Philip's aims were to expand Spain and the land over which it ruled. There are other interpretations that disagree and argue that Philip did not want to expand and simply wanted to protect the lands over which Spain ruled, such as the Spanish Netherlands or areas in the Americas which had been taken by men such as Cortes. These interpretations do not see Philip as expansionist but defending his Empire because he was under attack.

The view that Philip wanted to expand which Parker puts forward would see Philip's policy as aggressive. Philip fought a lot of wars during his reign against England, the Dutch rebels, Portugal and France. These wars were fought to gain land and increase the size of the lands that he ruled over. He fought against Portugal in 1580 and England, with the Armada and France soon after. He had to fight against the Dutch for much of his reign and had not defeated them when he died. Philip ruled over more land by the end of his reign than at the start because he gained Portugal and its lands, which included parts of Asia. The Armada was not a success and he had to make peace with France, suggesting that this policy was not always successful.

The view that Philip did not want to expand would argue that Philip was defensive. He did not fight wars in the years before 1580 and when he did fight wars it was to protect Spain. He fought against the Dutch because they rebelled against him and the English because they attacked the Spanish silver fleet. He needed the money from the silver fleet to pay his troops and was therefore angered by England. He also fought to protect the Catholic religion, that is why he fought against France and also a reason for the Armada. Philip had to fight lots of wars because many countries disliked Spain's power and wanted to reduce it so he had to defend Spain.

## Examiner commentary

- The answer does understand the interpretation and can place it in the wider debate about Philip's foreign policy, although this is not fully developed.
- The response is able to describe events that appear to support and challenge the interpretation.
- The knowledge that is present is imparted and is not directly linked to the interpretation to either challenge or support it, at best the evaluation is implied.
- There is much description with only limited analysis of the material and no real evaluation.



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