

## **Examiners' Reports**

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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## CONTENTS

Advanced GCE History B (H508)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE History B (H108)

### EXAMINERS' REPORTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
F981, F982 – Historical Explanation	1
F983, F984 – Using Historical Evidence	6
F985, F986 – Historical Controversies	13
F987 – Historical Significance	16

## F981, F982 – Historical Explanation

Centres should be aware that F981 and F982 papers sat from January 2012 onwards will no longer contain questions in the format *How would you best explain...* This format was introduced in order to offer a variety of question stem and in the hope that candidates would indeed argue a case based on what is, in their view, the best way of explaining an historical event or the development of an idea, for example. Since this was not consistently achieved, it has been decided not to persevere with this question stem. Questions set for the June 2011 papers will be the last to include this type of question.

What makes a good piece of historical explanation? In the context of this examination, a number of points may be made which it is hoped may prove helpful as reminders to centres and their candidates. Good explanation focuses on the word 'why', which is used explicitly in almost every question set, and is implicit in those where it does not feature. There is no set way in which this should be done, but phrases such as 'underlying this concern was...' or 'on closer analysis this event shows...', or 'this idea helps explain why...' will often help to bring into the open analytical thinking. Above all, the simple term 'because' often brings the writer immediately into engagement with causation, which itself underlies all the questions set for F981 and F982. What caused an event such as the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to happen, or the idea of Tariff Reform to spread? 'Because' frequently and successfully triggers an assessment of 'why'. Planning answers is important, but one examiner reports that many plans were almost too long and detailed, being driven by content alone, and few of the plans seen allowed students the opportunity to access modes of explanation, as set out in the following paragraph. Perhaps planning in the form of building upon 'because' statements may help as a very simple but effective technique.

Building on this approach to explanation, several centres have now adopted a straightforward approach which allows their candidates to avoid some of the pitfalls mentioned below. It maximises the chances of candidates hitting Levels 2 and 1 in the Mark Scheme. Taking Q8(a) as an example from Paper F982, *Why did the Bolshevik government sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?*, one starting point was to assess the beliefs and ideology of the leading players in the Bolshevik government towards war and the spread of Communism. Why such views were held and the forms these ideas took are relevant considerations in explaining why Lenin and Trotsky made the decisions they did, but since beliefs are not held in a vacuum, candidates then went on profitably to look at the April Theses and, in some cases, to the theoretical underpinnings of Marxism and Lenin and Trotsky's adaptations of those works. This led fairly naturally to consideration of the intentions of the Bolshevik leadership in 1917: to spread Communism to Germany and Austria-Hungary; to prevent further catastrophic military defeats; to defend Petrograd, and so on. In turn, candidates were then minded to consider the particular context of December 1917 – March 1918, the threat of internal political upheaval and further German advances into the heartland of Russia. Likewise Q3(a) from Paper F981, *Why was Philip II willing to help those who wished to overthrow Elizabeth?* prompted some responses which opened with discussion of Philip II's religious beliefs, moved on to consideration of his possible intentions towards the English monarchy, which some candidates saw as more benign than others, before then looking at events and key moments such as Drake's provocative actions in 1587.

Several caveats are important here. It is not recommended that centres adopt mechanical, mnemonic-driven methods towards explanations answers. Good historical writing is about more than following a formula, as almost every centre which enters candidates for this examination already realises. Yet it remains the case that some approaches are more fruitful than others, and regular readers of these Reports will recognise that the advice above chimes well with earlier comments about the value for candidates in looking at the past from several different angles, just as a building can be looked at in different ways for different purposes. What helps

good centres and candidates to avoid a formulaic approach is the emphasis which they place on linking beliefs to intentions, or actions to beliefs, or events to their contexts. The Treaty of Nonsuch merits discussion in response to a question about why Elizabeth wanted to help the Dutch rebels against Philip II but, rather than being seen and written about as a stand-alone event, putting the Treaty into the context of Anglo-Dutch trade links and weighing up its importance to mid sixteenth-century England will take us much further. Equally, the 'trigger' of the Treaty of Joinville tells us something about royal intentions and beliefs in the mid-1580s. Why events happened in the way that they did, and what caused them to happen, are central to good historical explanation. This approach is enshrined in the question-specific mark scheme for each paper.

Centres should note that there has been a change to the format of this question-specific mark schemes for papers F981 and F982 this session. Instead of offering suggestions about how responses might be made at L1, L3 and L5, mark schemes henceforward will offer indicative content. The hope is that this will support centres and candidates in looking at past paper questions to determine the breadth and depth of content considered appropriate at this level. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasising that examiners for this paper do not 'deduct marks because something is missing' or penalise candidates who fail to mention, for example, ideas about laissez-faire economics in consideration of why Labour lost the 1970 election. Candidates are assessed on the basis of 'a wide range of relevant and accurate knowledge', as Level 1 puts it, and it is the generic mark scheme which examiners keep in front of them as they mark responses rather than the question-specific mark scheme.

As ever, it was the case that a few candidates answered part (a) from one question and part (b) from another question, with the result that each part was marked but only the higher mark counted. Centres are urged to remind candidates that the rubric clearly instructs: *Answer both parts of your chosen question.* was less well understood than the others but there

What was referred to last summer as 'conditional writing' was again apparent: 'Philip would have wanted a Catholic ruler in charge...' Did he? If so, say so. The Duma was bicameral. 'This would have infuriated the Liberals.' Did it?

## F981

There were responses to all F981 questions. As usual, questions on Elizabeth I were the most popular, and there were encouraging numbers of centres tackling The End of Consensus: Britain 1945-90, perhaps reflecting the recent growth in resources dedicated to the study of post World War II Britain and in particular the Thatcher years. There are also indications that the greater availability of DVD and YouTube resources in centres has made an impact on some students, with references made, for example to violent scenes at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in the context of later support for Thatcherism.

Q2 proved more popular than Q1 under Lancastrians and Yorkists, 1437-85. Q1(a) saw answers of better quality, perhaps because the story of Clarence is well-known, and answers to Q1(b) were weakened by a lack of clear planning. The tighter confines of Richard III's reign were better grasped than the complexities of Edward IV's periods of rule. In general terms, Richard of Gloucester's importance to Edward was well-grasped, particularly in the context of Richard's powerful position in the North of England, but some responses did not distinguish well between those nobles who did and those who did not remain supporters of the King between 1483 and 1485 – and why this was. The major weakness here concerned ideas of patronage, service and loyalty, which were often ignored or mentioned only in passing, with events and actions being the main focus.

A minority of centres tackling the Elizabeth questions have clearly considered the Neale and Elton debates on Elizabeth and her parliaments. Valuable as this may be in its own terms, there is no requirement at all to address issues of historiography in F981 or F982, and candidates would be better advised to offer arguments of their own than to summarize the views of others. One such point was made in relation to Q3 (b): *Overall these two reasons [their respective faiths, and her imprisonment of Mary, Queen of Scots] would not have been enough for Philip to agree to help overthrow Elizabeth. They are things that would have directly annoyed or irritated Philip but not enough to agree on getting rid of her.* Here was a candidate looking carefully at the question set and teasing out the threads of the term 'overthrow'. Q3 was more commonly chosen than Q4, but there were some impressive answers in both instances which tied in contemporary attitudes and beliefs to specific events or responses in precisely the way recommended above. Assertions about Elizabeth's attitude to Parliament and Parliament's attitudes towards her are much more likely to be turned into supported demonstrations of a point by reference to particular events, such as Peter Wentworth's 1576 speech in support of freedom of speech, for example. In relation to both questions, change over time was not explored by many candidates. The assumption was that the England and the Elizabeth of 1558 were essentially the same as their counterparts in the early seventeenth century. Did Elizabeth constantly face opposition from her Parliaments? Was Philip II unchanging in his wish to overthrow the Queen?

Several centres, in line with comments made at the start of this Report, have built a modal approach into their teaching and planning, which is entirely to be praised and recommended. We cannot expect candidates to learn how to do this at the end of a course with the examination looming. The result was clear paragraphs on Philip II's attitudes and beliefs towards England and her subjects; an outline of his possible intentions at key moments, which changed according to the fortunes, for example, of Mary Stuart; consideration of his actions and responses in military terms to changing events, and an assessment of the changing situation or context of, for example, the Anglo-French relationship. One candidate went so far as to underline every mention of belief, action or event, which was unnecessary, but the point holds.

Questions 5 and 6 were equally popular. A tendency to list factors was apparent in Q 5 (b) in particular, and the result is that attitudes and ideas tended to be underplayed as a consequence – as the mark scheme suggests, there is room here for consideration of Home Rule, or the reform of the House of Lords, to take only two examples. Likewise, candidates are on safe ground when exploring Suffragette actions, but why such actions and reactions were considered appropriate by some and offensive by others opens up other avenues of explanation which can be rewarded. Answers on Enoch Powell were often disappointingly narrow and did not extend beyond the 'rivers of blood' speech, which was discussed in a vacuum and not tied in to a particular legislative or political context. Q8(a) needed a greater grasp of factual material than many candidates were able to demonstrate: key politicians, their views and the chronology of the first wave of privatisations, for example, needed more detailed explanation. Q8(b) witnessed the unhistorical explanation by one candidate that the Falkland Islands sought their independence from Britain, thereby explaining Mrs Thatcher's determination to go to war. The same candidate's assertion that the Falklands were populated by Aborigines added nothing to the credibility of the answer.

**F982**

There were no Charlemagne answers in this session. Questions 3 and 4 on Luther were equally popular. Q3(a) did elicit some narrative of events between 1517 and 1521, which is unusual for this paper, but Q3(b) was more convincingly addressed, lending itself well to exploration of beliefs, contexts and the dramatic events which characterise responses to Luther. Q3(a) was reasonably answered. Most were aware of the more pressing problems facing Charles at the start of his reign and his lack of appreciation of the gravity of the threat faced by Luther until it was almost too late. Better answers placed his response into a fuller context: the conflicting pressures of the Church and the dangers of inciting civil war in Germany. Some brought out the fact that blame should also be laid at the feet of the Catholic princes and Church for failing to halt Luther in the early years, while Charles was dealing with problems elsewhere, and that, by the time he was able to respond more directly, Luther's ideas were already well established. Better answers placed Charles' actions into the context of the power/authority of the Holy Roman Empire within Germany at this time and the importance of the protection of Luther by Frederick. Some suggested that Charles might legitimately have expected his intervention to have succeeded but underestimated the tenacity of Luther.

Q3(b) was generally well answered. Students picked up on the term 'people' and explained the appeal of Luther to groups as varied as princes/intellectuals/city magistrates/peasants. Many appreciated that Luther consciously targeted different groups, making use of the spread of communication, and some used this to explain how groups used Luther's ideas for their own purposes. There were few responses to Q4.

In terms of the French revolution questions, most candidates were well aware of a range of economic problems in France in the years leading up to the revolution and could explain them at least adequately. Listing factors, however, was no substitute for thinking about them. An absence of consistent political will to effect economic reform was a feature mentioned in several better responses. Analysis was often confined to assertions about how one factor made another worse. Candidates found it more difficult to provide convincing analysis, perhaps because they did not plan beyond identifying the problems. This question highlighted the need to plan – this can be done most effectively when the order in which the factors are addressed is designed to lead from one to another in an analytical argument.

Q5(b) saw some better candidates distinguishing clearly the works of intellectuals from the more popular and, arguably, more directly influential works of writers, polemicists and cartoonists. Some candidates then linked these ideas to particular events such as the Assembly of Notables in 1787, where taxation reform was discussed and rejected. Linking the nuts-and-bolts of taxation and exemptions from it to ideas about representation and taxation was fertile. Ideas and beliefs need a context and should wherever possible be linked to particular events and actions, and this was also evident with Q6(a) where some responses showed a good grasp of why Louis XVI felt unable to accept demands for a constitutional monarchy, while others merely made assertions about Divine Right without reference to any post-1789 events. Better candidates saw how ideas were related to secular constitutional developments and also to the power of the Church. Which people were most affected by ideas, and why?

Q6b Most candidates were familiar with the ways in which Louis increasingly lost the trust of his people, but did not distinguish effectively between the creation of the republic and the execution of the king. A few did engage with the power struggle in the Assembly between supporters and opponents of the execution, linking the issue (though never strongly) to the Jacobin/Girondin struggle. Factual knowledge was at a premium here: those candidates who explained events accurately and appropriately were better placed to access the higher levels.

As ever, questions on Russia were by far the most commonly tackled on this paper. Q7 was most frequently attempted. Q7(a) saw some excellent answers which looked at the terms of the October Manifesto and the difficulties which the ideas underpinning them presented to Nicholas II before moving on, for example, to paragraphs about the Fundamental Laws and the Tsar's actions and attitudes in relation to the Dumas which assessed events and changing contexts. Less successful attempts spent too long exploring why the October Manifesto had been agreed in the first place; some candidates had clearly been hoping for a question on Bloody Sunday and the 1905 Revolution and were determined to write as if there was such a question before them. It cannot be emphasised too much that responses which begin with a page of general description about the problems facing Russia and her ruler at the start of the century are unlikely to be addressing the question set – any question set. The reverse approach, working outwards from the particular and immediate context to a wider explanatory context, has been advocated in previous Reports as being much more likely to be successful.

Similarly, some answers ignored the key words 'enter the war' and looked instead at the consequences of this entry, to their detriment. A lack of subject knowledge, resulting in thin answers, ranks alongside an inappropriate essay structure and approach as the major reason for answers falling into Level 4 or 5. The wider context of the Balkan Wars was often not well explained. By contrast, a very good answer to Q7(b), *Why did Russia enter the First World War in 1917?* began by looking at Nicholas II's ideas about his own position before making this more specific to the question set by linking this to his attitude towards the Serb population. The essay moved on to examine events, notably the formation of the Triple Entente and the outbreak of the Balkan wars, resulting in the spark or trigger of events at Sarajevo. The circumstances in which Russia found herself, with an unstable economy and political fault lines were then discussed. The view presented was that the Tsar could have accepted Austro-Hungarian expansion and need not have entered the war. This essay was awarded L1 22 marks. Its modal structure allowed it to explain the entry of Russia into the war from a number of angles.

Examiners reported that some centres had not covered by the time of the examination the Consolidation of Bolshevik Power material addressed in Q8, putting their candidates in a difficult position. As one examiner tells me, when candidates appear not to know what the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was, or what the sequence of events was leading to WWI, it is difficult to find many marks for them. Of those who did tackle Q8, there were some nicely modal essays which progressed in Q8(a) from Lenin's beliefs about an imperialist war, for example, to the spread of those beliefs among the peasantry, to the immediate circumstances in which Russia found itself in 1917 – 1918, to discussion of particular actions and events. For Q8(b) some candidates suggested that the respective ideologies of Trotsky and Lenin alone were insufficient to explain why the Civil War was won; in order to explain fully the victory, assessment was needed of the actions undertaken by Trotsky, and of the economic and geographical circumstances which favoured the Reds over the Whites. Of these, it was suggested, the role of key individuals offered the best explanation. This was certainly preferable to a standard listing of the relative strengths and weaknesses of Reds and Whites with little analysis of why, given the perceived imbalances, the Civil War could have lasted as long as it did.

So, the emphasis in this Report is on recommending to centres the advisability of building the planning of a modal approach into teaching from an early stage. Planning answers in the answer booklet in the same clear format is highly advantageous to candidates, who may be encouraged to build links into this planning as they come to mind and as they naturally flow. Ideas link to events, and actions link to beliefs, with the simple but effective term 'because' helping to provide a consistent focus on the question set.

## F983, F984 – Using Historical Evidence

### General Comments

Most candidates managed their time well, writing appropriate amounts for each answer, and often showing some evidence of useful planning of responses. Many candidates adopted an approach that allowed them to produce a relevant and structured argument in part (a). Part (b) continues to present more problems; the focus is on the concepts associated with the use of historical sources and those candidates who do not show evidence of having progressed beyond the idea that sources provide information cannot score well.

A wide range of ability was seen in answers. The best candidates had a clear strategy for answering question (a) and maintained a sharp focus on testing the given interpretation using the evidence in the sources. They drew sound inferences from this evidence and were often able to see alternative readings of the same sources. They did not simply add knowledge for the sake of padding the answer but used what they knew to evaluate how strongly the evidence they had found actually supported the interpretation. In doing so, they went beyond face value reading of the evidence and produced more subtle responses. A particularly effective strategy was to understand that the interpretation was making a claim about a long period of time and to use evidence from the sources to examine whether it held true for the whole period covered. There is evidence that candidates are making more use of contextual knowledge in part (a), and this is to be encouraged, provided that the knowledge is used to draw inferences from, and to evaluate, the sources, rather than to provide additional evidence.

Comments on individual questions will reveal particular pitfalls into which some candidates fell. However it is worth noting that where a source is about, or shows evidence of, events or people who are familiar to candidates, they often fall into the trap of using what they know about the person or event to test the interpretation, rather than using evidence inferred from the source. Source 6 in F984 Q4 provides an example of a source that suffered in this way. Rather than analysing what the source showed or implied, many candidates used what they knew of the events at Little Rock on subsequent days to test the interpretation. This tendency to use knowledge about the topic has been prevalent in F983 Q2 in previous sessions, but extended to other questions in both papers in this session. It needs to be stressed to candidates that this examination is primarily about 'using historical evidence', not the content knowledge that is required for F981/2.

In contrast, candidates for F983 Q1 generally use less contextual knowledge, relying more on evidence taken at face value from the sources. This is surprising, given the nature of medieval sources. In this question, the distinction between what the modern writer knew about contagion and what the medieval writers knew gave a clear lead on how contextual knowledge might be used, yet few distinguished between the different levels of medical knowledge. The lack of reference to the deaths of children in monastic settings was taken to mean that adults rather than children were affected by plague.

Some weaker candidates ignored the interpretation in favour of testing their own – sometimes even dismissing the given interpretation in the first few sentences of the answer to replace it entirely with something else. This cannot achieve a high mark since the purpose of the task in (a) is to use the given interpretation as the base from which to develop an amendment. Another sign of a weak answer was source-by-source testing. This usually led to unnecessary summaries of what a source said with 'so this supports / challenges the interpretation' tacked onto the end of the paragraph without any clear understanding of how. Many also failed to move beyond a face value reading. As far as a significant minority of candidates was concerned, the evidence in the sources could be used without any questions being raised about its purpose, typicality or reliability.

The example which follows is from a response to F984 Q4 containing good use of contextual knowledge to make sophisticated inferences from sources in (a). This quality is demonstrated in the extract from the answer. However when referring to source 2, the candidate does not use the extract from the judgement that was provided, instead using contextual knowledge of the famous 'separate but equal' section of the judgement. Unfortunately the candidate did not cross-reference the sources, despite some clear opportunities to do so, but did establish that there was change over time.

*Source 1 supports the interpretation of 'the federal authorities had little influence on the way African Americans were treated' because, despite slavery being abolished in 1865, as well as African Americans gaining human and civil rights, we still see a cartoon from 1874, 9 years later, still showing white violence towards blacks.*

*Source 2 is an extract of a Supreme Court judgement from the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson case. This case upheld 'separate but equal' facilities for whites and blacks as constitutional. This source further supports the interpretation, as well as agreeing with source 1 in the way that both show legislation can be passed by the federal authorities which give African Americans de jure rights, when de facto (in fact) the white populations minds cannot be changed by legislation. Even when Plessy v. Ferguson case was overturned by the Brown v. Board of Education case, and African Americans were free to join white schools, federal authorities held little sway over state policy. At Little Rock High School in 1957 National Guard troops were used by the state governor to keep out black students. ... Source 6 is a photograph of students attempting to attend Little Rock Central High School in 1957. This source supports the interpretation as despite the Supreme Court ruling separate but equal schools unconstitutional in 1955 at the Brown v. Board of Education case, white racists still hold their prejudices.*

Answers to (b) also varied enormously, with a large number of candidates still unaware of what is being rewarded in this answer. Most candidates focus on the content of the sources for at least a part of their answer. This leads them into a discussion of the merits or otherwise of the sources as providers of *information* rather than *evidence*. Some candidates paraphrase or quote each source to show what it is about, while others generalise about the content of the sources as a set. They may also use their knowledge of the whole topic to list either subject content or 'voices' that are missing. This is not what examiners are looking for when awarding marks beyond level 4. The question asks about the sources as tools for the historian, and candidates need to appreciate that the strengths and weaknesses of a source depend on factors other than its content. That is, they should address issues such as why it was produced (its purpose), whether the view it contains is typical, and why the evidence that it contains and can be inferred from it can or cannot be considered reliable. Candidates are not rewarded for speculation ('this writer may be biased... the author might have been ...') but for using their knowledge of the topic or period to judge the source ('monks are usually critical of the Vikings because they destroyed monasteries and are more positive towards the French, but these sources are not typical as they take the opposite view.'). Equally, identifying 'what we do not know' (usually because the candidate does not know or the provenance provided does not tell him or her, rather than because it is not possible to find out) is unproductive, as, like the focus on content, this reveals little about the candidate's understanding of historical enquiry. Unfortunately it frequently reveals a lack of basic contextual knowledge.

It is worth reminding candidates that they do not need to mention all the sources in their answer to (b), especially if it is to make the same point repeatedly. A good strategy would be to select a source that has an obvious purpose and to discuss what impact this has on its usefulness, then to find others (or in some cases, the same source) to discuss typicality, bias and the other issues set out in the mark scheme. It is also worth reminding candidates that they must refer to and evaluate the sources provided and not be too general. In F984 Q4 for example, there were a couple of speeches by presidents which led candidates into poor quality speculation about speeches in general ('The President probably didn't write the speech, so we can't be sure if he meant it' or 'If it wasn't written down at the time, parts might have been forgotten') instead of

focusing on *these* speeches (source 3 was a State of the Union address, source 7 was given at an African American university – both points mentioned in the source attribution but not often analysed for what they might mean for the usefulness of the sources).

The following response to F983 Q3 (b) demonstrates many of the features that are rewarded highly, despite concluding that Lord Byron was unsympathetic to the Luddites. The answer would also have benefited from reference to more of the sources individually.

*Source 2 is both useful and problematic to a historian because although it provides evidence of the membership, methods and aims of protest, it faces serious reliability issues that are evident throughout it. It is useful to a historian because there is evidence to suggest that 'workmen' were the cause of this problem, and therefore that the working class were involved in radicalism. It also provides insight into their methods that revolved around 'violence' and 'broken' 'machines'. This is typical of the Luddite movement who used violence in order to try and accomplish their aims, which were 'the maintenance and well doing of the industrious poor', or in other words, employment and the removal of the machinery that was taking their jobs. However this source also creates problems for a historian because there are serious reliability issues. It was written by a lord and there is evidence of degrading language, with phrases such as 'in the blindness of their ignorance' that belittles the working class. This could mean that the information has been exaggerated or misrepresented in order to shine the lower class in a poor light. Also, as a lord, he could potentially be out of touch with the situation on the ground, and might not have relayed an accurate description of the situation. Therefore, this source is useful because it provides evidence of the aims, motives and methods of the Luddites but is problematic because it faces reliability issues and may not necessarily be accurate.*

*Sources 3 and 6 both come from a similar time period and agree on the working class in the trade union movement. This is both useful and problematic to a historian because although they provide strong evidence to support the working class movement and the Marxist ideal, they don't provide insight into alternative areas, that could potentially prove the Liberal interpretation of Britain, that protest was simply due to hunger and not a united class. Both sources suggest that the working classes were grouping together, which was typical of the time as the Trade Union movement was still growing and the GNCTU was around this time period as well. However, these sources provide no evidence to support the idea that protest was only due to economic reasons, when there is very strong contextual evidence to support this. Such as, the rise of radicalism around 1819, when bread prices were high, but also the reduction of radicalism in the mid-Victorian boom, when between 1850 – 1870, wages rose on average by 50%. Therefore, because these sources agree, they are useful because they provide strong evidence, but problematic because they lack variety.*

*The set of sources as a whole is both useful and problematic to a historian because although it provides a range of perspectives, it is unhelpful because there are not only several important gaps in the chronology, but also a limited type of source is available. The set is useful because a whole range of perspectives is covered, including radical and upper class views. This is important because it allows a historian to create an accurate image of the entirety of society, and thus come to a more accurate interpretation or conclusion. However, the problem of chronology is a significant one, because there are no sources relating to the events around 1819 such as the Peterloo massacre, or the rise of radicalism in the 1860s. This is important because these were two highpoints of radicalism and it would be an incomplete image created. Also there are no cartoon sources in the set which is important because cartoons provide critical insight into public opinion at the time.*

candidates' powers of expression demand comment. Increasingly candidates fail to employ the conventions of written communication such as using upper case letters appropriately. Spelling and grammar are regularly below the standard expected, with key terms misspelt from the start of the answer. Given that such errors occur from the start of answers, this is not an issue of time constraint causing a loss of accuracy, but indicates a failure to recognise the implications of poor English on clarity of communication, and, indeed, meaning. For example, 'effect' and 'affect' were used interchangeably, and where the meaning was critical, in F984 Q4, this led to a distortion of the argument.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **F983 Q1: The Impact and Consequences of the Black Death in England up to the 1450s**

The interpretation was accessible and candidates were able to extract relevant evidence from the sources to test its claim. Most candidates grouped the sources, often according to the type of plague victims mentioned. This often led to cross-referencing of evidence. Most candidates made use of the information provided to differentiate between the successive outbreaks of plague and some showed knowledge that one of the later outbreaks was nicknamed the 'plague of the children'.

Too many candidates accepted the sources at face value. There was surprising double-think applied when analysing source 7. While some candidates recognised that the writer's view reflected a literal reading of the Bible, and suggested that he might even be trying to excuse the inability of the clergy to intercede to halt the disease, they were also happy to accept that children were susceptible to plague because they were wicked. Many candidates inferred that the abbot who died was unlikely to qualify as a young person, yet they failed to recognise that a report on mortality in a monastery would necessarily exclude reports on the deaths of children.

Evaluation of chronicles remains weak, with candidates having only a superficial understanding of how and by whom they were produced and what this might mean when evaluating particular extracts from them. More worrying was the number of candidates who suggested that government death records or statistics from them would have been a useful source to have included in the paper.

#### **F983 Q2: Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England, 1489 – 1601**

This is an option where candidates in past sessions have tended to use their contextual knowledge rather than the sources to test the interpretation. This tendency is now less prevalent, suggesting that candidates are learning from the mistakes of their predecessors. Candidates displayed a sound knowledge of individual rebellions. There was good cross-referencing of sources, for example 2 and 3. Most candidates were able to differentiate accurately between national and local issues and better ones recognised that on occasion national policies, such as the dissolution of the monasteries, had impacts that differed from place to place and hence might be designated 'local'.

### **F983 Q3: Radicalism, Popular Politics and Control, 1780 – 1880s**

The interpretation discriminated well in that most candidates took it to imply that it was working class men who were radical and then proceeded to look for evidence of whether it was this group or others instead, or as well, who supported radicalism. A few candidates looked for evidence about what was supported (radicalism or reform) rather than who was involved. This was valid in that this issue could be addressed using the sources, but success was to a greater extent dependent on clear distinctions being made in defining the two terms.

Most candidates displayed good subject knowledge of the issues to which the sources referred and deployed it successfully to identify bias in the reporting. Some sources presented more problems in this respect than others. Spence and Paine were well known, with the latter used to provide context for the source. Luddites and Chartists were also well known, although most candidates were willing to accept the Luddites as radicals without question. Source 2 was understood by most to suggest criticism of the Luddites, rather than sympathy for them, but certainly there was some plausible analysis that inferred the former. Candidates were less familiar with Mechanics' Institutes, leading to some misinterpretation of Source 6. Occasionally it was apparent that Joseph Chamberlain had been mistaken for Neville.

### **F983 Q4: The Impact of War on British Society and Politics since 1900**

This was the most popular study topic in the British history paper. The interpretation was challenging, as testing it required candidates to establish that there was, or was not, a causal link between wars and changes in society. Most candidates focused on testing whether or not social change had taken place at the time of war rather than investigating the causes of the changes. One approach that worked well was to identify the main themes in the sources: health care and the role of women, then investigate them in turn.

Analysis and evaluation of the sources was mixed. While some excellent comments were seen, for example questioning if J. B. Priestley's comments were subject to censorship as they were made during the war, many candidates accepted sources at face value or suggested that he was a DJ. Millicent Fawcett's statement was accepted as a true reflection of the impact of World War I on women's lives by weaker candidates, while better ones pointed out that although they gained the vote, most jobs in industry were lost to them and they returned to more traditional roles. Statistical evidence was generally not analysed carefully, with few aware of why the figures for 1941 were missing. Some candidates did recognise that presenting the information as percentages might hide the fact that the numbers of women in some occupations had risen as the workforce increased.

Many were able to suggest the purpose of Lloyd George's speech (source 2), although fewer linked this to the building of council houses, or to the comments made by Priestley in source 4. A surprisingly high number had no idea what the Beveridge report said and were hence unable to cross-reference it with source 7 on the NHS. The purpose of websites was better understood, so most were able to offer evaluative comments on the final source.

### **F984 Q1: The Vikings in Europe 790s – 1066**

The interpretation was straightforward, but too many candidates did not pick up on the significance of 'became' in the interpretation. Instead they read it as 'were', so assumed that anything suggesting there was no threat challenged the interpretation and vice versa. Many adapted it only by adding a date when Vikings started to threaten the French monarchy, although some were able to pick out the damage done by marauding Vikings that was referenced in the destruction of churches righted by the Normans.

Too many candidates accepted the version of events as described in the sources. When using source 1 they missed the clue in source 4 about Rollo's 'loutish behaviour' that could have been used to evaluate the account offered in source 1. Overall there was surprisingly little evaluation of sources. Many were aware that Dudo can exaggerate but did not offer evidence of this in the sources. Much was made of the over reliance on Dudo or sources based on it, but this point was rarely developed to question the conclusions that could be drawn from the sources. There were strong inferences using contextual knowledge, often leading to a range of inferences being made from the same source, but this was rarely developed into a critical evaluation of the evidence itself.

#### **F984 Q2: The Italian Renaissance c 1420 – c1550**

Many candidates displayed extensive knowledge which they deployed effectively, particularly in question (a). Candidates seemed to find both the interpretation and sources accessible. Many challenged the idea of a 'revolution' in terms of either the dependence on classical models shown in some sources or the impracticality of, or opposition to, some of the ideas expressed in the sources and were able to reach at least a conclusion about the success of the given interpretation (Level 2 in AO2b). There were some good examples of candidates going beyond face value in reading the sources. For example, many noted that three of the seven sources were about da Vinci's work and questioned whether he could be regarded as typical of science at the time.

#### **F984 Q3: European Nationalism 1815 – 1914: Germany and Italy**

Most candidates were able to trace economic issues through the sources, though some took a very narrow view of what 'economic' might cover and so only looked for national economic issues, such as the effect of customs boundaries and unions, ignoring local shortages and lack of infrastructure (source 4). While there was some understanding of change over time, more candidates preferred to amend the interpretation by suggesting that other factors also played a part in driving developments. Whether candidates tried to explore a link between economics and these other factors or simply proposed a greater list of drivers affected their mark in A02b (Interpretations).

A significant number of candidates misunderstood 'contemporary' in the provenance of source 1 – if nothing else the tone and content should have prompted the realisation that this meant contemporary with 1819. Also, a number thought that the person in the bath in Source 7 was Bismarck. Given the date of the source (1914) this was highly unlikely; Kaiser Wilhelm II may not have been recognised, but this was a poor guess and, where it led on to the addition of contextual knowledge of Bismarck's contribution as Minister in Prussia and Imperial Germany, considerable wasted effort.

#### **F984 Q4: Race and American Society, 1865 – 1970s**

As always, this option attracts the most candidates and produces some of the best and worst answers. The best candidates realised that the interpretation made a claim about a period covering 100 years and considered whether it was too much of a generalisation. Using the evidence in the sources, they worked out that federal influence had perhaps grown over time and used this idea in producing their amendment. Others read the interpretation subtly, understanding that federal authorities could have a negative as well as a positive role, so that the claim in source 2 that 'legislation is powerless' needed to be seen in the context that the ruling in 'Plessy v Ferguson' had a massive impact on the lives of African Americans by legitimising Jim Crow laws. This nuanced reading of the evidence and use of own knowledge to evaluate a face value assumption created some excellent responses.

At the other end of the ability range, some candidates struggled with the interpretation as they could not work out what 'federal authorities' referred to. This led to bizarre amendments such as: 'The federal authorities had little influence on the way African Americans were treated when compared to the actions of the President and Supreme Court'. Since the role of the federal authorities is a key issue in the specification, candidates are expected to know which institutions it contains.

There were also candidates who misread or misunderstood the sources. The cartoon in source 1 for example was often seen as including a federal official; source 3 was interpreted as the president's support for a federally-funded school; in source 4 the role of the Supreme Court in overturning the original judgement was missed and in source 5 the authorities in Mississippi were assumed to be part of federal government. With these errors, it was difficult to see how candidates were accurately testing the interpretation.

A further weakness was specific to some centres. Candidates began by writing their own interpretation then testing it (both for and, surprisingly, against), completely ignoring the original. While strong candidates might be able to juggle testing the original and their own simultaneously, it is a bad strategy for less confident students since it produces an answer that would struggle to get into Level 3. A more direct approach of testing the original for and against, then proposing an amendment on the basis of the weaknesses identified is a much safer way of accessing higher marks.

Similarly in (b) strong candidates focused their answer on some of the key issues raised by the evidence provided. Some argued that a single judgement by the Supreme Court (source 4) or the activities in Mississippi (source 5) could not necessarily be taken as typical of what was going on. While weak candidates were satisfied with the reliability of source 6 because, as a dispiriting number put it: 'The camera never lies', others talked about the purpose of the photograph – was it just being taken to document the event? – and about its typicality or reliability since it is just a snapshot of a single moment in a protracted event and the position of the photographer affects what we see. Source 1 also discriminated well. Weak answers generalised along the usual lines – cartoons are for entertainment and are meant to be fun rather than taken literally. Clearly these candidates had not stopped to consider the 'entertainment' value of what was on the page in front of them. Once candidates stopped generalising and actually thought about the cartoon, better points emerged such as the fact it appeared in a northern magazine, which would affect its purpose given the views towards slavery in the north and the outcome of the civil war.

Finally, many candidates are picking up the idea that elements are missing from the collection of sources they have been given. This is producing in some cases massive lists of everything not covered without any analysis. Candidates need to ask – what would this missing evidence add to the sources provided? Simply saying that no sources are by civil rights leaders is correct, but misses the point – what benefits would adding such evidence bring? For instance, in the case of source 7, the timing of the comments made by Johnson might benefit from cross-referencing to Malcolm X's views of the civil rights progress of black Americans or to the 'long hot summers' to show the aspirational nature of what the President was saying.

## **F985, F986 – Historical Controversies**

### **General Comments**

The entry for these units was comparatively small. There were several hundred candidates entered for the Non-British units but only a handful of candidates for the British units. For this reason, the comments that follow mainly reflect what was seen in work for the Non-British units. The overwhelming majority of the candidates were entered for the Witch-hunting and the Holocaust units. There were a handful of candidates for some of the other units.

The quality of work ranged from the excellent to very poor. There was much less work in the latter category than in the former. Most candidates appeared to have a good understanding of what they were required to do. They also demonstrated knowledge and understanding of relevant historical events as well as of the relevant debates between historians. The sophisticated grasp of these debates, and the understanding of the nature and role of interpretations in the discipline of History, demonstrated by many candidates was impressive and encouraging. There are still some weaknesses that appear fairly frequently and the comments that follow focus on these. However, this should not detract from the overall standard of the work seen which was high.

Good answers usually contained the following qualities:

part (a) – clear sections on each of the following: interpretation, approaches and methods; explanation of some connections between these ie how the approaches or methods have helped lead to the interpretation; clear explanation of the main interpretation (looking at the extract as a whole); regular use of the extract to illustrate and support points being made; wider knowledge being used to explain the points already mentioned; an understanding that this is just one extract and therefore cannot cover all possible approaches to the topic.

part (b) – a brief and clear explanation of some of the key features of the named approach (with a few examples), explanation of how it has contributed to our understanding in ways in which other approaches do not (with a few examples); explanation of any shortcomings of the approach (with a few examples); wider knowledge being used to explain examples of the approach and to provide contrasts with it.

Answers to part (a) were stronger on approaches than on interpretations. It seems that candidates are more comfortable writing about approaches such as history from below, structuralism and intentionalism, than they are working out the main interpretation of an extract. However, the latter is the key to a good answer. Some candidates summarise or paraphrase each paragraph in turn, thinking that this is the way to explain the interpretation. Others were so totally obsessed with an approach that they had spotted, that they made little or no attempt to write about the interpretation. What is required, however, is the confidence to spend perhaps 10 minutes carefully reading the extract and teasing out the main interpretation. Only when this is done, should candidates start writing their answers. Candidates produce better answers when they know what their answer is going to be before they start writing it. The extracts often contain one big interpretation and some subsidiary ones. It is perfectly acceptable to write about all of these, but candidates should make clear which they think is the main one.

Some candidates got carried away when writing about approaches. This was usually because they knew so much about them. This led them to leave the extract behind and write down everything they knew about the approaches they had though that had spotted in the extract. This is obviously not a good way to answer the question. Candidates should base their answers on the extract. If they think the extract is an example of eg history from above, they should use the extract to explain why. They can also enrich their explanation by using their wider

knowledge and understanding of the approach but they should be careful not to fall into the trap of failing to base their answer on the extract.

Some candidates quoted extensively from the extract. At their worst, these answers left the quotations to do the work. Quotations should be brief and relevant. They should support an argument the candidate is making and not replace such argument.

There was a tendency for some candidates to try and identify the author of the historian. Candidates should not waste time doing this. It nearly always distracted them from the extract. These candidates had so much to tell the examiner about the historian that the extract was sometimes not mentioned for pages.

There were still some candidates who thought their task was to evaluate the extract. This was nearly always done badly as it was usually along the lines of 'this extract only uses the history from below approach. This shows the historian is biased and has ignored all the other ways of studying this topic'. Apart from this being a silly comment, it also has nothing to do with the question set.

Candidates should be aware that some extracts are much stronger on either approaches or methods. If there is not much to say about the methods shown in an extract then the examiner does not expect much. Candidates should ensure that they have at least written well about one, and have made some consideration of the other.

Answers to part (b) were generally better than part (a) answers. The overall standard was high with many candidates demonstrating impressive knowledge and understanding. Answers are gradually becoming shorter, which is good. Often the very best answers are amongst the shortest. The very long answers rambled along and contained everything the candidate knew or could find out about the named approach whether it answered the question or not. As with part (a) a few minutes spent planning an answer and organising the material is an essential prerequisite of a good answer.

Answers were generally very strong on explaining the shortcomings of an approach but less successful when explaining what it has contributed to our understanding of the topic. In fact, some candidates explained the approach and appeared to think that within this they had explained its contribution. This was often so implicit as to be virtually undetectable. Candidates are strongly advised to keep these separate – first briefly explain the approach, then explicitly explain what it has contributed to our understanding.

Some candidates thought that assessing the named approach consisted of simply listing all the other approaches. Candidates need to show how the named approach, because of its very nature, does not make possible some of the understandings that have come from other approaches.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

Only the witch-hunting and the Holocaust units had enough candidates for meaningful conclusions to be drawn about candidate performance.

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

(a) Candidates were able to write about a number of approaches evident in the extract eg social, cultural, psychological and from below. 'Cultural' was less well understood than the others but there were some excellent answers discussing the difference, and overlap, between social and psychological. There is less in the extract about methods but many candidates were to identify the use of a case study and the clear indication that court records had been used. Some

candidates struggled with the interpretation. There are perhaps two main points being made in this extract – one about witch-hunting arising from small, close and closed societies; the other about the qualified use of witches as an explanatory tool – people preferred to apportion blame to people who were dead, they only used it to explain strange events, and were not that convinced by it anyway. There are also subsidiary interpretations of evidence such as the charity-refusal model. Most candidates identified points being made in particular paragraphs and commented on each one separately, rather than looking for an overall interpretation.

(b) There were some excellent answers to this question. Some candidates usefully discussed different meanings of 'those in power', and many were familiar with, and understood, some of the main work that has been completed by historians using this approach. Key historians were mentioned and explanations of its shortcomings eg the danger of ignoring the role of women or of gender, were often excellent.

### **Debates about the Holocaust**

(a) The main point made in this extract is about how the Holocaust should be defined – should it include just Jews, or other groups such as gypsies and the handicapped. The author clearly agrees with the second type of definition. Some candidates were so keen to write about structuralism and intentionalism, that they barely bothered with writing about the interpretation. Others did make mention of gypsies and the handicapped but only as a minor point. The opening paragraph is about the issue of the nature of the Holocaust. The author returns to it frequently, and it is still a major theme in the final paragraph. It was clear that some candidates came to the extract wanting to do one thing only – to write about structuralism and intentionalism. This is clearly more of a danger with this option than any of others and future candidates should be warned about. There are clearly elements of both of these approaches in the extract but candidates should be aware that they cannot ignore the interpretation in the extract.

(b) Some candidates tried to turn this question into one about the 'strong or weak dictator' debate. It was not clear whether this was because they misunderstood the question or because they knew little about it. It appeared that some candidates came to the question prepared along some narrow lines of thought. They were not going to deviate from these even if the question was about something slightly different. Candidates need to be more flexible. They need to be ready to adapt what they know to the particular demands of the question. There were also some very general answers completely lacking any examples of 'local reactions to short-term events and circumstances'. However, there were also a number of candidates who were able to provide such examples and answered the question very well.

## F987 – Historical Significance

### General Points

The impression was of a coursework component that had worked well enough in its second year of examination. The examination discriminated well and, judging by diary reflections, gave many candidates an absorbing and challenging historical experience. Much impressive work was seen and rarely was there a feeling that a candidate had not at least made an effort. The necessary highlighting of errors and misconceptions in this report in no way reflects the general high quality of work seen.

As expected, weaker candidates found the demands hard and typically resorted to forms of chronology and description. Some managed a more complex form of narrative but lacked steady analysis and critical engagement with sources to support the judgements reached – so that these sometimes struggled to reach beyond the level of assertion.

Stronger candidates did much of what is expected: persistent question focus; analysis and evaluation; critical use/cross-referencing of a range of primary and secondary sources (**not** used merely to illustrate points made in the text); all used *to advance an argument* about the significance of an individual, an event or a site, both at the time and over time.

### A: The Study

#### Marking of students' work

Marking was remarkably accurate in the main – given teachers' relative lack of familiarity with assessment objectives and mark scheme. This allowed moderators to complement teachers in their reports to centres. Where marking was found to be generous, this tended to be because markers were too quick to reward points made by the candidate – for example, for candidates' mere use of the word 'significant' (often confused with 'important') or for the mere mention of a historian, or the insertion of a quoted extract without commenting on the value of the extract or on how reference to the historian or his/her writing has advanced an argument about significance in some way (see later).

#### Formative annotation

In some centres, formative marking appeared at regular intervals and provided an effective interface between what candidates had written and the demands of the assessment criteria; in others, there were virtually no margin comments – only a summative set of marks, with the result that the moderator knows the teacher's mark but not how he/she arrived at it. The importance of good, formative annotation cannot be over-emphasised. This is virtually the only way the moderator has of understanding how teachers are interpreting the generic mark scheme, and therefore of knowing what kind of advice to give to a centre that may be of benefit to future candidates. In cases of this kind, the moderator has to effectively mark the work himself. So it becomes a matter of common sense – why annoy the moderator?

#### Summative annotation:

Here the picture was more positive. In most cases, summative marking was clear and diagnostic, using (as requested) the language of the mark scheme descriptors – in one case this amounted to a full page of typed commentary on each candidate's performance in respect of the three assessment objectives. In a thankfully small minority of cases, there was simply a set of three marks with the briefest of comments and no reference to the research diary.

## Choice of questions

The key requirement of any question is that it allows candidates to address the significance of the event, individual or site both at the time and over time. Consequently, where questions failed, it was usually because they did not allow candidates to perform one or other of these functions. In order to avoid this in future, centres are urged to take advantage of the OCR consultancy service. Whilst not infallible in the advice they give, OCR consultants do see a great many studies and so develop the ability to distinguish questions that tend to succeed from those that tend to fail.

### Questions that were less successful included:

- those that contained no reference to 'significance' in the title;
- those that confused significance with causal importance – for example, 'How significant was the battle of Stalingrad in determining the outcome of the Second World War?', or 'How significant a threat was the Pilgrimage of Grace to the government of Henry VIII?'
- so lacking a long enough time span for the diachronic, or 'over time', calculation.
- those that set up comparisons – for example, 'Compare the significance of Pasteur and Koch in the development of 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine'. This kind of question *can* work – particularly if those being compared are contemporaries – but it requires very confident handling of material to fit everything into the word limit.
- those that confused moral righteousness (or infamy) with significance – for example, one-sided hagiographies of Gandhi; one sided condemnations of Stalin, Hitler.
- those that turned into self-fulfilling prophecies – for example, 'Why was Martin Luther King so significant in the development of the Civil Rights Movement?'
- Questions that were more successful included:
- those that genuinely allowed candidates to address both synchronic and diachronic significance – for example, 'How significant was the Repeal of the Corn Laws for the development of English agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?'
- those whose wording indicated the imminence of an enquiry: "How significant..."
- those whose wording defined the 'over time' calculation: "...for the development of English agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (see above)", "...in the development of a united Germany", ".....in changing medieval society" ".....in the growth of anti-Semitism since the 1890s"
- those featuring unusual 'individual' choices – for example, Hannibal, Idi Amin, Rousseau, Stokely Carmichael and the Nottinghamshire Luddites.
- Those featuring unusual but successful choices of events, for example, the First Crusade; Poland 1989; the bombing of Guernica; the 1849 California Gold Rush; the Repeal of the Corn Laws; the Black Death; and the Viking invasion of York in 866AD.

## Attributions of significance

### Significance at the time

For the synchronic calculation, it is usually necessary to select something whose immediate impact ('at the time') can be readily explored and assessed. This is straightforward if an event or a site is chosen, since the parameters are defined by the immediate impact of the event itself (eg the Highland Clearances, the Battle of Hastings) or perhaps by the act of constructing or dismantling the site (eg the Berlin Wall). However, selection of an individual can be more problematic, since there may be many and varied activities spanning a long career – eg the reign of Elizabeth I. The advice here is to choose an area of activity or policy that, whilst offering ample opportunities to negotiate its significance at the time, can also fit into a longer line of development dealing with a related aspect of the same topic. In the case of Elizabeth, for example, the immediate significance of the religious settlement could be assessed in its own right *and* as part of a longer story about religious changes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries;

similarly, the significance of the Poor Law of 1601 could be assessed both on its own terms *and* as part of a longer story about attempts by successive governments to deal with the problem of poverty between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even where the career is more limited to a particular field of activity, (eg Emmeline Pankhurst or I.K. Brunel), it is still advisable to select a salient point around which to base the synchronic part of the study (eg Pankhurst committing the WSPU to violence, or Brunel's construction of the Great Western Railway).

Having settled upon a topic and a title, it is then a matter of composing the synchronic assessment of significance. This has to involve an *argument* or *negotiation* of some kind, since the impact of the action, event or site in question is likely to have varied, in terms of eg the number and types of people affected, the depth of the effect, or its immediate and longer-term consequences.

*In 'Popular disturbances and Public Order in Regency England', Darvall is strong in his assertion that the Luddites had no broader political agenda: "There is no evidence whatever of any political motives on the part of the Luddites. There is not one single instance in which it can be proved that a Luddite attack was directed towards anything deeper than disputes between.... workmen and their employers..."*

*M. Thomas presents a different attitude towards Luddism, suggesting they were a methodical, organised movement: In 'Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835', Thomas describes how the Luddites used "a premeditated plan of systematic aggression, choosing particular victims for particular reasons"...*

*[E.P.] Thompson also suggests that the Luddites were highly disciplined and had clear aims as well as a broader agenda: "Even in Nottingham, where Luddism showed greatest discipline in pursuing industrial objectives, the connection between frame-breaking and political sedition was assumed on every side". Thompson appears to be sympathetic towards the Luddism movement, suggesting they were a highly organised group of individuals. He believes that the aims of the Luddites were much broader than Darvall and the Hammonds [previously quoted] assert....*

*The actions of the Nottinghamshire Luddites were reported in 'The Times' newspaper several times. The very fact that news of their attacks reached London undoubtedly shows that they were a significant movement at the time. Although the reports tend to show a negative attitude towards the Luddites, they do show that their actions were being recognised, and were having some kind of impact: "The spirit of insurrection that has so long disgraced the county of Nottingham has been rendered doubly alarming from the secrecy with which it has been conducted..." This also shows how difficult authorities were finding it to control the actions of the movement... This could support Thompson's view that the Luddites were highly organised."*

Notice how the candidate has developed her argument through critical cross-reference of secondary sources, leading to a judgment relevant to the question. [It is also worth noting that several candidates from this centre chose topics local to their area and used the local record office to good effect in assembling primary sources.]. This particular candidate went on to consider the significance of Nottinghamshire Luddism as part of a longer narrative of popular radicalism from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Perhaps because the synchronic, or 'at the time' assessment usually comes first, or because it requires more contextual narrative with which to 'set the scene', it takes some candidates too long to get to the matter of significance. There is nothing wrong with the habit of speaking about significance – and the criteria candidates intend to use for measuring it – from the start. In this way it should be more clear to the reader what purpose is being served by any contextual narrative. However, no more than this is required; mechanistic recitation of 'received' criteria for measuring significance (the other extreme) can act as a hand-brake on more able candidates

## Significance over time

The diachronic calculation proved more problematic on the whole. There are four common errors that tended to be made.

- Candidates produce a study that is more concerned with causation than with significance, so that the candidate ends up assessing the relative *importance* of causal factors, rather than determining the historical significance of an event. Typical of this sort of question would be: “How significant was the Battle of Stalingrad in determining the outcome of the Second World War?” The argument will then typically be about whether Stalingrad or some other factor was more important in explaining the allied victory. Unfortunately, the causal importance of Stalingrad (to the outcome of the Second World War) is not necessarily the same as its historical significance. The *significance* of the battle might be expressed in terms of how it altered the international standing of the USSR, from diplomatic recluse in the 1920s and 1930s to fully fledged super-power in the post war and cold war eras. **Hence, when measured over time, significance has more to do with change and development than with explanation.** Consequently, accounts of significance need to adopt the language of change and development, characterising events or actions according to the manner in which they affected the direction of a development – eg as a turning point, as part of a trend, or as a ‘false dawn’ etc...
- Candidates try to measure diachronic significance over too short a time span, quite often dealing only with the consequences of an event or an individual's actions. There needs to be some consideration of prior as well as subsequent events and the use of terminology – ‘trend’, ‘turning point’, ‘false dawn’ – that is commonly associated with accounts of change and development. It should be clear from the Elizabethan examples (above) how the difficulty is resolved by making the Religious Settlement and/or the Poor Law part of longer lines of development dealing with the problems caused by religious change and poverty respectively. There is no requirement here to produce a detailed, long-view narrative of events. Rather, the candidate needs to be selective, focusing on prior and subsequent events that speak to the significance over time of the event, individual or site in question – a sequence of hooks on which to hang an argument. The following example can be used to illustrate the point:

*The significance attached to the particular circumstances of repeal [of the Corn Laws] further diminishes when looking at Britain's movement towards free trade throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as it becomes clear that although free trade could be symbolised by repeal, it did not precipitate it, as illustrated below [in a graph showing average tariffs in the UK and France 1820-1913]. This suggests that the repeal was not, as Hobsbawm implies in 'Industry and Empire', a turning-point in the defeat of the landed interests by industrial might... Therefore although the repeal was significant due to the improbability of the convergence of its causal factors, given the movement towards free trade' it is likely that some other set of circumstances would have eventually led to noteworthy falls in the tariffs on corn. This would have been especially likely when corn prices abroad fell around 1875, due to the huge advantages that would have been gained from removing barriers. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that, if anything, repeal held importance due to its mitigation of the agricultural depression seen in the 1870s as it exposed English agriculture to competition from the late 1840s, promoting a gradual transition away from corn and diversification into other areas of agriculture, and as it accelerated the growth rate of the economy due to the freeing up of resources from agricultural production. This view is supported by Lowe who says that "by the early 1870s the major profit for most farmers came from their livestock" and that "[the agricultural depression] was especially severe in areas that relied heavily on wheat".*

Notice here that, whereas the candidate moves freely over a broad canvas covering the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, he keeps the longer-term, developmental significance of repeal at the centre of the argument.

- Candidates use simplistic or implausible 'then/now' comparisons in order to assert that the chosen person or event has some kind of special resonance, or iconic significance, that transcends the passage of time – eg, "If it hadn't been for Florence Nightingale, we wouldn't have had the NHS" This is a perfectly valid approach to calculating significance 'over time'; indeed, in the right hands it can reflect exactly the kind of liberated reasoning that this syllabus was designed to promote. However, there needs to be some willingness to explore and explain the workings of the resonant link itself. Consider, for example, the following assessment of the iconic power of Magna Carta:

*The Whig interpretation [of the long-term significance of Magna Carta] has perhaps over emphasised the importance of clauses 39 and 40 and these clauses lie at the root of its fame today, with many citizens in the United States and the United Kingdom claiming the Magna Carta to be a source of their liberties. To an extent, the Magna Carta's true origin has been obscured by myths and misunderstandings about its meaning and significance. Modern Revisionist historians have perhaps been far too dismissive of the rebel barons and their aims, seeing the document as totally reactionary because of 'Bad' King John's actions. They see the barons as greedy and self-serving, looking to protect their interests and to destabilize the English monarchy for personal gain. My conclusion falls in the middle of the Whig and Revisionist interpretations. The rebel barons' original intention was pragmatic, dealing with the original problems rather than looking forward and setting principles of how the monarchy should rule. Its effect at the time was limited because it only involved a small proportion of the population and from the very start it was treated by King John and the barons with very little respect and almost totally disregarded. Over time, however, the document has been manipulated to suit various events and reinterpreted/misinterpreted subsequently to serve different interests. This manipulation and misinterpretation has given the Magna Carta its symbolic importance as a protector of popular freedoms both in the United Kingdom and the United States of America....*

In this concluding paragraph, the candidate can be seen summarising the reasons for common misinterpretations of Magna Carta and, in so doing, exposing the myth underpinning its widespread iconic significance [covered in more detail in the main part of the study]. Notice, also, how the candidate has made critical use of historians' interpretations to support her argument [having named and quoted from specific historians in the body of her main text]

- Candidates try to compare the significance of two individuals. As suggested earlier, candidates who attempt this tend to fall between the two stools of evaluation and comparison; between negotiating the significance at the time and over time of each person individually, and carrying out a critical comparison of the two – all within 3,000 words. In most cases, this results in one or other subject being 'under-sold', or a hurried comparison being 'bolted on' in the final paragraph. Candidates should think very carefully before embarking on a comparative study.

### **Integration of synchronic (at the time) and diachronic (over time) perspectives:**

In order to reach Level 5, candidates have to produce a complex narrative – effectively a synthesis or fusion of the two separate narratives produced at Level 4. This has to involve more than a cobbling together; the final argument needs to have more explanatory power than its (separate) predecessors. Two examples are provided – the first showing how the contemporary significance of the Black Death is 'lessened' when it is viewed as part of a longer development; and the second showing how the contemporary significance of the Viking invasion of York is 'increased' by the longer perspective;

(a) *According to contemporary sources, urban and rural communities were critically affected as the feudal system began to disintegrate. However, although historians note the massive shock and devastation England experienced, they are generally more realistic about its longer-term significance. For example, with hindsight it is easier to see that problems in the countryside had been spiralling slowly downwards for decades before the arrival of the plague.... What is more, it is important to note that although the plague of 1348 was by far the most devastating, there was a succession of fresh outbreaks in the following years which meant that England was never really given time to recover fully in terms of population... placing the Black Death into a pattern of change rather than seeing it as a unique event....*

(b) *It is important to remember that many of these factors would only have seemed truly relevant at the time to those who were directly affected – in most cases the leaders in any given area. It is entirely possible that thousands of peasants and farmers may have been totally unaffected by changes of leadership, even one as seemingly huge as unification. This does not mean that they were insignificant but it does clearly demonstrate how significance depends largely on who is being studied. In the case of the invasion of York, it may be that its long-term significance relates to how it continues to influence us today. The average peasant may not have given much thought to the unification of the country at the time, but over the generations its significance has grown, affecting a much larger group of people than just the elite, who would have been affected immediately... The whole grammar system on which the English language is based, placing emphasis on word order rather than word endings, is the product of a gradual fusion of Old English and Old Norse, another result of the Anglo-Scandinavian culture. The new system must have spread through the Danelaw and the rest of England with the culture it accompanied, only becoming accepted as 'standard English' in the twelfth century... It seems clear that much of the evidence, both archaeological and documentary [evaluated in detail in the body of the study], disputes the clear-cut, traditional argument that York's significance was finite and local. Depending on the social groups and areas studied, the invasion can be interpreted as significant to varying degrees at the time and in the immediate aftermath. However, study of the invasion's economic, social and linguistic consequences reveals that some of them, including some which may not have seemed significant at the time, have become immensely significant over time...*

### **Use of sources**

Both the synchronic ('at the time') and diachronic ('over time') significance of an event, individual or site have to be negotiated by means of the *critical use* of sources and of historians' interpretations. The mark scheme is very clear on this – but there was a variety of interpretations of what might be meant by 'critical use'. A candidate is using sources critically when he/she asks questions of them, so turning information contained in the sources into *evidence* of something. This can be done in a variety of ways, eg

- by making a simple (or more complex) inference from (ie going beyond) the information given in the source;
- by considering the context of the evidence so formed – eg its strengths and limitations; its authorship, purpose and circumstances of production;
- by cross-referencing - for agreement or disagreement - with evidence gathered from other sources.

It is worth repeating that *evidence generated from critical use of source material must be used to provide evidence for either supporting or challenging a line of argument*. When quoted extracts are inserted merely to illustrate points made in the narrative, or where sources are evaluated but not in respect of any line of argument, the candidate cannot be rewarded beyond Level 2 in the mark scheme for AO2a (face-value reading/use of sources).

These comments apply equally to primary and secondary sources. Here is an example of a candidate being explicit about the value of the primary sources he has used – testimonies of survivors of the Warsaw ghetto:

*Abraham Lewin, a school teacher, wrote of the Warsaw Ghetto in his diary, 'here in our cramped and gloomy little world, the days are black, desolate.... Helina Midler wrote of her experience of Warsaw on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1944, 'I long for thoughts at twilight never to begin with the words 'If I survive' and are never burdened with the heavy doubt that all thinking is pointless and empty, because in the end I won't survive anyway.' These sources are useful in showing emotions, but reveal little about the details of the ghettos. However an anonymous entry reveals that, 'people die in great numbers of starvation, the typhus epidemic or dysentery, and they are tortured and murdered by the Germans in large numbers... These sources, when combined, reveal information about the treatment of the Jewish victims and intricate details about resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto. When cross-referenced they are useful in revealing the mentalities of the victims... However, the witnesses knew that 'they were experiencing what would one day be an important historical event, and this awareness shaped their writing....'* [Waxman]

There was also some confusion around the mark scheme distinction 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 – rewarded under AO2(a) and AO2(b) – included hardly any use of sources - of any description!*

The distinction can be clearly stated. When a historian comments on this or that *detail* of an event or action, an extract from the passage can be defined as a secondary source and can be critically used in the same way as a primary source (see above) – indeed, it is perfectly feasible to combine or cross-reference primary and secondary sources in support of a line of argument - as long as it is understood that they provide different *kinds* of evidence. 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, which needs to be evaluated in slightly different ways. For example, this can be done by cross-reference with competing or complementary views; for consistency with evidence from primary sources; by considering that a 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 (as in 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.

The following extracts are chosen to illustrate this distinction. The first, showing the development of an argument by cross-reference of secondary sources (AO2a), is part of a study of the significance of the Holocaust, dealing with one of its immediate consequences – the creation of Israel. The second shows part of a discussion of the ways in which historians over time have interpreted the effect of Luther's teaching on the repression of women (AO2b).

*(a) A significant consequence of the Holocaust for the Jewish people was the creation of the state of Israel. Landau believes that 'the transformation of the Jewish people from being a group without a land and without an army into a militaristic nation would never have come about without the constant spectre of the Holocaust'. Martin Gilbert agrees that 'there was a renewed determination that a Jewish state should make it possible for Jews in distress... to have a haven and a home'. It is true that the Zionists called for the State of Israel to be created before the Holocaust; however this proposal mainly fell of 'deaf ears'. Yet, the sympathy felt by the world for Holocaust survivors and the determination of the Jewish people as a result of the Holocaust, would lead to the materialisation of the Jewish state. Landau supports this, 'the image of British*

*soldiers and sailors using force against the survivors of the Holocaust and interning them behind barbed wire played right into the Zionists' hands'....*

*(b) The most significant effect of Luther's teaching on the repression of women synoptically, was on witchcraft. The period that followed the Reformation is described as 'the burning years' [Gardener]. During this time, around 25,000 women were executed for the crime of witchcraft. The anti-female feelings propagated by Luther grew into widespread hatred for the female gender. This all related to original sin, as when Eve first bit the apple from the Tree of Knowledge she doomed womankind to a life of sin. After Luther's death in 1546, the number of women executed for crimes of witchcraft increased dramatically until it peaked in the years 1626 – 30. Luther's sermons did not directly cause the attacks on women. However, through history his words have been used by others to support their reasoning. Many feminist historians from the 1970s [details supplied in the text]... looked back at the witch hunts and labelled them the 'Women's Holocaust', the culmination of years of patriarchal domination. But these historians often exaggerated the number of casualties – eg quoting the number of 'nine million'. This, therefore, makes their judgments untrustworthy, though revealing about how the feminists of the 1970s viewed this period of history. The witch hunts were even used as a tool for propaganda by the Nazis, who looked at them as a Christian/Jewish way of corrupting Aryan women. Luther's contribution is significant as his feelings about witches and women in general lasted for many centuries.*

There was generally too much classifying of historians as eg "traditionalist", "revisionist", "post-revisionist" etc. Stronger candidates were able to use these to advantage, explaining and assessing critically. Weaker candidates simply used them without explanation. Whether or not to use classifications of this kind should depend on the candidate's approach. If this approach is essentially historiographical, then classification of historians into this or that 'school' can serve a valid purpose; otherwise classifications of historians are generally less important than what they have actually written.

Some able candidates followed well rehearsed routines of evaluation, such as "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 be too explicit about their intentions, or indulge in basic and stock evaluation (usually "reliable", "biased", or unhistorical assertions along the lines of: "X is a professor/specialist on the topic and therefore must be trusted...").

The best work involving AO2a and AO2b occurred where evaluation of source material was informed by sound contextual knowledge, a sense of the 'otherness of the past' and an understanding of how interpretations of significance have themselves changed over time.

### **Bibliographies and footnotes:**

Bibliographies contained an alarming number of websites. As a general rule, there was a clear correlation between the number of websites listed and used, and the modest quality of the finished study.

Each footnote, appearing preferably at the foot of any page containing a super-scripted reference, should contain the name of the author, the title of the book or publication (italicised) from which the reference has been derived, and, crucially, a *page number*.

Normally, a footnote will link either to a directly quoted extract on the same page in the main text, or to an indirect, or 'reported', view ascribed to this or that historian. In either case, it is particularly important to include a *page number*, so that the reference can be checked if necessary. Crucially, candidates should ensure that footnoted items – be they directly quoted or indirectly ascribed – are linked to matters central to the argument being conducted in the text on that page.

Footnotes may also be used for the purpose of clarifying specialist or unusual terms used in the main text. However, they may *not* be used as a means of evading the word count – i.e. of evaluating source material or conducting part of the argument – both of which properly belong in the main text.

## **B: The Research Diary**

In almost all cases, the quality of the research diary was a good indicator of the quality of the study itself. In the best work, it was clear that candidates had benefited from the process – indeed, they often said so – and enjoyed the opportunity to pursue a line of genuine historical interest. It was obvious from the commentaries that 'big' books were being read – more so, perhaps, than on more conventional A-level courses – and with critical insight into how they might be used to provide evidence about significance. This was the factor that tended to distinguish diaries of differing overall quality; the diaries of weaker candidates generally confined themselves to the logging of meetings, the visiting of libraries or websites, and/or the securing of books, but with little critical commentary on the content or value of the resources themselves, or on how this might have led to adjustments in the design of the study.

It cannot be stressed sufficiently that the research diary gives candidates the opportunity to rehearse the kind of critical thinking about evidence that will be demanded by the finished study – the 'donkey work' if you like. Time and again, critical commentary on the sources used in more successful studies could be found in the research diary preceding the study. The following is extracted from a diary supporting a study of the significance of the Repeal of the Corn Laws:

*C.P. Hill's 'British Economic and Social History' and Hobsbawm's 'Industry and Empire' both emphasise the importance of repeal as symbolising the defeat of landed interests by industrial ones. I felt that these books, particularly Hobsbawm's, were overly simplistic in their analysis and didn't provide enough to persuade me of their case. This may be because their views are influenced by the Marxist school of thought which places emphasis on class struggle and therefore tends to simplify reality in order to show generalised patterns.... I am having major difficulties finding contrasting opinions of significance; therefore I have decided to cast the net wider.... Asa Briggs' 'Age of Improvement' was helpful as it provided data about agricultural developments which it seems were virtually unaffected by the repeal... I have read 'False Economy' by Alan Beattie, however I found it unhelpful with regards to the significance of the repeal as it evaluated in a cursory manner, with no regard for historical context, although the book did help to highlight the improbability of repeal at the time... I have found two very useful sources, one from a speech by Ann O. Krueger showing a drastic fall in prices, and another from M. Levy-Leboyer and F. Bourguignon that demonstrates that a movement towards free trade was underway before repeal [a central argument of the study – see earlier quoted extract] ...*

A further benefit of critical consideration of source material in the diary is that this can compensate for weaker treatment of sources in the study itself. Consequently, it was sometimes possible (depending on relevance to the argument) to either uphold or raise the overall mark within the level awarded under AO2a or AO2b for the critical approach to source material demonstrated by a candidate in the pages of the research diary.

Bibliographies were generally well compiled (alphabetically by surname of author) and in some cases sectioned according to type of source (eg primary, secondary, websites). Whether because of the diary experience or some other factor, there seemed to be less of a discrepancy between the length of bibliographies and the number of sources actually used (usually signalled in footnoted items) than tends to be the case in conventional coursework.

As mentioned above, there was a fairly reliable, negative correlation between the number of websites listed in a bibliography and the quality of the finished study. It would be foolish to deny the value of the Internet as an historical resource; however since authorship tends to be invisible – and in some cases highly dubious – it seems reasonable to expect candidates not to use extracts taken from websites unless they can provide the name of a credible author or – failing that – a reliable institution (eg the Imperial War Museum).

One candidate shared a very valuable research technique that is worthy of a wider audience: *Looking back, I should have evaluated and criticised my sources more as I was reading them, so that my initial reaction was recorded, rather than having to find the sources again in order to forge an opinion.*

Finally, the research diaries afforded an unusual but charming glimpse of the reactions of candidates to their first experience of historical research.

*I have learned a lot about a period I had never been taught about and... about how to relate skills learned from other modules to my own independent work. I very much enjoyed the independence and freedom of the module and not having to stick to a limited curriculum...*

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