

History B

Advanced GCE A2 H508

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H108

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

HX08/R/11

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Chief Examiner Report

The candidates' overall performance in this specification continues to be most encouraging and there is a steady growth in the number of centres entering candidates. The specification was constructed to allow and encourage progression by the candidates as they complete the different units. This is clearly happening and the senior examiners are delighted to see the candidates producing work of maturity and thoughtfulness in the second year of the course. The work produced for the coursework and for the Controversies units was generally excellent. In the former many showed a sophisticated grasp of 'historical significance'. This is clearly helped by the candidates being to study topics of their own choice that they are genuinely interested in. The work for the Controversies unit continues to demonstrate a mature grasp of the nature of interpretations and of the subject itself. Good progress was also made in the AS units. In the Historical Explanations unit there is evidence of progress being made in understanding and using the modes while in the Using Sources unit candidates are using sources well to amend the given interpretations. Part (b) in this unit, however, still remains a big challenge for many candidates.

Overall, centres are to be congratulated for adapting to the demands of this new specification so well. The candidates are clearly ending their course of study having made significant progress and with an excellent appreciation of the nature of History which will be invaluable to those going on to study the subject in Higher Education.

F981, F982 – Historical Explanation

General comments

It is pleasing to report that entries for F981 and F982 have risen. Specification B is now well established and popular. Readers of *Teaching History* 143 will have seen Arthur Chapman's article *Times Arrows?* explaining a 'dartboard' scaffolding device for the construction and validation of historical claims. When I introduced the methods outlined in this article to a group of students in my own school who had studied F981 for a year, they were very familiar with its approach and were confident in applying it to some new material in preparation for A2 coursework (F987) from September. F981 and F982 essays do require students to think about what they are writing and to plan a structure, not a unique requirement, of course, but one which reaps rich rewards given the mark scheme descriptors, which stress different approaches to a problem and the credit which can be given for demonstrating the interactions between these approaches or modes. If there is one strand running through this Report it is that centres which succeed in getting their students to plan their essays do better than those which do not.

Continuing in a positive vein, one centre had encouraged its students to plan their essays in diagram form. A student had a simple pie chart divided into sections for ideas, events and actions, with arrows flowing between the sections; another produced a target with causes in the centre, with another circle for intentions and an outer circle for beliefs. There is no single, approved way of planning F981 and F982 essays, and previous Principal Examiner's Reports for these units have offered alternative models, but it is good to observe that some interesting and thoughtful methods are being tried and are helping students to tackle the fundamental AS Specification B skills of selecting and deploying what is appropriate to the question from a range of material. Moreover, such planning encourages the all-important links and interactions which the mark scheme stresses: 'some analysis of interactions between...key features and characteristics such as ideas, beliefs, actions and events.' The arrows on the pie chart are pointed reminders of this.

By and large, it remains the case that narrative writing is not often seen by examiners of these units. The same cannot be said for descriptive writing, however. Weaker candidates sometimes have recourse to detailed descriptions of the arts under Elizabeth or the economic problems facing Ancien Regime France, for example, without relating the material directly to the question, thereby condemning themselves to Band III or below. Another obvious characteristic acting as a discriminator is that of defining one's terms or unpacking the question. So, what exactly is a 'cult of majesty?' Why are we taking for granted that Nicholas II had 'no choice but to abdicate?'

In terms of causal explanation, what happens when we take a cause away? Several answers played with the modes productively. Contextual or 'state of affairs' passages, called by one centre 'conditional factors', were intertwined with 'contingent factors' or sparks. Thus the February Revolution was not fully explained by economic collapse or other factors; without the army's loss of loyalty in February the Tsar would have been able to put down the revolution with brute force. The same point holds for the French Revolution. What sparks, or tipping points, turned disquiet and unrest into a popular demand for change, there and then and in that form? Centres choose different names to refer to modes of explanation, for example 'conditional factors' or 'contingent factors' or 'empathetic factors.' What matters more than the actual label chosen is that within an answer candidates explore several different ways of looking at the issues and that the 'modes' or approaches outlined in the mark scheme enable them to exercise discrimination and judgement. This will not be achieved by a mechanical trot-through of a list of factors.

Given that we are asking students to write an essay, the concluding paragraph is important. The differences between a summary and a conclusion are too obvious to be restated, but it is worth

noting that a conclusion which draws together several methods of explanation can very much help to confirm a response's qualities: *It can be concluded that although actions may have catalysed revolutionary masses, and ideas been a contributory factor to Nicholas's unpopularity and therefore revolution, that war was actually the source of February 1917 that had caused a build up of anger, dissatisfaction and outrage towards the Tsarist regime.*

F981

Question 1a offers the exception to the rule mentioned above about narrative writing. It was too often the case that candidates explained how Edward IV became King in 1461 rather than why. Likewise it was disappointing that little was said about notions of patronage or loyalty or oaths, for example; sometimes comments were offered on 'bastard feudalism' in a rather desultory and mechanical fashion. By contrast Question 1b was often better answered, with more analysis offered of intentions and a much more developed sense of change through time: why was the context for actions in 1471 very different to that of 1461? There were also opportunities for some counterfactual exploration, within reason, of what might have happened had Edward not married Elizabeth Woodville.

As always, Questions 3 and 4 on Elizabeth I proved popular, with greater numbers tackling Mary Queen of Scots than questions on the arts. To take the latter first, there was among weaker responses a consistent focus on *how* the arts flourished in the form of painting and literature, most typically, rather than *why* they did so. Supported examples of the works of Marlowe or Shakespeare or Nicholas Hilliard were able to be rewarded, but most highly in the context of propaganda, progresses or patronage, for example, rather than simply in their own terms. It was refreshing to see that some responses were able to discuss musicians such as Orlando Gibbons. The 'Cult of Majesty' was less well understood, with some candidates offering assertions and generalisations drawn from a diverse body of content rather than a specific study of the changing political context of the final years of Elizabeth's reign. This answer showed that high Level 1 quality could be attained:

As time passed and the hopes of Elizabeth getting married disappeared, her councillors had to guide the arts into direction so that the queen's virginity and lack of a husband would be seen as something glorious and god-like. That is why the image of the Virgin Queen married to her country was developed in both painting and literature. Also towards the end of the reign (1590s in particular) when the queen seemed to be losing control, the government had to cover the problems of Elizabeth's indecisiveness and ageing by instructing the best artists to create paintings such as the Rainbow Portrait.

Likewise, another response took up the issue of how a cult or trend or fashion might develop:

It also has to be said that the cult of majesty was to an extent self-generating. Once it started, by one artist painting a portrait of the Queen or writing a poem about her glorious deeds, other people wanted to follow the motif. It led to the appearance of many works of art focusing on the queen, it was also a matter of earning one's living. [This is part of a response given 23/25.]

Answers on Mary Queen of Scots were stronger on the details of her life and marriages than on the domestic Scottish context for her actions or the wider diplomatic background of the auld alliance, for example, which might help to explain why events took the course that they did. Knowledge of the religious situation in Scotland was weak, with claims that Mary tried to enforce Catholicism on a reluctant population. Although the major plots against Elizabeth were well known, the extent of the 'involvement' of the Queen or the reasons why that participation varied were rarely considered. Examiners report some appreciation of changing motivation for involvement or non-participation in plots over time; once Mary discovered that she had support within England and without, this prompted greater involvement in conspiracy.

Liberal Sunset Question 5a was well answered by many candidates and some had good knowledge of the ideological background as well as of the personalities involved. While responses to Question 5b will justifiably have shown some overlap with those for 5a, there was too little focus on the particular circumstances leading to the creation of the Labour Representation Committee in the particular year of its foundation. By contrast, the circumstances of Lloyd George's appointment as Prime Minister in 1916 were well understood and answers which linked contextual factors to the particular circumstances and triggers of Asquith's failings were able to earn high marks. Likewise the events of 1922 were interestingly addressed, with divisions of opinion about the strength of the argument that the coalition was doomed from 1918 and some valid explanation of the trigger of the Carlton Club Meeting.

Questions on The End of Consensus raised several problems. First, there was the issue of chronology. The first Thatcher ministry was not clearly delineated from its successors in students' essays, resulting in analysis of the Miners' Strike, 'the enemy within' and major privatisations which occurred after 1983. There were indeed a few privatisations during the 1979-83 ministry but not the better-known ones. It is imperative that students spending a year on a course have a strong sense of when major events happened, whether they belong to the early 1980s or the late 1580s. The second major issue was simply that of the question itself. There have been questions in past papers on the 1970 Conservative election victory and the 1974 Labour election victory, and some candidates determinedly wrote pre-prepared answers to those questions in spite of their non-appearance this time. Explaining the economic and legal backgrounds to unemployment, inflation and industrial relations legislation was well rewarded as an answer to a 'why' question on industrial and political strife under Heath. One centre was unhappy with Q7a's insistence on the emergence of the 'New Right' in 1970. I can only reiterate that textbooks are unreliable predictors of examination questions and, in the worst cases, are uncertain companions to the recent past, where the historicity of 'Selsdon Man' and the New Right is well attested. As always, the wording of the left-hand column of the specification itself is the failsafe. Answers to Question 8a tended to be polarised: better answers identified support across a range of groups as well as criticism; weaker responses simply described Thatcher's policies and actions. The 1983 election saw much focus on the Falklands War, quite rightly, but too little discussion of the problems facing the Labour Party. One fruitful line of argument here was to consider how unlikely a Conservative victory was before the Falklands War occurred, but this approach did need assessment of the state of the economy in the early 1980s.

F982

Question 5a on the formation of the National Assembly required a good but not unreasonable grasp of the chronology of 1789. Some candidates largely explained this constitutional development in terms of the calling of the Estates-General and the swearing of the Tennis Court Oath. This was fine in so far as it went but was too narrow a focus to be rewarded at the higher levels. Stronger answers were able to look at the actions and possible intentions of the Third Estate, suggesting that disagreements within that body acted as a trigger to the creation of an assembly when paired with an absolute determination not to back down, and it was the lack of co-operation between the estates which was considered by some to be the main reason for an assembly being created. Bankruptcy and taxation issues, with failed reform attempts, provided the states of affairs to help explain these dramatic events, but the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau were also instrumental. Question 5b offered a ready opportunity for answers to explain an event by means of a trigger, for example the mistreatment of the tricolore or the royal rejection of the August Decrees, which in turn required the establishment of a state of affairs and discussion of the ferment of ideas in which these events and actions took place. This was not the only way to answer this question, but it worked. Yet this only applied where the candidate knew the chronology and the history of the period reasonably well. There is no substitute for knowing what happened. Candidates found it hard to explain why France was able to turn initial defeats in the revolutionary wars into victories if they did not know about the *levee en masse* and the actions of Carnot. Similarly Question 6b required examples and details from 'some French provinces' or cities such as Lyons for an answer to be credible and supported.

Remarks above about descriptive writing sometimes applied to Q7a. As has been mentioned on several previous occasions, a lot of descriptive writing about the state of Russia, economic problems and the challenges presented by the outbreak of the First World War will not merit high reward from an examiner unless it is tied in specifically and frequently to the precise wording of the question set, and even then such a discursive approach is unlikely to prove fruitful. Starting from the immediate events and then working 'outwards' to explain why they happened, why there and then and why in the form that they did, requiring analysis of attitudes and ideas, for example, is a more intelligent, productive, and rewardable method of planning and writing an essay for this unit. One candidate started with the immediate triggers to February 1917 in the form of the Putilov strikes and International Women's Day, before explaining that these events by themselves were not enough to catalyse a revolution, thereby opening up discussion of inflation and economic hardships. The answer continued by demonstrating that it was not World War 1 itself which caused revolution but Russia's inability to handle it; monarchical government could not cope. Some responses doggedly explained the significance of the events of 1905 and the consequences of the Russo-Japanese War, or even of the 1891 famine, with a frustrating disregard for the wording of Question 7a.

By contrast, a superb answer to Question 8b on the failings of the Provisional Government started with the failings of that institution from 1917 in composition and aims before looking at its attitudes and responses to World War 1 and the land question respectively; moving at that point to the strengths of opposition groups and events such as the July Days and Kornilov revolt ensured that a relevant and focussed approach to the actual question set had taken place. In the same fashion, the following opening response to Question 7b signalled a clear intent to take nothing for granted:

First of all we must understand that the question is wrong. Of course Nicholas had a choice, as nothing in History is ever inevitable.

This approach is entirely welcome and appropriate. Where answers began to consider why an event happened when it did, centres are encouraged to guide their students towards consideration of the 'tipping point' which made other choices or paths of action restricted or impossible: at what moment, and why, is there actually no choice at all? Better responses to Question 7b were happily able to wrestle with such issues.

Another response focussed upon what the mark scheme refers to as 'interactions' between modes in offering an argument about why Nicholas II had no choice but to abdicate: *If the Tsar's conservatism had not been so deep-rooted then Nicholas may have allowed the Duma to continue or make more concessions or actually listened to what the people wanted-he could have directed more time into securing the loyalty of the army, but his conservative nature perhaps held him back in the sense that he believed that he had the god-given divine right to rule, so the army would not turn against him, surely?*

A problem of chronology to bear comparison with that experienced by some candidates answering questions on Margaret Thatcher's first ministry (but bringing in material from later ministries in evidence) occurred in relation to Question 8a. Assessing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and extended analysis of War Communism are not relevant to a question on the appeal of Bolshevik ideals in 1917. The selection of material appropriate to the question set is one of the basic tasks of the historian and it is surely a reasonable position for an examiner of Russia 1905-24 to expect a sound grasp of the chronology of 1917 and 1918. The actions of the Tsar cannot be considered to be a reason for the failings of the Provisional Government.

Students did not always have a good grasp of the role played by the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1917-1918; it was asserted confidently that the Bolsheviks appealed to the peasantry and indeed to all Russians bar a handful of opponents, which rather conveniently ignores the results of the October 1917 elections.

No examiner's report would be complete without its list of observations on the ways in which candidates express their thoughts. Examiners came across *could of* so frequently that they might be forgiven for becoming *majorly* annoyed. The quality of some written English, like World War 1 for one student writing about the Tsar, was a *stressor*, so it was just as well that the Tsar was very *laid back*. *Stuff* appeared with sufficient regularity for it to be deemed the very essence of History. Conditional writing remains commonplace: *People who's land Henry [VI] had to take to give to his favourites also would have supported Edward's cause more readily*. So did they? Answers securing good Level II and Level I marks were often characterised by an admirable concision and an appropriately formal manner of expression.

F983, F984 – Using historical evidence

General comments

The majority of candidates made a good attempt to do what is required of them in this very demanding set of tasks. Many candidates presented an ordered argument, grouping evidence that supported and challenged the interpretation in (a) as well as demonstrating the ability to draw inferences from sources and to use a range of evaluative techniques in relation to historical sources. The best candidates displayed the ability to manipulate material in a truly sophisticated way, incorporating a range of variables into coherently argued responses. Besides identifying what was commendable, this report will attempt to identify weaknesses noted by the examiners in the hopes that where possible candidates can learn from them. In (b) there was evidence that more candidates were aware of the requirements of the mark scheme and were attempting to demonstrate understanding of evaluative methods.

Most candidates completed both questions, and it was clear that they allocated their time with a view to allowing adequate time for (b). However there was evidence that a significant minority of candidates did not use all the sources in (a), often omitting the last one or two sources, or those that seemed more difficult to use in an effort to complete (a) in the time they had allowed. Inevitably the result was that any conclusion reached by the candidate was unlikely to provide a convincing interpretation of the evidence in the sources.

Part (a)

The interpretation: the task in (a) requires that the candidate test the given interpretation. Most focus on this in the greater part of their answer. However a number of candidates adopt the strategy of devising an interpretation of their own (as invited in the final part of question (a)) then show how the sources support this new interpretation instead of, rather than in addition to, testing the one provided. These candidates are not following the instructions and should expect to be penalised in AO2b for not doing so. Other candidates begin by suggesting an improved interpretation. Where this follows a general introduction to the issues surrounding the given interpretation, it is not always clear if this new interpretation has been generated in response to reading the sources or from the candidate's prior knowledge of the topic. In the latter case, candidates may fall into the trap of using their knowledge rather than the sources to test the given interpretation. This is not what the question requires. At times it is clear that the candidate is offering a new interpretation that incorporates a reference to change and/or continuity through the period studied in a bid to show understanding of the focus concepts of the unit. This is potentially a good strategy, but will only result in a high mark if the sources provided support the interpretation generated. The best new interpretations developed the one provided, for example by showing that it pertained more at some periods than others, or that it identified a factor that was dependent on another one.

The sources: the maximum number of sources is seven. Too often there is a simplistic assumption that any individual source will either support or challenge the interpretation. Many sources can be used in a more complex way, and to gain high marks candidates are expected to use the sources in a more sophisticated way. In many cases the evidence in a source can be used both to challenge and to support an interpretation, depending on how it is interpreted or what inference is drawn. An awareness of the nature of historical enquiry would help candidates to look for different inferences from the same sources.

The following extract illustrates how a candidate answering F984 Question 2 did this.

“Sources 2 and 6 must be closely examined when looking at the support of the Catholic Church in reference to the development of the arts. Source 2, a photograph of the duomo in Florence, at face value would suggest it had been purely influenced by the Catholic Church. However, the duomo designed by Brunelleschi had been inspired by the classical structure of architecture in ancient Rome and Greece, and was intended to show the greatness of Florence, therefore this could suggest it was in fact built in order to build up civic pride within the state. Similarly, although source 6 is a painting of the Virgin Mary and Child, it is painted using domestic realism and the two are illustrated without halos. This alone would suggest it was moving away from the religious influences. The painting was also commissioned by a merchant guild in Parma, which could suggest that it was painted to illustrate the skill of the painter and once again, increase civic pride.”

In general written sources are used more effectively than pictorial ones. Other than in F984 question 2, examiners noticed a tendency to read cartoons and photographs at face value, with generic evaluation that at times went against knowledge and understanding of the period. Despite the very limited copying of books in the Middle Ages it was suggested that the intended audience of the illustration of the Peasants' Revolt was the peasants. The cartoon in F983 question 4 was rarely recognised as a comment on austerity after the Second World War and comments on the message and purpose of the cartoon in F983 question 3 were often simplistic, even from candidates who demonstrated sophisticated evaluation of the remaining sources. The purpose of the photograph in F984 question 4 was rarely explored and several candidates suggested that it had been staged.

Part (b)

There is no doubt that candidates have much to do in the 90 minutes allowed for this examination, yet script evidence suggests that they have time to write at length. However, many candidates adopt approaches that do not make best use of the time. In (b) examiners noted that some candidates write about each source in turn, mechanically noting generic points about the typicality, reliability and purpose of the sources. The following extract from a response to F984 Question 4 illustrates this and scored Level 4 in AO2a:

“In Source 5, the use of autobiography may not be trustworthy to a historian, due to the fact these things can be changed and manipulated by the push to make themselves look better. This could also be the case in source 4, with the autobiography of Malcolm X, which I know was not actually written by him. Another reason as why it may not be trustworthy, important information may have been changed or even missed out.”

This approach often leads to low marks where candidates do not know enough about the individual sources to make meaningful comments. In the case above, many candidates were aware of the circumstances and context of Rosa Parks' protest. They could have used this to demonstrate how she has been selective in recounting the incident. She does not refer, for example, to previous clashes with the particular bus driver, or to the fact that the NAACP was keen to challenge bus segregation but had rejected an earlier incident due to their view that the wronged African American was an unsuitable subject for publicity. As an NAACP activist she would have known of these incidents. The source makes her action sound far more spontaneous than contextual knowledge implies.

A better use of time would involve the candidate looking for the best source(s) to evaluate for typicality, reliability and purpose. If a candidate knows very little about, for example, the writer of a particular source, he or she is unlikely to be able to address the issue of reliability effectively. In terms of use of time it is better to say nothing about that source than to make generic points that will score at best at Level 4. For the examiner reading such an answer, the repeated speculative use of 'may' is an indication that the candidate is unsure of the comments he or she is making in relation to the specific source.

In the following extract from F984 question 4 the use of specific knowledge to comment on the point made by Malcolm X is enough to raise it to Level 3 in AO2a.

“Sources 4 and 5 are both autobiographies by African Americans. These autobiographies can be helpful, because it shows the thoughts and opinions of the author at that time, but because they are the person’s own opinions they may be more biased towards their own ideas making them less reliable; for example, Malcolm X was against integration, so he said other civil rights leaders didn’t understand how to lead because they fought for integration.”

Candidates are aware that to reach the highest levels in (b) they need to engage with the historian’s task. In past reports it has been pointed out that historians do not simply try to find out about a topic (this source is useful because it tells the historian that ...) but instead that they ask questions of their sources. Many candidates are now suggesting questions. However this often involves turning ‘finding out about’ into a first order question such as ‘what did the government do that affected the lives of workers?’ or ‘what were relations between lords and peasants like?’

It is clear that some candidates have little concept of what historians do. The advice is to consider this early in the course. Candidates need to revisit the issue regularly, focusing on the asking of, and attempts to answer, second order questions; that is, those concerning historical concepts. A significant number of candidates do begin to engage with the use of the provided sources in relation to enquiries concerning change and continuity over time – the concepts on which this unit is based, but they might equally consider enquiries based on historical explanation which they will probably already have studied in the first AS unit.

The following two extracts illustrate the difference between a candidate operating at a low level and one at a high level:

“The source is useful as it allows the historian to answer questions such as were food restrictions a problem in 1941 and also whether statistics were collected to provide information.”

This candidate (F983 Q4) has failed to move beyond viewing the sources as providing facts and regards historical enquiry as a quest for information.

In contrast, the next extract (F983 Q2) reveals a more developed understanding of the historian’s purpose, recognising that historians ask questions of their sources, and, incidentally, displays very good contextual knowledge to support the source evaluation:

“The sources can cause problems for the historian as many of them are biased against the rebels and speak of them in a degrading tone, such as source 1 and source 4 which speaks of the ‘bare-arsed’ rebels and such as source 2 which speaks of in a condescending tone about the rebels begging for mercy. However, these sources could also be considered useful depending on the purpose of the historian. For example, if they were researching attitudes towards the rebels and lower classes, the sources could be very useful as they show this. For example because many of the sources are written by the higher social classes such as source 2 and source 7, it shows their attitudes towards the rebels, and how underlying these people were wanting to keep the Great Chain of Being and the social structure in place, therefore having the lower classes kneeling before them as in source 2. In conclusion, despite there being many problems, all the sources are useful in some way depending on the purpose of the historian using them. For example the very thing that causes a problem for one historian such as the bias of the nobility in source 2, could be the very thing that is useful for another historian, for example if they were researching the attitudes of the higher classes to the lower classes in the Tudor period.”

A significant number of candidates appreciate that it is a good idea to write about the sources as a set, but their comments are often confined to describing the content, 'voices' and temporal range of the sources, noting what is missing and claiming that this is important. Again, the missing element here is the historian. Sources can only be evaluated effectively in relation to an historical enquiry. Some candidates claim that the set of sources is more useful if it contains a balance of points of view. In doing so they fail to recognise that utility depends on the purpose of the historian, that is, on the questions asked.

Comments on individual questions

F983

1 The Impact and Consequences of the Black Death in England up to the 1450s

Most candidates accepted that what happened after the Black Death was likely to be caused by it. There was widespread awareness of the role of the Church and this was used to good effect to interpret and sometimes evaluate sources 1 and 2 and the content of 7. Many candidates were able to draw a range of inferences from sources 3 and 4, for example that the need for these laws implied a loss of control, and that the 1388 Statutes of Labourers shows that the earlier ones needed to be reinforced. Candidates also understood that a historian would need evidence from the courts to show whether or not the laws were enforced before being able to make a secure judgement in relation to the interpretation.

Source 6 presented some challenges. Most candidates' comments related to the scene shown (information) rather than the source (evidence). While it was clear that the illustration was intended to emphasise the control that the lords could exercise, many candidates suggested that the intended audience was the illiterate peasants who should learn from it that rebellion was futile.

New interpretations were often based on change over time, with the sources used to show initial problems for the lords in controlling the peasants, but a regaining of much control via legislation. Some candidates focused on the perception of the lords that they were losing control, leading them to clamp down on peasant unrest with uneven success, set against the peasants continued acts of defiance.

2 Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England 1489-1601

Compared with previous sessions there was more evidence that candidates were using the sources rather than their contextual knowledge of the rebellions referred to in the sources as the basis of their arguments. However it remains the case that candidates should guard against the temptation to use contextual knowledge to form a new interpretation. Most candidates were familiar with both the rebellions covered by the sources and the social hierarchy of Tudor England, making sound use of their knowledge to interpret the sources. Some candidates thought that Source 6 referred to Wyatt's rebellion, misconstruing the reference to 'the marriage', and it was clear that some candidates were unfamiliar with the term 'parish' in Source 5. There was good evaluation of sources for purpose, making use of both tone and content to suggest that what nobles wrote about themselves and about the rebels could not be accepted at face value. The establishment of an overview was less in evidence, with few making any attempt to look for patterns over time. However there were successful new interpretations focusing on the relationship between the lower orders and gentlemen within rebellions.

3 Radicalism, Popular Protest and Control 1780-1880s

There were many very good responses to this question. Candidates were able to access most of the sources at a simple level and many progressed beyond this, for example making use of their knowledge of Peterloo to evaluate Source 2. A few discussed which of the movements/incidents were radical in assessing the extent to which radicals supported the use of violence, but most assumed that all the groups and individuals were radical. While candidates are willing to question the reliability and purpose of written sources, it is noticeable that this is less the case with pictorial sources. There was a tendency to accept Source 5 at face value, or to make generic evaluative comments claiming that the source was unreliable because the purpose of a cartoon is to entertain. Too many candidates provided over-long analyses of the first two sources to the detriment of the remaining five. Effective planning and practice are needed to avoid the temptation to unbalance answers in this way. A range of new interpretations were generated at different levels of sophistication. Most candidates looked for patterning through time, identifying a cut-off point beyond which violence was less favoured by radicals. Others identified the circumstances in which violence might occur or in which it might be more acceptable to radicals.

4 The Impact of the War on British Society and Politics since 1900

Most of the sources proved accessible to candidates, with the favoured evaluative approach being to raise the issue of typicality of the views expressed. This worked well for Sources 1, 4, 6 and sometimes 7, but led to some contorted discussion of the Gallup Poll (Source 3) with claims, for example, that most men were away fighting thus distorting the result. Most candidates recognised that Source 3 and Source 4 provided a good opportunity for cross-referencing. Source 5 presented problems: few candidates were aware that World War II rationing was continued and became more severe in the immediate post-war period. As a consequence they tried to interpret Source 5 either as a comment on restrictions during the war, or as a response to Cold War restrictions. While candidates recognised the reference to the atomic bombs, they seemed unaware that none of Britain's enemies had atomic weaponry in 1946. In contrast there were interesting evaluations of Source 4, showing good knowledge and close reading. For example the issue of social class was raised; the woman concerned was clearly not working class since she had not worked for fifteen years – would working class women have had similar views? The impact of government on different social classes as well as the contrast in attitudes towards government in total wars and other periods were both used successfully by candidates as the basis for a new interpretation. A successful approach adopted by some candidates involved grouping the sources according to the kind of people whom they concerned – workers, women and so on – then assessing their reactions to increased government powers.

F984

1 The Vikings in Europe 790s-1066

Most candidates were able to use the sources to construct an argument about the reasons for Viking travel, evaluating the interpretation and usually adding other reasons than that given. Some developed the interpretation at a more sophisticated level by establishing that the reasons changed over time, with raiding being followed by trading, or trading being an unintended outcome of settlement in places that lent themselves to trade. A few were aware of the 'traders or raiders' controversy and this helped them because they were more likely to recognise that the same sources could be interpreted in different ways to reach different conclusions. Most candidates recognised that the sources should be evaluated, but there was a tendency to generic comments that were not sufficiently developed in

relation to the extracts to be rewarded. For example many recognised that an ecclesiastical source from the ninth century was likely to be biased against the Vikings, yet accepted the evidence presented at face value. On the other hand, the significance of Biarni being singled out as a trader in contrast to the more typical glorification of Vikings as warriors was often noted and sometimes used in their arguments by candidates. Few candidates noticed that source 7 related to *possible* trade routes from York, but many made useful cross-references to source 6.

2 The Italian Renaissance c1450-c1550

There were many very good answers. Candidates displayed sound knowledge and were able to apply this, for example to Source 6, recognising and applying their understanding of the characteristics of later Renaissance painting to draw inferences about the development of the arts. There were some excellent examples of cross-referencing of sources, with discussion, for example, of the extent to which the Roman Catholic patronage described in sources 1, 3 and 5 was responsible for the artistic developments shown in sources 2 and 6. Many candidates presented a new interpretation adding other factors producing development in the arts. More sophisticated interpretations established relationships between the Catholic Church as a patron and, for example, the developments that this allowed the artists to make, based on other influences such as classical antiquity. Other candidates focused on change over time, suggesting that the influence of the Church on developments in art was less significant after a certain point, such as the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

3 European Nationalism 1815-1914: Germany and Italy

The sources presented few difficulties, candidates being familiar with the named individuals and writers. Evaluation of sources rested on a number of issues, with candidates referring for example to the provenance of Source 2 (a secret society so how typical was it?) and Source 4 (a popular song, so reflecting a more widespread set of ideas). Most candidates had a good understanding of both liberalism and nationalism and analysed the sources for evidence of linkage or not between the two. New interpretations were often based on the concept of change through time, with the link between liberalism and nationalism stronger earlier in the period than later.

4 Race and American Society, 1865-1970s

Candidates found the sources accessible in that they recognised the ideas and incidents to which they referred. The named leaders were known, as were their different approaches. There was some discussion, for example in relation to Rosa Parks, about what constitutes a leader, although many weaker answers stated either that she was or was not a leader without explanation. In some cases candidates used contextual knowledge rather than the sources as the basis for their arguments. This was particularly prevalent in relation to sources 5 and 7. There was a tendency to use sources in isolation, despite clear opportunities for cross-referencing, for example the reference to other leaders in source 4 that could be tested against the photograph of Martin Luther King (source 7). Evaluation of sources was often weak, with generic comments about the problems of autobiographies and photographs. Several candidates suggested that the scene in Source 7 might have been staged; while the camera angle may have been carefully chosen, the setting up of the whole scene seems improbable. New interpretations rested most commonly on the addition of other factors, although a significant number of candidates recognised that there was a relationship between 'leader' and 'led' that could be explored through the sources.

F985, F986 – Historical controversies

General comments

The performance of the candidates continued the promising start established by last year's candidates. Much of the work demonstrated a maturity of understanding of the nature of the discipline of history that was impressive and should be invaluable to those going on to study History in Higher Education.

The non-British options were much more popular than the British ones with Witch-hunting and the Holocaust being chosen by most of the centres. There was a reasonably sized entry for American Wests while only a handful of centres chose the Crusades. This balance between modern, early modern and medieval was repeated in the British units. Imperialism and Appeasement were most popular, a few centres studied the 17th century and no centres entered candidates for the unit on the Norman Conquest.

Examiners were impressed by a number of aspects of the candidates' answers: the wide knowledge of the topics themselves, good understanding of a range of interpretations and approaches, excellent appreciation of the nature of historical interpretations, and mature understanding of the nature of the discipline of History.

Previous reports have highlighted areas where, as with any new specification, some candidates were adopting inappropriate approaches. These included: part (a) not analysing the extract closely enough and providing a general survey of the historiography of the topic, focusing on approaches to the detriment of interpretations, evaluating the extract when this is not required, and trying to guess who the historian is; part (b) writing about the topic rather than assessing the named approach. In both parts – writing long meandering answers that failed to directly address the tasks with too much time being spent on the writing and too little on thinking, reflecting and planning.

It is encouraging to be able to report improvement in some of these areas in both parts of the question. Answers to part (a) were generally more focused and relevant. Answers were generally shorter (there were some exceptions) and were clearly based on more careful thinking and planning. There was more detailed focus on the extracts but some candidates still went straight to the approaches and ended up hardly examining the interpretation at all (more on these points later in the report). Far fewer candidates tried to evaluate the extract. When this was attempted (it is not required) it was done very badly with the most common line of argument being that one interpretation is totally inadequate because it does not cover what all the other interpretations cover. It was encouraging to find far fewer candidates trying to guess who the historian is. If they think they know, it always acts as a harmful distraction. In response to part (b) candidates generally focused more on assessment although in some options some candidates still wrote about the topic, the events in the topic, and interpretations rather than approaches.

The remainder of these general comments focus on a few key issues. Some candidates in part (a) are still far more interested in writing everything they know about the approach than on teasing out the overall interpretation of the extract. In some topics there are a few candidates who seemed to be determined to write about, for example, intentionalism or functionalism, regardless of what is in the extract. They then write a prepared essay about their favourite approach and as a result score very few marks.

One issue that some candidates are still struggling with is – how closely should they stay to the extract? The first candidates who tackled this unit sometimes wandered too far from it. There has been a turn away from this with candidates keeping much closer to the extract. However, there is a delicate balance to be struck between a paragraph-by-paragraph examination that is little more than a paraphrase, and approaches that focus so much on other historians and interpretations that the extract is sometimes not mentioned for pages at a time. The paragraph-by-paragraph examination needs to be carried out during the planning stages. The answer itself should not include a paragraph-by-paragraph paraphrase. The preliminary close examination of the extract should be part of the planning and thinking and should lead to the next stage which is to work out the overall interpretation of the historian. Only this needs to be in the candidate's final answer with appropriate references to the extract to support what is being claimed about the interpretation. If there are subsidiary interpretations in the extract these can then be explained. Candidates can then move on to the approaches and methods. Some extracts might contain much more on one or the other. Candidates should be aware of this and should not panic. If they think that an extract contains much more about approaches than methods, they should focus on the approaches. The examiner will not expect them to write about things that are not in the extract. They should also try to link the approaches or methods with the interpretation.

In answers to both part (a) and (b) there was evidence of some candidates struggling with how to handle comparisons with other interpretations and approaches. The key here is use these to throw further light on the extract in (a) and on the named approach in (b). Some candidates bolt alternative interpretations and approaches onto the end of their answers where they sit in glorious isolation adding little to the answer. In (a) it is probably best not to leave reference to alternative interpretations to the end of the answer. They should be introduced into the answer where they can usefully add to a candidate's analysis of some aspect of the extract. Likewise in (b) other approaches should be referred to as a way of enhancing the assessment of the named approach.

When answering part (b) candidates should try to make sure they are focusing on the named approach as an approach. For example, the part (b) question on appeasement asked about approaches that focus on Hitler. This was not meant as an invitation to tell the examiner about all the historians who have put Hitler at the centre of their interpretations, nor to simply explain the argument that Hitler's intentions should have been clear to everyone. Candidates are expected to explore how this approach has added to our understanding of appeasement – what has learned from it that would not have been learned through other approaches? They should then go on and explain its disadvantages and shortcomings eg what insights have we gained from other approaches that were unlikely to be gained from the named approach? Candidates need to be careful to keep to approaches and not wander into interpretations. There is, of course, a fine line between them and some candidates who write about interpretations often end up telling the examiner quite a lot about the advantages of the approach. However, it would be preferable if candidates did this with a clear understanding of what they were doing.

Comments on specific questions

The debate over the impact of the Norman Conquest 1066-1216

There were no candidates for this option.

The debate over Britain's 17th-century crises, 1629-89

Those candidates who focused on the interpretation first wrote the best answers. They were able to explain that the extract argues that the revolution happened by accident and through misunderstandings. There was no deliberate intention to cause a revolution and there were no long-term causes. There was, however, a breakdown in the system of government. The extract also emphasises the importance of understanding the differences between those who made the war (in Parliament) and those all over the country who had to take sides. These candidates were then able to go on and write about approaches with most understanding that the extract represents fairly recent revisionism. Some candidates were determined to include in their answers every approach they could think of. The references to taxation and the public in the extract sparked off answers about Marxist approaches, while the mention of Lilburne led others to write about history from below.

Answers to part (b) were mixed with some candidates obviously more familiar with the concept of a European general crisis than others. There were some good answers that explained what such an approach adds to our understanding of events in Britain but there were others who were left floundering for links eg Charles marriage to Henrietta Maria.

Different Interpretations of British Imperialism c. 1850-c.1950

There were many good answers to parts (a) and (b). Candidates were able to follow the extract's argument that Britain's relationship with areas around the world was complex, ever changing and ambiguous. There were many different factors that influenced these areas and the nature of the relationship. This leads to an explanation of the important role of free trade and the informal nature of much the Empire. However, it is then argued that neither the informal empire nor free trade achieved all that had been hoped for and that terms such as 'formal' and 'informal' are inadequate and too static to describe the fluid relationship. The extract ends by explaining that Britain's aim to create an informal empire was overtaken by other countries assuming direct control. Many candidates developed their explanation of these points by excellent use of relevant wider knowledge. However, there were some candidates who were sidetracked by particular issues such as continuity which took them away from the other important points that needed to be covered. Many answers were less successful when moving to the approaches and methods of the historian with many resorting to claims that the approach was 'an informal one'.

In response to (b) most candidates started by confidently stating that 'gender' is about more than 'women' but some then went on to write just about women. Some candidates focused only of gender and decolonisation and nationalist movements which made their answers rather narrow in scope. However, there were plenty of candidates who ranged across a range of other issues including the use of language, control, the use of concepts such as masculinity and femininity, the different roles of women both British and indigenous. Most candidates explained how the study of gender has added to our understanding of imperialism but also dealt well with its shortcomings as an approach. Candidates were less successful when trying to bring in other approaches into their answers as these were often bolted onto the answer and were not used to explore issues about gender as an approach.

The debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s

There were many good answers although some candidates did manage to complete their answers to (a) without mentioning Lord Londonderry. Some candidates spotted structuralism straight away and wrote about that instead of the extract. However, many candidates produced detailed and thoughtful analyses. They explained that despite going out of his way to understand how people at the time saw the situation and the structures and limits that they were acting within, the historian still considered appeasement to be an avoidable error. Candidates wrote well about military weakness, public opinion and the importance of social class.

In response to (b) some candidates explained Hitler's role in causing the Second World War and then took the examiner through just about every historian who has used an 'intentionalist' approach, and then through every alternative approach to studying appeasement. Thankfully, some candidates did focus on how focusing on Hitler has led to an understanding of appeasement. There was sometimes a worrying lack of valid assessment of the approach.

Different Approaches to the Crusades 1095-1272

This option was chosen by just a few centres. The overall standard of the answers was high although there was a significant minority of candidates who appeared to have little grasp of what to do and spent most of their time trying to pull the interpretation to bits. However, many candidates understood that the historian was exploring what should, and should not, be called a crusade. The extract focuses on the 'complicated and subtle' nature of crusading and uses what contemporaries understood a crusade to be, as a method to reach answer to the question. This leads the historian to a very wide and inclusive definition.

Part (b) also produced many good answers which assessed the approach named in the question as a way of studying the Crusades. Weaker candidates took the approach to be an interpretation and wrote answers that argued that the Crusades were, or were not, a defence against Muslim aggression.

Different Interpretations of Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe c. 1560-c.1660

There was a wide range of answers. Many candidates were able to explain the key points of the interpretation early in their answers – pressure to hunt witches came mainly from below, witch-hunting was more common in decentralised parts of Europe than in more centralised areas, the importance of material factors and the issue of religion and the problem facing Catholic archbishop-electors. 'From below' was understood well as an approach but 'from above' less well. Structural factors were recognised and explained by better candidates while weaker ones tended to bolt on to the end of their answers a series of alternative interpretations and approaches without linking them to the extract.

In response to part (b) weaker candidates took the Reformation as a possible causal factor of witch-hunting and then argued whether it was or not. The weakest had little idea what the Reformation was and took it to mean 'religion'. There were also candidates who were thoroughly familiar with both the Reformation and the work of those historians who have investigated witch-hunting by exploring possible links with the Reformation. There were good explanations of how it has added to our standing. Its shortcomings, as an approach, were not assessed as successfully.

Different American Wests 1840-1900

Generally candidates wrote about the overall interpretation more successfully than about approaches. The argument presented in the extract about the roles of violence, capital, corporatism and government were understood and explained. Candidates had a little more difficulty recognising the qualifications in the final sections of the extract – that many people prospered under the conditions described earlier in the extract and that the violence of the West has a limited role in explaining why the US today has a reputation as the most violent advanced democracy. Some candidates made vague assertions about the approach of the extract being 'revisionist' when they would have been better off by explaining the ways in which the historian uses a 'structuralist' approach. 'Revisionist' is probably a term to be avoided in all the options as it can mean almost anything. One decade's revisionists are themselves 'revised' in future years.

In part (b) there was a tendency to discuss interpretations rather than approaches with candidates arguing whether or not industrial, or even vague economic factors, were important or not. Some candidates turned the question into an opportunity to evaluate 'Old Western' and 'New Western' perspectives. These answers sometimes covered relevant ground but were not really focused on the question. The better candidates were able to explain how a focus on the industrial and urban West and the role of large corporations has led to new understandings of the West.

Debates about the Holocaust

This was by far the most popular option and as result produced a wide range of answers. In response to part (a) a number of candidates tried to guess who the historian was and then wrote about the historian rather than the extract. There were other candidates who focused on evaluating the extract revealing all kinds of misunderstandings about how historians work and about the nature of History. Some were very critical of the historian who because there was no piece of paper from Hitler proving his role had resorted to making inferences from sources. Other candidates simply accused him of baseless speculation. Some wrote essays about 'Intentionalism' or 'Functionalism' or even 'Synthesism'. Although these terms are important and cannot be avoided in teaching, candidates do need to be made aware of how they can be used properly and improperly in their answers.

There were, however, many good answers that contained careful and thoughtful analyses of the extract. They showed an understanding that the historian views Hitler as being the fundamental and crucial factor while recognising that other factors played a part in timing and in the nature of the Holocaust. Weaker candidates tended to focus on either Hitler or on the other factors. There are also some candidates too ready to use 'synthesis' as the response to any extract. This attempt to find an easy answer led them to miss the emphasis the historian gives the role of Hitler. There was some excellent discussion of the use the historian has made of the various notes and documents to arrive at early December as the crucial date.

In response to (b) weaker candidates either simply described instances of Jewish resistance or summarised the work of every historian of resistance they could think of. When they did try and assess they simply accused various historians of a lack of objectivity. Better candidates focused on the approach and there were some good answers explaining how a focus on Jewish resistance has led to new understandings of the Holocaust. There were also some good explanations of the limitations of this approach.

F987 – Historical Significance

General comments

Overall, the coursework component worked well again. Most candidates demonstrated, in varying degrees, a sense of both the concept of significance and the requirements of the assessment objectives. As a result, the component discriminated well and a good range of responses was seen – including work of a quality that would sit well for any University consideration. Some impressive work was read and rarely was there a feeling that a candidate had not at least made an effort. There were few really weak scripts.

The quality of Research Diaries was improved this year. Once again, the quality of the finished product tended in general to reflect the quality of the study. However, it is clear that some centres have realised that thorough preparation and planning are the keys to success in this component and this was readily observable in critically reflective diaries that in turn bore witness a well-organised teaching programme. Strangely, however, there were one or two instances where the genuine, evaluative quality of the Diary was not reflected in the text of the study.

In the main studies themselves, stronger candidates did much of what was expected: persistent question focus and engagement with the concept of significance (across and over time); analysis and evaluation; critical use of a range of sources and historians' interpretations (not used merely to illustrate or decorate a passage of text) – and, by a combination of these, producing argument of considerable complexity and sophistication.

Weaker candidates found the demands hard, resorting to forms of chronology, hagiography, or, in extreme cases, pure narrative and description. Some managed a more complex form of narrative but lacked steady analysis and the engagement of sources that were need to convert these into assessments of significance. Where significance was addressed, it was often handled weakly; sometimes, it was asserted or else consigned to a bolt-on ending.

A growing number of candidates proposed criteria for significance borrowed from the writings of well known history educationists. However, this needs careful thought. While weaker candidates may benefit from the structure which these criteria provide, this can result in somewhat mechanistic responses, in which reasoning about significance is made to fit the 'model', rather than the 'model' being used as a source of ideas that might (or might not) underpin the reasoning. In other words, such criteria are not necessarily appropriate for all topics, and candidates could be encouraged to design their own, or modify the list supplied. In this way, responses would be more personal and appear more original.

Finally, it was clear from the some of the studies that candidates are using terminology associated with 'significance' interchangeably, suggesting a need for consistency. When discussing immediate significance or impact, candidates should use 'at the time', contemporary' 'across time' (think of ripples on a pond) or 'synchronic'; when discussing significance or impact over a longer period of time, they should use 'over time', or 'diachronic'. When discussing a combination of both, the phrase 'historical significance' should be used (as in the title of many of the studies).

A: The Study:

Presentation:

A good majority of submissions were well organised and clearly presented. It follows that a minority were not.

The most important omission is the Coursework Cover Sheet. This is what enables Moderators to link a candidate's name and number with the mark given for the study. In other words, where a centre decides to place each candidate's marks on scripts without cover sheets, and where several candidates (as often happens) do not put their names on their scripts, there is no way for the Moderator to know whose work he is moderating.

Similarly, most, but not all, centres provided a Records of Programme Study Forms – which allows a quick check to be made that no content combination rules have been broken.

Almost all centres now place their candidates' studies (including both of the above and the research diary) in poly-pockets without a staple. This is good practice, considerably easing the physical process of moderation.

There is a requirement for candidates to adhere to the word limit and for centres to show by a clear line when the reading of the work stopped. There is an additional requirement to show an individual word count on each page as well as the cumulative total at the end. Again, some centres did and others did not – where the word limit had clearly been exceeded. Please be advised that Moderators do stop reading when the limit is reached.

Marking of students' work:

Formative annotation

Most centres made good use of the Generic Mark Scheme and its level descriptors. This resulted in a full range of outcomes and, consequently, a component that discriminated well in terms of candidates' performance. No centres were asked to re-mark their candidates' work and no more than a minority erred beyond tolerance.

Formative annotation, involving identification of eg analysis, evaluation, description, cross-referencing, critical evaluation, etc) was, in most cases, both extensive and informative. However, some scripts had precious little comment on them and at least two centres had nothing at all on any page. The point is that margin annotation actually helps everyone: the candidate, for (as it were) formalising his/her reasoning; the Moderator, for being able to see why the centre has rewarded this or that passage (and thence revealing teachers' understanding of the assessment objectives); and the centre, as recipients of more diagnostic advice that the Moderator is able to give in his report.

There was, again this year, considerable over-estimation of what constitutes "critical use" of sources at this level. Some candidates received credit for simply mentioning a source or historian. There really is a need to wait until satisfied that the candidate had demonstrated a consistent operational understanding of this or that technique before awarding the level. Some evaluative judgements made by candidates had not advanced beyond the level one might find at GCSE. Sources, and historians' judgements, were commonly introduced merely to illustrate, support, or echo, a point already made by the writer.

Summative annotation

The marking was generally sound and some of it most impressive. However, some inconsistencies were also observed – in particular, there was some tendency to be a little generous at the top end and the reverse at the bottom end. This could be the product of a desire to stretch marks but, at times, it was a little harsh on those nearer the low end of the mark spectrum (narratives quite often had some semblance of analysis or tried to evaluate sources, even if very rudimentarily).

Many candidates achieved good responses by separating short-term and long-term significance and by evaluating source material in the planning of their responses. This is a point repeated from last year's report. The key to success in this component is width of reading and critical appraisal of source material at the planning stage.

It is worth remembering that Level 5 can only be awarded to candidates who successfully integrate both assessments of significance (see below). Too often the top level was awarded to candidates who had, in effect, arrived at two separate judgements of significance – or had arrived at what looked like integration but was still separate treatment: "on the one hand.....on the other....." The safest strategy in summative annotation is to use phrases from the relevant level descriptor – which is now fairly common practice.

Most centres place a summative commentary in the appropriate box on the cover sheet but offer a more detailed breakdown of candidates' performance at the end of the study – followed by separate annotation at the end of the diary. As there is a single mark under each AO for both the study and the diary, it makes more sense to provide one set of annotation at the very end to cover both study and diary.

Choice of questions:

The biggest single factor in enabling candidates to do their best is ensuring that they design appropriate enquiry questions. It was clear that Centres which had not made use of the OCR Consultancy service had often limited their candidates' opportunities. Limiting questions this year included one or other of the following:

Questions that were too narrow or time restricted (Eg What was the significance tactic X in the outcome of war Y?), so cutting off consideration of significance over time;

Questions that seem to deny the possibility of negotiation and lead straight into biographies (Eg "Why is Z significant in the history of...?");

Questions that led straight into causation: ("Eg Was X the most significant factor in explaining Y?");

Questions with no reference to significance in the titles;

Questions that set up comparisons "Compare the significance of..." these rarely succeed, leading all too often to an imbalance of coverage.

To accommodate the 'over time' dimension, it is useful to think of the subject as being part of a longer story that deals with something slightly different and allows for consideration of prior and subsequent developments. For example, a study focusing on Pasteur might consider his significance 'in the development of medical cures'; similarly, a study focusing on the Second Reform Act could be seen as part of a story about the development of democracy in Britain; whilst a study focused on the Tonyandy Riot might be seen as part of a longer story about popular protest in Wales.

If in doubt, candidates should allow themselves maximum flexibility with “What was the historical significance of...”

Attributions of significance:

Significance at the time:

The most successful studies tend to be those who address the question early on. This involves giving the reader some idea about how the problem of ascribing significance is to be addressed and a flavour of how, in broad terms, the historical debate around the topic has developed.

Assuming that this takes up the introduction, it is the second paragraph – usually the beginning of the argument proper – that is then critical. Candidates who go wrong at this point tend to launch into a descriptive narrative of the person or event or site as a sort of background context to inform the main argument. This may be well intentioned but invariably goes on too long, losing focus on the question and leaving insufficient room for development of the argument itself. On the other hand, context is important. The ‘trick’, therefore, is to weave sufficient contextual material into the first argument about significance (usually ‘at the time’) to facilitate the interpretation of source material and say something about contemporary impact. In other words, the narrative has to ‘get to work’ on the question from the start.

The following is a very successful example of how this can be done. It comes from a study assessing the historical significance of Owain Glyndwr:

Owain Glyndwr was an experienced Welsh military commander whose inspirational leadership and tactics were successful in curbing English domination of Wales during the fifteenth century. The Annals of Owen Glyn Dwr support the interpretation that Owain Glyndwr was able to inspire the Welsh to rise in rebellion against their English overlords when it cites that ‘from every part of Wales’ there were ‘many youths and fighting men’ who ‘rose and joined’ Owain Glyndwr in his War of Independence. However, the Annals only recall the events of the Glyndwr rebellion and may therefore exaggerate Glyndwr’s successes against the English. Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt further identifies how it was Owain’s ‘considerable renown’ that was the ‘means to bring many to his side’ and cause the number of rebels to ‘greatly increase’. However, this fails to take into account that there were many reasons why Welsh people decided to support Owain Glyndwr. A view furthered by the Archaeologica Cambrensis when it credits the effect of Owain Glyndwr’s inspiration and his ‘gallant exploit’ at the Battle of Hyddgen ‘achieved against so great a superiority of forces’ as the inspiration behind the ‘increased popularity of the Welsh chieftain among his countrymen and the cause of ‘considerable accession to the number of his followers’. However, this interpretation does not recognise that the Battle of Hyddgen was one of sheer desperation not gallantry. Nevertheless, Terry Breverton believes that Owain Glyndwr could not only inspire ‘unpaid Welsh volunteers’ with the passion and determination to fight off ‘no less than six large-scale royal invasions of paid soldiers and foreign mercenaries’ but also that this ‘passionate’ commitment to fight against the English came ‘from every corner of Wales’. However, this view ignores the fact that a large number of Welshmen chose to follow and fight for the English crown against Glyndwr. [All quoted passages are footnoted in original]

Significance over time:

As in last year’s examination, it was this calculation of significance that tended to cause more problems – partly, one suspects, because traditional approaches to A-level history involve digging deeper rather than looking longer, and partly because diachronic narratives require a rather more sweeping manipulation of historical facts.

There at least three ways of doing it:

- by placing the event etc in the middle of a line of development consisting of prior and subsequent events, in order to reveal how much of a turning point the event represented;
- by examining, critically, ways in which the event etc is remembered, or commemorated – in order to measure its resonance, or iconic significance;
- by considering how, and explaining why, historians views of the event etc have themselves changed over time.

An example of the first approach can be found in the following extract – part of study of the significance of the Labour reforms of 1945-51.

As we have already discussed, the idea of a National Health Service was nothing new and especially came to prominence during the Second World War but, as Michael Foot says, the significance of it can clearly be seen in how different the new from the old was. Even only ten years before, the feudal system of healthcare existed, with the provision of healthcare seen as a privilege rather than a social right and principle. Bevan's ideas completely surpassed the half-way houses of Tudor and Edwardian legislation. I see one of the most significant ideas that the NHS brings is one of uniqueness and a creation that was fit for the time that it was in. Finally, practical welfarism in Britain had lived up to its ideological principles. The Booths and the Rowntrees in the early 1900s would have been shocked at how far Clement Attlee's government had gone in creating a revolutionary social institution.....

..... This suggests that the long-term significance of the NHS was huge because it was ingrained in the national consciousness as an institution for the collective good. Although prescription charges had to be introduced, it took until the Thatcher Administration's white paper, 'Working for the Patients' to break down the monolithic structure that dominated Britain's social and political landscape, which even supporters of the NHS agreed needed to happen. The fact that the NHS' principles and general structure remained intact and survived the onslaught of Thatcher's Neo-liberalism is a testament to the fact that the creation of the NHS was a revolutionary moment in British history, encompassing everyone, regardless of race, wealth and background, which was extraordinary for class-ridden Britain – a purely egalitarian institution and a landmark in British history.'

And an example of the second approach can be found in the following example – taken from a study of the significance of the Dreyfus Affair. It is included to show that resonance needs to be explored and explained – not merely asserted, which tends to happen as part of a bolt-on assessment of significance 'over time' in some studies.

Despite the limited impact of its consequences, the Affair remains prominently remembered in modern day France; indicating its lasting political significance in the French psyche. A major strand in this 'psyche' is the nation's pride in its Republican identity. Chirac's words during the commemorations of Dreyfus's acquittal indicate that the Affair remains significant for France as it symbolises this 'identity': "The rehabilitation of Dreyfus is the victory...and unity of France". Equally, the Affair's lasting significance is shown by the fact that its political controversies continue to resonate across France. The pride of the Army, for instance, as a powerful right-wing institution at the time, remains heavily bruised for wrongly condemning Dreyfus. In 1994, Colonel Gaujac notoriously stated in his account of the affair that "Dreyfus's innocence is the thesis generally accepted by historians", demonstrating that the French army still could not accept Dreyfus's innocence or honour him accordingly. This instantly provoked such a public outcry that the Colonel was automatically removed from his post. That the question of one man's innocence a century ago continues to be a current controversy highlights the Affair's lasting political significance. Its pertinence today, however, extends far beyond this one incident; many historians, draw on the 'mythology' of a 'united struggle for humanity' to analogise current political issues. Begley, for example, recreates the Affair in the controversy over Guantanamo

Bay, concluding that “the cautionary tale of the Dreyfus Affair deserves an important place in our current political and legal memory”. Whilst Lindemann attempts to undermine this, stating “Captain Dreyfus’s story has been too tempting to the popular, vulgarising type of historian, and too appealing to various political agendas”. The Affair’s universal applicability to political issues across the twentieth century demonstrates its lasting significance as a symbol of both political unity and division, not only in France but across the globe.

Merger of synchronic (at the time) and diachronic (over time) perspectives:

To reach the top level, candidates have to merge or integrate the two separate assessments they have made at L4 – in effect, to propose a synthesis, or third view, which has greater explanatory power than the first two separately – ie it has to be more than the sum of the two parts. This can be done eg by *explaining* differences in significance between one and the other, or by showing that they were both significant in different ways, at different times or for different groups in society. Integrating both approaches requires a high level of historical thinking, and carrying different perspectives and values in one's head at the same time. The key here is careful forethought in the planning stage. A few candidates did genuinely achieve this and produced some remarkable responses.

Here is an example taken from a section of a study of the significance of the Glorious Revolution, dealing with the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689.

Religion saw what I interpret to be a strong attempt to move towards toleration by introducing the Act of Toleration. However, making laws would not change attitudes very soon, as evidenced by John Locke, who referred to the Act's limitations but did welcome the new move towards tolerance: “Toleration has been established by law in our country. Not perhaps as wide in scope as might be wished...still it is something to have progressed so far”. The Toleration Act of 1689 gave freedom of worship solely to Protestant Dissenters, though the Test and Corporation Acts still barred them from office, demonstrating a limited tolerance; Dissenters managed to evade it using the Occasional Conformity Act, meaning they could attend Anglican sessions once a year but the rest of the time worship in their own faith. The Act would only have been significant in viewing changes of attitudes, were it not for the long term effects of this practice.

While James II was still alive, some churchmen found it difficult to take similar oaths of allegiance without breaking their original one to James. Eight bishops and 400 clergymen refused the oaths. William replaced these with ‘Latitudinarians’, who favoured a more moderate Church. Therefore divisions began between intolerant High Church factions and Low Church Latitudinarians.... The partial solution for intolerance at the time created other controversies that lasted into the 18th Century, coupled with a revival of the Church of England. Only with repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts in 1719 did controversies die down... Coward explains this by the fact that ‘what many in England wanted was not religious toleration but a more comprehensive Church of England’..... Attitudes only began to coherently change in the early 19th Century, when repeal of the Conventicle and Five Mile Acts demonstrating the willingness of Parliament to remove restrictions. Only in 1828, with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, were political disabilities removed for Non-conformists. However, Catholic emancipation was only achieved in 1829, when it became apparent that Ireland seemed to be going into civil war over the issue. This demonstrates how far events had to move along for full religious toleration to even break through the surface.

Hence, the candidate has shown that the promise of toleration enshrined in the Toleration Act of 1689 had a significant impact at the time but proved to be a ‘false dawn’ over time – when genuine toleration would be achieved for other reasons.

Use of sources:

There is clearly a need to explain the difference between the requirement of AO2a and AO2b. The two strands carry a separate range of marks and so have to be separately rewarded. However, it was clear in the worst cases either that marks given to one strand was simply duplicated in the other regardless of how much evidence there was for giving the second mark, or that marks were being awarded (in some case at Levels 4 or 5) to candidates who simply inserted a quotation (2a) or mentioned a historian by name (2b). This cannot be allowed. If no sources are used, or historians named, the candidate has to be given 0 marks.

Perhaps part of this was because of confusion about the difference between 'secondary sources' and 'historians' interpretations'. This is clearly explained in one moderator's report: *The mark-scheme is very clear: sources are not the same as historians' views. It was revealing that many centres gave exactly the same mark in each category, and in one case didn't even separate them, but lumped both parts of AO2 into one total. Some responses included hardly any sources at all.*

The distinction can be clearly stated. When a historian comments on this or that *detail* of an event or action, an extract from the commentary can be defined as a secondary source and can be critically used in the same way as a primary source – indeed, it is perfectly feasible to combine or cross-reference primary and secondary sources in support of a line of argument. However, when a historian makes some *generalised statement* or judgement about an event or individual in the past (for example, Elton's famous view of Thomas Cromwell as "one of the most remarkable revolutionaries in English history") this can be defined as an historical interpretation and evaluated in slightly different ways – eg by cross-reference with competing or complementary views, by claiming that the historian may be 'positioned' in certain ways according to his/her circumstances or approach or by the kinds of questions he/she may have asked (see the 'Controversies' unit), or by demonstrating how prevailing views have themselves changed over time through the normal processes of revision and how the view in question may have contributed to this state of affairs.

Here is an example of both AO2a and AO2b being simultaneously well developed – in a study of the significance of Oliver Cromwell's rule as Lord Protector:

Barry Coward is one historian who proposed Cromwell was of great significance as Protector, "elevated to a position previously occupied by those from royalty's elite, the former farmer left a lasting legacy..... Jonathan Clark is a historian who is unconvinced by claims such as Coward's that the Republic was actually worth celebrating. He reveals that "the idea of a republic was weak and Cromwell did very little to strengthen it". He believes that the post of Lord Protector was that of a quasi-king – a king in all but name. Clark sees the same inauguration ceremony that Coward writes of as a quasi-coronation and in comparison to Coward's personal interpretation, Clark corroborates that Cromwell was often addressed as 'Your Highness'. Barry Coward believes that this was down to the uncontrollable habits of the people and accepts that the regime adopted a 'regal style', however the passing of 'ordinances' under the 'Instrument of Government, Protector and Council' shows that the regime did not intend to be a 'carbon copy of the Stuart Monarchy..... Clark claims that the republican experiment was weak due to the fact that it was unprecedented. Europe was largely monarchical and "the English, Welsh, Scots and Irish had not engaged in armed conflict from 1638 with any widespread intention of instituting a republican alternative to monarchy". I can infer that republican ideas were improvised and unprepared... evidence of which is clearly obvious in the fact that in 1660 the restoration of the monarchy began.... As to the little significance Cromwell gained from the republican experiment, Clark makes a comparison with Charles I. Firstly he states that Cromwell was not a 'necessary figure in English government'. He believes that Cromwell respected Parliament no more than Charles I did, "A stable republic could only have been built on a cult of the 'ancient constitution' and the immemorial authority of Parliament, yet Cromwell did nothing to enhance parliament's

role.... This is clear evidence that Clark believes that Cromwell's significance, if any, does not lie in the republican experiment because in fact he did little to actually help it.....

'Critical use' of evidence, at its simplest level, occurs when the candidate goes beyond what the source actually says and then uses this new interpretation to advance an argument in some way – singly or in cross-reference with other pieces of evidence. Hence, a source – primary or secondary – is being used 'critically' if an inference is being drawn from it; if its meaning is shown to depend on its context or the circumstances of its production; if the reliability of its author is in doubt, or if it is shown to lack relevance or usefulness. When, in addition, a source is cross-referenced to one or more other sources, the *combined effect* can either strengthen or demolish a line of argument.

This is demonstrated in the following extract, part of a study assessing the historical significance of the French Resistance.

One of the most prominent arguments for the significance of the Resistance was the moral support that it gave the French [people throughout the oppressive German occupation of France. The first reactors in France to the Vichy regime, constructed by Marshal Petain following the Armistice of 22 June 1940, were the protests of individuals and youth groups against the oppression instigated by the new regime. This is exemplified by teenagers such as Pierre Roche, who cut the telephone cables used by the Nazis and Parisian journalist Jean Texcier, who composed '33 Conseils a l'occupe', a text which encouraged passive resistance against the Nazis. However, the Germans retaliated quickly and viciously against such actions: Roche was found and executed, rendering his actions fairly insignificant in the short term. Despite this, individuals such as Texcier had a wider impact in the long term. Agnes Humbert, secretary of the Musee de l'Homme resistance group described the 'Conseils' as a "glimmer of light in the darkness".... Additionally, the work of newspapers and anti-Vichy propaganda, for example the Parisian 'Musee de l'Homme organisation, other regional papers such as the southern 'Combat' and the anti-Vichy propaganda group 'La Derniere Colonne', provided substantial moral support for French society, arguably providing the grassroots confidence and inspiration that formed the later, more influential Resistance groups. This is corroborated by B. Ehrlich, who notes that "their dream gave hope and strength to others". However, Ehrlich's text was published in 1966 and it is arguable that he was endeavouring to contribute to the national belief of 'resistancialisme', and trying to rebuild the self-confidence of a defeated country. Despite this, the similarity between the sources provides evidence that, in this respect, the Resistance was of some significance.....

Some responses placed sources and historians' judgements quite separately from the main text, as if they were part of some other discussion. Some tried to bring in too many. On the other hand, in some responses no reference either to sources or to historians' judgements was made in the entire response. A few well-chosen sources and historian's judgements, thoroughly analysed and brought into the flow of the candidate's argument, are likely to produce better history – and better marks – than a plethora of superficial, passing comments.

Labels ("Traditionalist", "revisionist", "post-revisionist") did appear but less frequently than in 2010; the best candidates were able to use these to advantage, explaining and assessing critically. Weaker candidates simply used them without explanation. Some candidates had views on "N.O.P" (nature, origin, purpose) and were sharp-eyed on issues of handling primary sources, or more contentious secondary sources; the less able tended to indulge in basic and stock evaluation (usually "biased", "reliable", "unreliable", or else "X is a professor and must be trusted..." or "Y was not present at the events and his account cannot be trusted...").

Bibliographies and footnotes:

Bibliographies were generally well constructed (alphabetical by surname, followed by title, publisher and date). However, there was a problem in the area of referencing that needs to be highlighted and explained. This is about what might be called 'indirect' referencing – ie where the candidate *reports* the view of a historian in the text, attaches a super-scripted reference number and links this to a footnoted reference. There is nothing technically wrong with this practice – indeed it is an accepted convention in historical works of various kinds; moreover, it lends fluency to the narrative and should not be discouraged. However, if a candidate wishes to evaluate a *particular* source, or cross reference one *particular* source with another, it is advisable to quote directly from the source(s), so that the reader can see *exactly* what is being attempted, and *exactly* how this is advancing an argument about significance.

B: The Research Diary:

There were fewer one-line entries and descriptive logs than last year and a definite rise in the minimum standard achieved. This may be because centres are becoming more familiar with the requirements of the component and, in particular, of the critical importance of disciplined research and preparation. The best examples offered quite remarkable testimony candidates' critical engagement with evidence and an ability to link this to the evolving design of their studies. It was fascinating to see how whole studies turned on a visit to a particular museum, or the reading of a particular book, or even a chance encounter with an eye-witness. This is exactly what marks the coursework apart from any other unit.

Thoughtful teacher support and intervention was evident in many of the logs of successful candidates. Ensuring the Enquiry question was effective was one obvious way in which teachers kept their students on track. Another was the very wide reading undertaken by many candidates this year. The debate about significance which is at the heart of this unit can only be undertaken if candidates are made aware of the range of views already expressed by historians and other writers. It was surprising to see that some candidates relied quite heavily on GCSE textbooks. While these texts may have a place in considering a range of views, this is an A2 Unit, and the depth of reading should reflect this.

It is clear from reading many of the logs that candidates were often well into their research before thinking about how historical sources and historiography should play a part in their responses. This probably led to candidates "finding" sources to support positions they had already arrived at. Again, teaching what this unit is about, and how it should work, would help students engage with both elements from the start of their research, so that the debate is one into which source material and historiography are drawn. In several cases there was evidence of interesting and worthwhile critical analysis of sources found, or books read, in the logs, which, unfortunately, did not make its way into the main assignment itself.

The logs were being used in quite different ways by different centres. Some, the least useful, were no more than chronicles of dates of conversations or visits to libraries, with nothing to say about how these events had affected the progress of the students' thinking. Some logs were written retrospectively, after the whole process was over. These were often interesting, but probably of not much use to the candidates. The best were more like journals, recording the thinking of the candidate and the developing stages the planning was going through. It is not the number of entries which is worth having, but the quality of thought and its usefulness.

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