

## **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2012**

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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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**Advanced GCE History B (H508)**

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE History B (H108)**

### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## Overview

Specification B continues to go from strength to strength. It is most encouraging to see the quality of the candidates' work improving in all the units. In Explanations the answers are becoming more focused and candidates are getting to grips with the modes better so that they inform their explanations without becoming too intrusive. The part (b) answers in the Historical Evidence unit are showing clear signs of improvement with candidates demonstrating greater awareness of the issues surrounding the use of historical sources. The Controversies unit has always produced impressive work and it is most encouraging to see candidates showing a genuine grasp of how different approaches in history have enriched our understanding of different topics. This year also saw a definite improvement in the quality of the coursework with many candidates producing focused work that included mature judgements about significance at the time and over time.

Much of the work seen demonstrates to examiners the interest and progress of the candidates as well as the enthusiasm and expertise of the teachers.

## F981/F982 Historical Explanation

It would be appropriate to start this Report with a few words about beginnings and endings. As teachers we are often asked about how essays should begin and end, and with examiners we concur that these elements of an essay do leave a lasting impression. It is undesirable to be too prescriptive because there should be scope for individuality of approach among Explanations essays, but several pointers may be useful. First, one examiner comments that ‘shopping list’ introductions should be avoided: ‘In this essay I am going to look at x, y and z.’

Secondly, some students plan their essays carefully, as can be seen from their answer booklets, but it is not always the case that a plan translates into an effective introduction; the converse can be true. Therefore it is recommended that, where a plan has helped a student to come to terms with the particular demands of a question, its essence is carried forward into an introduction. Which questions or sub-questions seem most important in addressing the essay? Which ‘mode’ or way in to the essay will prove most effective? This can be done crisply. An introduction of the kind suggested here offers signposts and invites the reader on a journey. Secondly, some students will, by inclination or under time pressure, dispense with an introduction altogether. This can work very well, and indeed some of the best essays do not have a classic introduction at all. There is a qualification, however. Where no introductory paragraph is offered, there remains a strong need to see where an essay is going, and this mapping should be done within paragraphs or at the end of them, where a student comes back to the wording of a question and re-engages the reader with the overview of the landscape. Dispensing with a formal introduction is not the same as leaving a reader without a means of navigation.

Such an approach should lead to no great surprises in the conclusion, since the direction of travel has already been made clear and reiterated. Examiners sometimes comment that a conclusion has been ‘bolted on’, or that a random factor has been chosen to be the most important, with seemingly little connection to the paragraphs preceding. Again, without being too prescriptive, a good conclusion is different to a mere summary or list of what has already been covered. There is no time or space in a 45 minute essay for a redundant paragraph which recaps what has already been said, any more than there is for a ‘shopping list’ introduction. An examiner is looking for further movement, and for something else to reward. This might be a tying together of mini-conclusions already offered within or at the end of paragraphs into something bigger: *Elizabeth and Philip II held different values and beliefs regarding religion and the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s rule, but these factors mattered because they help us to understand Elizabeth’s actions in supporting Dutch rebels in the Netherlands, and in understanding Philip’s furious responses.* A conclusion which ranks a factor as most or least important is less appropriate to Explanations papers than one which reasserts the links between factors already set out, or which establishes those links with reasons for them. What connects the points on the journey, and how strongly and effectively? Above all, a Conclusion must be active and should engage with the question rather than passively listing previous points. It is not, to repeat the obvious, the same as a summary.

Centres are reminded that the Principal Examiner’s Report for January 2012 spent a good deal of time setting out the need, quite simply, for accurate history. To recap what was said in January:

*‘Centres must be sure that they are offering to their students a picture of the past that is accurate, nuanced and evidence-based in terms of, for example, the pace of industrial development in early twentieth-century Russia, or the extent and nature of support for revolutionary groups. Students’ chances of producing a ‘sound’ or ‘complex’ judgement about the past are hampered if responses are burdened with unsustainable generalisations and assertions – or History which is simply erroneous.’*

This is not a matter of the occasional student slip of the pen or error with a date. Examiners are more forgiving of these minor errors than students believe. It is more the case of a whole centre's candidates asserting material of questionable reliability and historicity. In such cases it is depressing for an examiner not to be able, repeatedly, to reward students' hard work because the quality of what they have learned will not allow them to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. Examples were given in January regarding Russian History, and the same points applied in this examination session regarding Russia and, to some extent, the French Revolution. Centres are therefore strongly reminded that sound, accurate History is essential. This is specified in the Mark Scheme as 'relevant and accurate knowledge'. This is not to impugn the efforts of the great majority of teachers and students, whose combined efforts lead to explanations essays demonstrating skill, knowledge and flair. To continue this theme, what the deployment of accurate and well-chosen examples allows is for a student to move rapidly from *identifying* an important point or theme or cause to *explaining* it. The use of the word *because* can be very simple and effective here. Moving content on from spotting and noting a point to explaining why it matters to this particular question is a key element to success on this paper.

### F981

Wars of the Roses questions were once again well answered by a good number of candidates, with only Q2a presenting any appreciable difficulties. It is hoped that the guidance given in the subject specific mark scheme for this question will be helpful to centres, particularly the advice about explaining ideas of service, loyalty, patronage and kingship. Questions on Elizabeth, again the most popular topic area within F981, saw responses to Q3a answered less well than those to Q3b. Better answers tied in the dilemmas, problems and threats associated with religion to the question of Elizabeth's legitimacy and, indeed, of her succession without dwelling at undue length on the religious changes of Henry VIII and his successors. A focus on the Throckmorton Plot as an event was always highly relevant and interesting for Q3a. Q3b saw some good responses where candidates knew the details of the Settlement well and could refer to the fates of Campion, Wentworth and Grindal, for example. Puritans were less well known and understood, whether in terms of beliefs or actions. A useful pointer common to both questions here is the desirability of looking at events, actions and beliefs not only from Elizabeth's perspective but also from those of opposition groups, which in themselves must have changed somewhat across such a long reign.

Question 4a saw a number of candidates plan their essays in terms of circumstances, actions and ideas. For example, some suggested that the papal excommunication in 1570 changed values and beliefs because Philip II could now see himself as legitimate and Elizabeth as illegitimate. Similarly the 1567 execution of Mary Queen of Scots could be used as an example of actions and events causing changes in beliefs and ideas, and the same might apply to Cecil's actions in supporting Dutch rebels in the Netherlands. Candidates should not, therefore, be hamstrung if a question only mentions beliefs and values because this is not an instruction only to address such areas, but a signpost to one possible way into a question which does not in itself exclude others. To continue in a vein familiar from recent reports, a long reign implicitly invites responses to consider continuity and change. Did Philip's actions in the Netherlands cause the queen to change her attitudes dramatically, uphold them or modify them subtly? Some candidates managed to tie in beliefs regarding the Elizabethan settlement nicely to actions. Responses to Q4a were good on beliefs and sometimes on circumstances but often weak on actions and events over a long reign. Q4b saw some unexpected but perfectly valid points made about piracy and attitudes towards Drake, which do not feature in the Mark Scheme but were taken entirely on their merits. The subject specific mark scheme for any question on F981 or F982 offers advice and support rather than prescription. Responses on the Armada thankfully avoided narrative but some points were more identified than explained. In particular the sequence of events was not always secure, for example involving the role of the fireships and the action off Gravelines. Lord Howard of Effingham's role is rarely acknowledged. Although this essay might normally lend itself most to consideration of actions and events, there was room to bring in attitudes, for example concerning xenophobia.

Q5a saw a good grasp both of Gladstonian Liberalism and New Liberalism, but answers were less successful in explaining what led to a break between them, if anything. Socialism and the emergence of a parliamentary Labour Party were fruitfully explored by some in this regard. Some students wrote about the selfishly obstructive policies of the House of Lords for Q5b, but their lordships' resistance to some Liberal legislation arguably owed as much to constitutional implications as self-interest. Responses which could explore the idea that Lloyd George may have deliberately provoked the Lords and set them a trap were at an advantage. The Ireland responses were mostly very well focussed on the period after 1914 and subject knowledge for this complex period was genuinely impressive. At the top end students might have made more of the assumption in the question that Home Rule no longer satisfied an increasing number of Irishmen. Did it? Weaker responses on the Easter Rising were too preoccupied with an account of events, whereas better answers saw a commendable emphasis on attitudes towards the Rising within and outside Dublin and the degree of popular support for it. Again, challenging the idea of a 'failure' was welcome and rewardable, with some students advancing the idea that raising the profile of the cause and acting as martyrs to it could be argued to have been worthwhile in the eyes of participants and their supporters.

Better responses to Q7a recognised that Macmillan's celebrated remark has been seen as ironic or as a warning about the future rather than a triumphalist celebration of the present. However the question was viewed, some engagement with 'most' would help students look at his ministry in a critical fashion. Macmillan's achievements in housing policy mostly precede his time in office and this needs to be better understood. Some better responses were able to see Macmillan's unexpected resignation within the context of an economic slowdown and were able to draw from the events of the Profumo scandal some explanations of contemporary attitudes towards trust, loyalty and corruption in political life. Q8a on Thatcher was challenging. Candidates could not always establish what her notorious phrase meant, or a context for it, and tying it in to the events and problems of her governments from 1983-7 or 1987-90 was difficult. Messrs Howe and Heseltine's roles in contributing to the Thatcher resignation were well explained, but the broader Conservative backbench disquiet with some aspects of her policies was less successfully discussed.

## F982

No answers were seen on Charlemagne. Luther questions were better answered where they were tied in to events and actions (3a and 4b) than to ideas (3b and 4a). As noted above regarding Elizabeth and as is made clear in the Mark Scheme, a question focussed on Lutheranism or the spread of ideas is as much an invitation to talk about states of affairs, events or actions as it is an opportunity to explore beliefs and attitudes. As also noted earlier, the French Revolution sees some of the strongest and weakest responses on this paper. Long descriptions of Ancien Regime France are never appropriate, and each paragraph needs to be brought back to the question carefully. The *taille* and the *corvee* by themselves tell us little, whereas problems of their collection resulting in a decline in royal revenues offers some explanation for the financial problems facing the French crown. Causal and empathetic factors were adeptly deployed by some candidates, including a discussion of the influence of the Enlightenment – often a strength of students' work. Examiners report some errors in identifying which minister was in power at which time, however. Question 5b uses the words 'up to 1789' which can be taken to include 1788 and its consequences well into the following year. To reiterate, students who are able to offer a pattern or shape to their knowledge will always receive as much credit as possible. Louis XVI left himself open to criticism from Enlightenment thinkers by his failure to address grievances; he strengthened opposition but also radicalised it, as one student put it, arguably translating a failure to act into a determination not to, as confirmed by his attitude to the public ridicule heaped on Marie Antoinette. The strength of such an approach is in the patterning and shape it imposes on the material, the opportunity it gives to argue and, not least, to think and to show thinking. Such an approach was evident in the questions on Robespierre. One examiner thought that these questions were challenging, but that they produced some of the most lively and thoughtful responses she had seen. Where students knew

their material on Robespierre, the opportunities to address ideas and beliefs (of specific opposition groups such as the Girondins as well as those of Robespierre himself) were taken up with gusto, alongside the chance to select some events and actions which were relevant to the question.

Previous Reports have aimed to encourage students to avoid a trot through Russian history which only belatedly arrives at the central issue of the question. Why not therefore start Q7a immediately in 1914 and ask what caused the state of affairs in which Russians found themselves and work back from there, selecting events and actions which might be causal factors, or continuing circumstances such as the loyalty of the army? This would avoid the risks of writing a thinly-disguised answer to a question on 1905 which does not actually appear on the paper. Alternatively, using modes from the outset explicitly to structure the essay is appropriate: the intentional mode might look at the actions of opposition groups and of the Tsar; this links to the empathetic mode which allows us to explore where the Tsar bought off the peasants and placated liberals; the causal mode looks at the October Manifesto and its implications. Shaping and patterning the material made it effective for responses to discuss the October Manifesto as an act of survival for the Tsarist government; the same applies to Stolypin's reforms, not in themselves valid if trotted out but excellent support as an explanation of a reinforcement of Tsarist beliefs and as a survival mechanism.

Q7b offered scope for the classic 'preconditions' and 'triggers' essay, which worked well, particularly where students had some sense of the geography of Europe and were not confusing Serbia with Siberia or Liberia. Russians of the time would have been surprised to be told that they depended on the Dardanelles for the import of much of their grain, rather than its export. There was some good analysis of Pan Slavism, especially where it was associated with the events which saw the annexation of Bosnia and events within Serbia.

One strong essay ended thus:

*In conclusion it was not the beliefs of Nicholas and his court which led Russia into the war with Austria-Hungary, but the circumstances at the time: train timetables, Balkan instability and European treaties which led Germany into the war and, thence, the rest of Europe and ultimately much of the world. The trigger was the assassination of Franz Ferdinand but given the instability of the region it could have been any number of things.*

*Another response concluded: Overall it is clear that beliefs were the biggest factor in all of this; it drove everything including the circumstances. The beliefs were like actors in a play. The events were the script and the circumstances the stage. Without the actors there is no play.*

Centres teaching Russia might like to be aware that some candidates writing about the Provisional Government do not convey a sense of its Dual nature, hindering their ability to explain why it could not satisfy workers and peasants. After all, the driving word of the question is 'why' not 'how', and the question does require students to explain why the Provisional Government did not satisfy people rather than could not satisfy them. Shaping the material to make the arming of the Bolsheviks during the Kornilov affair relevant to the question was possible; similarly, mentioning specific economic circumstances germane to the Provisional Government rather than generic famines or harsh economic problems could be credited. The role and appeal of the SRs during 1917 and 1918 is seldom well explained by candidates. The appeal of the Bolsheviks to specific groups of Russian people was well explained in relation to the Petrograd garrison, for example, or the Kronstadt naval base. Conversely, some responses accurately noted that many in the bourgeoisie could see perfectly well that they were unlikely ever to benefit from Bolshevik policies if carried out, so there was no appeal to them. The careful use of qualifiers such as 'most' or 'a few' helped students to avoid generalisations applying to the whole Russian people. A few responses explicitly and successfully linked peasant and Soviet beliefs in pursuing their own destinies to the appeal of Lenin's ideas in purporting to offer solutions to Russia's economic and military problems. 'Peace, Bread and Land' offered an obvious and perfectly acceptable way into Q8b but to gain access to L2 and L1 more needed to be done with these ideas than identifying them in general terms.

## F983/F984 Using Historical Evidence

The entry for these units remains high in the summer session, with comparable numbers entered for both units. In F983 there is a good spread of entries across all options. In F984 the majority enter for Q4, although there are significant numbers studying Q1 and Q2. The entry for Q3 remains small.

There was a noticeable improvement in the quality of the work in this session. Far more candidates were aware of what was required in both questions. Particular improvement was seen in answers to (b). It was more common to find scripts in which the candidate was able to apply his or her understanding of how the sources provided could be evaluated rather than simply making assertions or identifying general uses or issues associated with particular types of sources. Besides this there was evidence of comments on historical methodology; for example, candidates suggested how types of sources that were not included in the paper could be used to evaluate the sources provided. There were also more scripts in which candidates made suggestions about how sources could support historical questions framed around concepts such as change and continuity, why events and changes occur, or what their significance is.

In part (a) very many candidates organised their answer well, grouping sources in a range of ways – according to whether they supported or challenged the interpretation, or by issue, for example. There was often clear understanding that the candidate should seek to establish patterning of changes, be it to show continuity, progress or regression. Some candidates planned by identifying the position of the sources on a timeline. This was potentially helpful in establishing patterns of change. A refinement would be to place the sources above or below the line, or both, according to how they relate to the interpretation. Candidates using this approach would need to consider whether to place the sources according to the date of the content of the source or the date of the source's production.

Where individual sources could be used both to support and to challenge an interpretation, better candidates often used this to generate a debate about the relative importance of factors. This was seen in scripts on F984 Q2 where the relative importance of great men as patrons and cities in causing the Renaissance was debated, as well as in F984 Q1 where candidates discussed whether or not Vikings could have raided, traded and assimilated successfully without their seafaring skills.

It remains the case that many candidates score better on (a) than (b). Examiners identified two main reasons for this discrepancy. In some cases, candidates spend most of their time on (a) and write only a paragraph or so for (b). In a minority of cases, candidates choose not to attempt (b) at all, perhaps hoping that they will be able to spend the time more profitably in crafting a better answer to (a). The second problem is a lack of understanding of what is being assessed in question (b). In some scripts it was clear that the candidate was familiar with the requirements of the mark-scheme and consequently reflected on the reliability, purpose and typicality of evidence in the sources as well as some of the Level 1 and 2 issues of historians' purposes in pursuing different lines of enquiry. However, in many instances candidates' answers remain generic and speculative, talking about types of sources rather than the evidence in the sources on the paper and failing to support ideas, instead relying on what might be an issue in relation to a source.

Good answers are usually characterised by efficiency in using the sources to construct an argument. Such responses avoid describing and paraphrasing the sources, in other words telling the examiner information that is on the question paper, instead engaging immediately with argument. The following extracts from responses illustrate weaker and stronger approaches.

F983 Q4 (a): this candidate paraphrases the source, identifying relevant material in it without using that material to construct an argument. This is characterised by the sentence starters

“Source 2 says ... The author of the source argues ... She says that ....” The candidate had stated that this evidence supported the interpretation, so this constitutes using the evidence at face value, a low-level skill.

*“Source 2 says that the wartime economy and ration tickets had bridged the gap between rich and poor. Everyone was entitled to the same amount of food no matter how much money you had, so the rich had to eat more like the poor and the poor ate more like the rich. The author of the source argues that this levelling was inevitable when people of wealthy background were serving under working class people in the army, and working class women were earning more money in the munitions factories than middle class women who stayed at home. She says that people now knew that the old social orders were not fixed, and the common phrase ‘I know my station’ was used much less. Sources 3 and 4 are both ...”*

F983 Q4 (a): in this analysis of source 1 the candidate deals with a range of ideas – the purpose of the source, the way in which the source can be used at face value to support the interpretation, and the use of inference to challenge the initial reading. The phrase ‘despite its class divisions’ is enough to suggest that the candidate understands the context. Although more could be made of this, this approach is more focused than that of candidates who simply used this point as a stimulus to add details of the percentage of working class recruits found to be unfit and the drive to ‘national efficiency’ that followed the Boer War.

*“At face value sources one, two and five could be taken in evidence in support of the original interpretation, indicating a narrowing of class divisions as a direct result of early twentieth century wars. Source one, a poem by Rudyard Kipling from the early stages of the Boer War, was clearly written for the purpose of trying to unite the nation, despite its class divisions, behind the families of soldiers. Kipling even seems to ridicule the old class stereotypes, it is the ‘absent-minded beggar’ after all, who is now a soldier fighting for the country that has treated him so poorly. On the one hand we could see this as evidence for the unifying power of war, but the fact that Kipling felt he needed to write this also seems to show how durable these divisions proved to be.”*

There was a clear distinction between those who understood what was required and those who operated at a simplistic level, accepting sources at face value, using them in isolation or with only basic grouping by topic or according to whether they supported or challenged the interpretation without showing how they related to one another in any more sophisticated way.

Inevitably not all candidates scored well and the purpose of the following observations is to assist Centres in promoting good practice and encouraging candidates to avoid of less successful approaches. The assessment objectives are addressed here in turn.

Examiners noted that stronger candidates might approach answers in a variety of ways. Indeed, the answers worked best when they did not follow a pre-planned strategy but represented a thoughtful response to the interpretation and sources provided. Candidates quite rightly work through past papers as part of their examination preparation, but learning and then re-using interpretations from previous papers is unlikely to work as each set of sources is unique.

Pre-planned answers ranged from those who seemed to have decided their conclusion in relation to the issue in the interpretation before entering the examination room to those where there was formulaic grouping of the sources, using a learned system regardless of the content or interpretation. This was seen, for example, in answers to F983 Q3 where candidates had a fixed idea that popular protest began by having political aims and progressed to having more economic and social aims or by those who had decided in advance that Vikings (F984 Q1) started as raiders and plunderers and moved on to being traders and colonisers. In the former case, this often led candidates to accept source 2 about Luddites at face value, while source 6 on the Vikings, recounting Harald Hardrada’s bid for the English throne in 1066, was simply ignored in the conclusion.

The challenge of constructing an argument using evidence from sources from which evidence can be inferred that both supports and challenges the interpretation is considerable. Examiners noted a clear distinction between candidates who can cope with several competing ideas simultaneously and those who can only focus on one aspect at a time, often using sources selectively and apparently uncritically to find evidence for or against the interpretation. The following extract from F984 Q1 (a) contains complex argument.

*“Source 3 explains Viking hit and run raids as ‘devastating’ with their ability to attack, steal, plunder then escape and attack elsewhere. This is made clear as it mentions the Norse using river systems. Plus, in addition, it highlights the grand scale on which Vikings travelled, ‘from the North Sea to the Mediterranean’. These sea voyages could only be made by forces with great seafaring skills and navigation, which links to source 7. Again, this supports the interpretation as it shows Vikings were not just mindless warriors, but advanced navigators. This device would be used to show Norsemen which direction their target was in when out in the open sea. Vikings mainly used coastline for navigation but when out in the open ocean, this device would be used. This helped them become advanced and successful seafarers.”*

The second extract also shows some successful testing (in this case finding support for the interpretation), but in this case uses only one source at a time with basic grouping of sources 2 and 6. The use of evidence is relatively selective, especially in the case of Source 2 as it is clear the Vikings had formed an alliance with Lothar, showing another tactic for achieving success, yet this is ignored. In the case of Source 6 (quite apart from the fact that Hardrada was killed in the second battle of this campaign) the reliance on water for a quick getaway suggests a somewhat skewed definition of ‘success dependent on seafaring skills’ is being used.

*“Source 4 supports the interpretation because they would use ships in orders to reach places such as Constantinople so they could ‘trade’. Without skills as seafarers the voyages would be hard to make. Also sources 2 and 6 support the interpretation because ‘Lothar welcomed the support of a Viking fleet’ which suggests they were needed in order to win a battle or because the Vikings sea skills were greater than ‘Lothar’s’. Source 6 shows where the Vikings chose to base themselves before a war and it ‘was next to a river’ which suggests that the Vikings back up plan was their skills on ships as it almost seems natural to them.”*

Regarding the use of contextual knowledge, since the early examinations for this unit there has been a marked shift away from ‘information dumping’ where a candidate looks at what a source is about then inserts everything he or she knows about the author or topic. Answers are now more clearly informed by using contextual knowledge to evaluate what a source is saying. This might be achieved in a number of ways. On the one hand, the candidate might know something that would enhance what the source is saying or flatly contradict it. On the other hand, they might be able to use wider knowledge to comment on whether a source is typical or reliable. The point of doing this is to judge how well a source supports the interpretation, that is, to go beyond face value reading of the literal words of the source. Contextual knowledge can also help to establish patterns in the evidence from the sources and the highest levels specifically mention rewarding candidates who can step back to see these wider images rather than simply pressing their faces to the sources.

Evaluation of sources, especially the use of provenance, remains a difficult skill for many candidates. Those who fail to address issues of provenance in (a) often follow this by not developing comments about sources beyond the generic in (b). This is not a result of having too little time for (b), but of failing to apply their generic understanding of source types to the extracts provided.

An important aspect of the structure of this examination which is clear from the mark scheme is that the sources are not provided one at a time but together, as a collection, on the paper. The set has been created to provide narratives and patterns relevant to the interpretation and the sources are best seen as connected. Most candidates can group sources together by saying for

example that sources 1, 2, 3 and 6 all support the interpretation while the rest do not. In the mark scheme this sort of remark would be rewarded at Level 4 (3 or 4 marks) in AO2a. In order to achieve Level 3, candidates need to demonstrate how the sources support or challenge the interpretation, thus generalising from the set. To achieve the higher levels, candidates must find direct links between the sources, for example using one source to interpret or evaluate another. In the following example from F984 Q2 the candidate has already analysed Source 2 and here goes on to develop ideas from sources 2 and 6 together to strengthen the argument, so can be rewarded at level 2 or above in AO2a.

*“Though this [source 2] is an interpretation, it nonetheless depicts the kinds of activities that allowed the renaissance to happen – the spread of learning, culture and trade. Cross-referenced with source 6, we see that Florence was a trading centre but that places like Venice were in even better positions. This implies that many Italian cities had this trade and spread of learning.”*

Too many candidates simply treat the sources provided at face value, using the evidence they contain directly to support or challenge the interpretation without stopping to think whether they are using reliable or strong evidence. At the other extreme, some candidates question everything yet there is no indication that they understand why they are doing this. Usually this means that they talk about how a source may be completely unreliable but still go on to use it as evidence both to support and to amend the original interpretation. What is missing from many answers is a sense that candidates understand that evidence in the range of sources in front of them will have different value or weight in the answer depending on the provenance of the source, and that this understanding needs to be used to shape the conclusion.

F984 Q1(a): *“At face value sources 3 and 4 appear to support the interpretation. Source 3 mentions “pirates”, which we know many Vikings were in the early stages of the Viking period. Pirates were very skilled seamen, and you could argue that this skill is what led to Viking success.”*

In this case the candidate picked out one word from the source and made some claims on the basis of that one word. Given that the source was from a Norman French chronicle in translation, this represents very limited and doubtful ‘use’ of the source. The candidate also implies contextual knowledge: ‘which we know Vikings were in the early stages’. In order to gain credit for using contextual knowledge candidates need to provide some, rather than just claiming ‘we’ or ‘I’ know that this is the case.

Some candidates simply fail to read either the source or its provenance carefully:

F983 Q3(b) *“Source 1 would be useful for the political historian studying how people reacted to the layout of Parliament in the period before during and after 1793. However it would cause a problem for that historian because it does not actually voice any opinions, we do not know who produced it we can only speculate why.”*

Clearly the source, published in 1793, cannot tell anyone anything about the period after 1793, while the source itself names the London Corresponding Society as the authors, and it is possible for an historian to discover the membership of that society. Given that it states, “A petition ... PRAYING for a radical Reform in the Representation of the PEOPLE” the purpose of the source seems clear.

Many candidates offer their own amended interpretation, although there is a surprising minority who do not attempt to do so and thereby cap their mark at Level 3 in AO2b. It is important to emphasise to candidates that the first thing an examiner is checking is whether the candidate has identified evidence that can support and evidence that can challenge the original interpretation. Only then will the examiner go on to consider what the candidate is saying about how the interpretation could be amended. Those who make amendments fall into two categories. The first, higher risk, strategy is to begin with an amendment or new interpretation.

Although this can work very successfully with simultaneous testing of the original and the new version to show how the latter compensates for the former's weaknesses, the danger is that only the amendment is tested. The argument can become confused with the candidate challenging his or her own amendment, or failing to test the original adequately.

It is also clear that some candidates write a new interpretation without having thought first about the sources, merely reacting to the interpretation as a piece of English or using their existing knowledge of the topic. This is a feature of some answers in all questions, but these examples are taken from F984 Q4 where the original interpretation said that 'Racist attitudes became less acceptable during this period'. Some candidates simply reversed this: "Racist attitudes were still held by most people during this period" or asserted something different: "Racist attitudes became less acceptable in the north". This was difficult to justify since few of the sources were specifically about the situation in the north so the usual approach lay in demonstrating that attitudes were still held in the south and then relying on often weak knowledge to fill in the missing evidence about the north.

The second, safer, strategy is to test the original, then use the problems that have been identified to generate an improvement. The quality of amendments varies considerably and, again, it is worth specifying the qualities of the best answers. Many candidates add another factor to the given interpretation – for example, that it was not just seafaring that gave the Vikings success but also something else, or that nationalism was not just driven by the international situation but also ideology. These answers typically reach Level 2. What marks out Level 1 answers is that their interpretations bring in change over time or that they offer a more complex amendment of the original. In F984 Q1 for example, some candidates argued that seafaring was a necessary condition of Viking success but on its own did not guarantee it. They then brought in other explanatory factors to offer a sufficient explanation. In F984 Q4 candidates also used the sources to argue that, after an initial attempt to challenge racist attitudes, federal authorities paid this less attention. Most interpretations make flat or static statements about a long period of time, suggesting that X was always the case or that Y was always the influential factor. Breaking through this mind-set to see a more dynamic and shifting pattern offers access to level 1.

It is also worth revisiting the (b) question with candidates as familiarity with the task appears to lead to the question itself being ignored. The question asks: 'Explain how these sources are both useful and raise problems and issues for a historian using them.' Firstly, the question emphasises '*these* sources'. Examiners are looking for comments about the specific sources provided, not general remarks about types of sources. For example, instead of writing about the benefits or otherwise of using legislation (F984 Q4, source 2), candidates need to talk about this particular law – the Civil Rights Act of 1875. It is not expected that they will have in-depth knowledge but they should have sufficient contextual knowledge to say, for example, that what the source says about equality in public places did not become reality because 'Jim Crow' laws were quickly enacted by southern states to lessen its impact, or that the law represents a federal attitude towards race which might not be typical of how southern state governments, who had already been creating 'black codes' felt.

This extract from an answer to F983 Q2 does not focus on *this* source:

*"Source 1, a chronicle 'written at Merton College, Oxford' raises a few issues. It is useful as chronicles often utilise very good sources (if they are not firsthand) and give a chronological and detailed account of events. However, his chronicle's source is quite vague which creates a few potential problems. We don't know when this was written or who by. ..."*

In contrast, this analysis of the uses and problems of a medieval chronicle (F983 Q1) starts with generic points but then develops this with more specific ideas:

*“Chronicles are very common sources from the time of the Black Death, however, many are ecclesiastical what can cause problems. Source 1 has contemporary knowledge as it is primary, wrote in 1348 so it has good provenance. Its content however is harsh towards the labourers what shows how the elite showed peasants to be almost devil like. The utility of the source comes from how it shows the workers reaction to government policies.”*

The following extract represents a more focused use of *these* chronicles in F983 Q1, raising and resolving the issue of typicality and in the process showing understanding of enquiry and methodology:

*“Source 1 is a chronicle written from an ecclesiastical perspective. It takes a rather dim view of the peasants of Rochester and would be useful for a geographical [local?] historian looking at the local impact of the Black Death, equally raising problems for any historian looking at the national impact unless it is cross-referenced with a source which might suggest the events in Rochester were similar to those in the rest of the country. Source 5, for example, would be useful to a historian alongside source 1 because it shows the lawlessness of the workers needed to be dealt with by a national law, therefore suggesting it was a nationwide issue.”*

Secondly, the question refers to sources being ‘useful’. Candidates should ask the question ‘useful for what purpose?’ Simply saying that sources are useful because they have range of coverage, types and variety of opinion is not enough because this is just describing what is on the paper. Candidates should be prompted to start thinking about what sorts of questions historians might ask using these sources – questions about causes, significance or change rather than questions of ‘what’ and ‘when’. Thirdly, the question asks for ‘problems and issues’. This should prompt candidates to think why specific sources might not be as reliable or typical as might be thought at first glance. Many candidates do this perfectly well when evaluating sources in part (a) but miss the necessity to do something similar in part (b). The kinds of sources that are discussed least well are often extracts from works of literature. The idea that the message was of greater concern than the enjoyment of the reader or that the writer did not simply aim to make money by selling as many copies as possible is often missed. Similarly, many candidates claim that the purpose of a cartoon or illustration is simply to amuse the audience.

The following extract from an answer to F983 Q3 illustrates how candidates can link sources to an enquiry in order to show their strengths and weaknesses. More use of contextual knowledge, perhaps relating to the location of industries, would have helped to support the comments.

*“Source 6 could be useful to a historian as it states the widespread discontent in the north. It gives geographical information that links to issues at the time such as the introduction of machinery or imports from other countries. The sources are not varied enough in terms of geographical distribution. This is because sources 2, 3 4, 5 and 6 are accounts from quite localised areas in the north such as Manchester and Yorkshire. Source 1 is the only southern source. This raises problems as there is not a widespread view of what the country was like in this period, although this could indicate that there was only problems in the north. A more varied selection would display if any other regions were at all affected.”*

This extract from an answer on F984 Q3 illustrates how the uses and problems of a source may be discussed using contextual knowledge to good effect:

*“Source 2 is useful in studying the beliefs of Italian nationalists, comprising Mazzini’s instructions for members of Young Italy (written when the society was founded in 1831), this goes to show the beliefs of the most popular of the secret societies. These beliefs include liberal ideologies and ideas of Italy uniting “through her own strength” – perhaps inspiration for Charles Albert’s belief in Italy uniting “fara da se”. However, the source cannot be seen to represent the views of all Italian nationalists seeing as there were vastly different ideas – from Balbo’s support of Piedmont to Gioberti’s ideas of a Papal Federation. Furthermore, this was not a view maintained through to unification. Garibaldi, a former member of Young Italy, betrayed Mazzini’s ideas of uniting from within in joining Piedmont’s efforts during the war of 1859.”*

Finally, the question asks candidates to reflect on all these things ‘for a historian’. The weakest candidates ignore this completely and assess sources in terms of their own shortcomings – ‘this source is weak because we don’t know what happened next’. The question assumes that a historian has sufficient contextual knowledge not to be stumped by any of these extracts, so simple remarks about weaknesses (what the candidate does not know but a historian could easily find out or would know, for example) are unlikely to score well. Instead, a candidate who shows that they have thought about how historians work with evidence and can apply some of this thinking to the given sources will score very highly.

Lastly there are still candidates who handicap themselves in unnecessary ways. The provision of a pen from which the black ink flows smoothly and which allows for legible writing makes the task of the reader easier. Inevitably on reading through their work candidates sometimes want to add a few sentences in the middle of an answer. Making it clear not just that there is an addition but where the addition is located is essential. The handwriting of some candidates presents difficulties for the reader, making the flow of argument hard to discern, but more problematic are those whose numbers are illegible as it is harder for the examiner to guess which source is referred to from a carelessly formed number than it is to work out a whole word in context. 1 and 7 are often indistinguishable as are 3 and 5. Candidates are also advised to refer accurately to the number of the source about which they are writing.

### Comments on individual questions

#### F983 Question 1: The impact and consequences of the Black Death in England up to the 1450s.

Candidates were able to engage successfully with the issue in the interpretation and recognised how the sources could be applied to it. The most common way to construct an argument was to consider the short and long-term impact of the Black Death on government. Although this was a valid approach it immediately presented the problem of where to draw the line between the two – unfortunately there was no clear-cut turning point evident in the sources. Many regarded the Church as an important bulwark of government and used this to interpret the king’s message in source 3. Less convincing arguments failed to show awareness of the role of government in the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, claiming that the medieval government was responsible for the economy, food supplies and so on in a way that showed little understanding of differences between then and now. Although candidates recognised there would be a religious slant in chronicle sources, they found it difficult to use the evidence in the chronicles at anything beyond face-value or to appreciate that, with the Church an important institution in terms of control, it could have a political as well as a religious role. Remarkably few candidates seemed aware that there was a series of laws designed to control wages and employment of which source 5 was an example, even though the extract referred back to the ordinance and statute of labourers of 1349 and 1351. Most recognised that Source 6 referred to the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, but there was little evidence that candidates knew that peasants were often uncooperative with their lords, both before and after the Black Death, albeit on a much smaller scale. Given that there are relatively few source-types, it is disappointing that so few candidates use their generic knowledge to evaluate sources and make relatively little use of specific contextual knowledge.

#### F983 Question 2: Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England

Most candidates made good use of the sources to construct an argument about how Tudor government dealt with rebellion. The sources raised the question of prevention as well as punishments and many candidates engaged well with the range of issues. Candidates made an effort to use their contextual knowledge to identify patterns, suggesting for example, that the strength of the monarchy at a particular time might determine the reaction to rebellion or that the extent to which harsh laws were applied depended on the status of the rebels and whether they were leaders or led. There was some confusion where candidates had a weak understanding of what the law amounts to – that is, the relationship between laws, punishments and the ways in which the law is enforced. On occasion this led to contorted new interpretations that sought to

distinguish the laws from the punishments. Sources 3 and 7 provided evidence of methods of preventing rebellion either by emphasising the benefits or God's order or by removing a cause of rebellion. Most candidates recognised this and were able to make good use of these sources, using their contextual knowledge to infer the links between these sources and rebellions, although some read source 7 to be promoting enclosure.

There were some very mechanical answers to (b), with generic introductory paragraphs noting, for example, the problem of limited survival of sources from the Tudor period. Such comments score very low marks and reduce the amount of time candidates have for developing comments in relation to the sources provided. Candidates should aim to engage with the sources on the paper from the start in (b).

### F983 Question 3: Radicals, Popular Politics and Control

Candidates often engage well with this topic by showing a good overall grasp of the material. However, too often they come with preconceived ideas and pursue them without assessing carefully how well the sources support their ideas. The concept of a driving force behind popular protest was familiar to most, and they were able to identify the motivation behind many of the more familiar protests. However, too many assumed a simple progression from political to economic aims and pushed this line of argument by using the sources very selectively. Grouping of the sources was common and there was good use of knowledge to contextualise the sources and present them thematically. Candidates usually recognised the influence of French Revolution in sources 1 and 3, picking up on 'Fraternity' and 'Liberty' on the banners at Peterloo. Sources 2 and 4 both provided evidence of attacks on machinery that was impacting on employment. However, sources that warranted more unpacking often presented problems. Many candidates were aware that Luddite aims focused on machinery that was undermining wages and jobs, but found it difficult to reconcile this with the face-value evidence in Source 2. Even where they were aware of the use of informants and could suggest likely motives for Thomas Broughton's evidence, they tended to take the view that there was 'no smoke without fire', so the Luddites were driven by political grievances. Source 4 was a rich source, and good candidates recognised that the different groups in it focused on different issues, with the middle classes demanding political reform while the workers had economic aims. At face value Source 5 suggested that shortage of food was driving protest, although some candidates thought 'workhouse' meant 'factory' and linked this attack with the Luddites. Source 6 was clear but needed careful reading and some candidates assumed the problem here was illness among the workers, while political overtones in Source 7 were missed.

In (b) there were too many who took a simple view of the purpose of illustrations (to entertain) and are insecure about the reliability of newspapers. Better candidates made use of their knowledge of Peterloo to assess how accurate the report in Source 3 was rather than relying on generic comments about newspapers. Many candidates commented that there were no sources about Chartists and explained how this skewed the conclusions that could be drawn.

### F983 Question 4: The impact of War on British Society and Politics since 1900

Understanding of the sources was generally good. Many candidates were able to differentiate between social class and race when discussing the interpretation and could use sources 3 and 4 to establish a pattern of race relations in the first half of the twentieth century. From this, they were able to develop a new interpretation along the lines of 'Wars have appeared to narrow differences between social classes more than they narrowed differences between races'. In question (b) many went on to point out that had there been reference to the so-called 'War on Terror' in these sources, the idea that wars have lessened racial differences would have been less easy to sustain. Many candidates also made good use of source 1 to show the idea of everyone pitching in to help with the war effort either as a combatant or a donor and went on to examine provenance including some impressive observations about Kipling himself. The sources that caused most trouble in interpreting were source 2 (the comments by a middle-class

woman after World War 1) and the photographs in sources 5 and 7. Few candidates picked up on the tone of source 2 so only used the source to support the interpretation, rather than recognising that the writer clearly opposes what has been happening (and no doubt exaggerates the changes too). Lack of contextual knowledge here meant that candidates could not place their assertions about change in the light of what happened after the war, although some used their knowledge of women's history to make good observations about the lack of long-term change. The picture sources suffered from the usual problem of generalisation – some candidates asserted that photographs, by their nature, cannot mislead and are 'worth a thousand words' to historians. Others were undecided about whether source 7 showed unity or disunity and some thought that it was a photograph of a protest about the Falklands War.

Successful strategies for this question often identified themes within the sources that could be used to test the idea of narrowing differences. In particular it was possible to identify issues involving race, class and possibly gender. By distinguishing between strands a more complex assessment could be made. Another successful approach was to compare the short and long-term impacts of war on social cohesion and to recognise that what benefits wars brought was usually short-term because of the necessity of warfare, as this candidate explained very successfully in her conclusion:

*"The interpretation that wars have narrowed the differences between people is too simple. While wars were being fought people were encouraged to work together (sources 1 and 2 for example talk about different sorts of people who would never normally have contact with each other having to work closely together or how people played down racial differences) but these changes were exaggerated by government propaganda and rarely lasted after the war was over."*

In question (b) too many candidates were still trying to write about every source, whether they knew anything about it or not, and wrote too generally about 'photographs' or 'poems' rather than basing their observations in the sources provided. Better candidates focused on specific sources – e.g. commenting that source 2 might not be a typical view because this was a middle-class woman's view of the war and that a working-class woman's experience of factory work and changes to the daily routine might yield a different view.

#### F984 Question 1: The Vikings in Europe

This question elicited a full range of responses. 'Seafaring' was defined in a number of acceptable ways; besides travelling across the sea from Scandinavia to Britain, France, Italy, Greenland and Iceland, there was evidence of Rus Vikings on the Volga and penetration inland in France and England via rivers. All this was accepted as evidence of seafaring skills. Many candidates recognised that the Vikings also used skills of land warfare, especially raiding and that they were able to trade, negotiate and assimilate with other peoples. Craft skills were also in evidence in sources 4 and 7. The relationship between these factors formed the basis of successful new interpretations, but weaker candidates tended to impose what they already knew: that Vikings moved from raiding to trading. The sources produced an interesting range of comments, but too many candidates relied on generic evaluative claims about types of sources – chronicles, sagas and so on. Disappointingly the reconstruction from an archaeological find was accepted at face value by many candidates. Some, however, did recognise that not only was its construction questionable but also the use to which it was put and the extent to which Vikings relied on it was open to interpretation. These candidates made good use of their knowledge of the Vikings' preference for hugging the coast and sometimes used this device as a platform for introducing and using evidence of shipbuilding skills that created ships suitable both for ocean-sailing and river navigation. Candidates in this option typically have a sound overall knowledge of changes across the period and of the source types, but often find it difficult to think flexibly about the former, adapting to the evidence presented in the sources and struggle to apply what they know about the sources to the particular examples on the paper.

### F984 Question 2: The Italian Renaissance

The quality of answers to this question was generally high. Candidates understood the sources well and could draw sophisticated inferences from them, for example noticing that the concentration of different activities in a single street in Florence could suggest that cities were vital in causing the Renaissance by bringing so many different people and skills together while at the same time wondering whether it was the skills themselves that were the cause. This ‘chicken and egg’ approach to the question paid dividends for those who went on to develop a new interpretation. They suggested successfully that while cities were no doubt a precondition for the Renaissance taking root, without the ingenuity of artists or interest of patrons there would have been no trigger for developments. In other answers, candidates picked out other causes suggested by the sources - trade links, civic pride and patronage – but did not show how these interacted with the growth of cities so tended to achieve Level 2.

### F984 Question 3: European Nationalism

Candidates found the interpretation approachable, although some struggled to define what the ‘international situation’ might mean, so were unclear whether Austria counted as ‘international’ or what source 7’s reference to colonialism might signify. The sources were well-understood, although some candidates were uncertain which ‘Napoleon’ was referred to in source 1 and so applied invalid contextual knowledge to the source. New interpretations sometimes recognised change over time applying to the sources but usually suggested that ‘other factors’ also drove nationalism. It was noticeable that some candidates used this as an opportunity to re-visit themes set in previous papers, with the ‘great men’ theory in particular being used despite its limited application to these sources. The best candidates showed an impressive mastery of the concepts of liberalism and nationalism and the extent to which they as well as the international situation were responsible for the unification of Germany and Italy as well as their role in driving events post-unification in Germany.

### F984 Question 4: Race and American Society

The majority of candidates study this option. There has been an improvement in the quality of answers recently and this year’s examination was no exception. The best candidates read the sources carefully and thought about what they wanted to argue before putting pen to paper. The resulting answers were tightly-focused on evaluating the original interpretation and proposing a new amendment. Common strategies were to argue that in theory racial attitudes became less acceptable but the reality was of on-going discrimination or that federal leadership began to change attitudes but local responses were slower to change. It was noticeable that where candidates had not really planned their answer or had come with something pre-prepared, their approach to the sources was very partial – ignoring much of source 1’s positive view of what was happening at the university because it did not fit with their new interpretation that no change happened to attitudes.

Understanding of sources was generally good. Some candidates questioned the tone of source 4, wondering whether the author could be writing ironically. They also were able to place source 2 into a broad context, understanding that this law was passed just before the end of Reconstruction so was never really enforced and provoked ‘Jim Crow’ laws in the south. Some even knew that it was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court a few years later. From this, they generated a sophisticated argument. On the one hand, they saw the law as a genuine federal attempt to change attitudes so supported the interpretation but it also challenged the interpretation by the very fact that it was needed and because it was overwhelmed by the backlash. It is this integration of what the source says and the candidate’s own knowledge to evaluate it as evidence that is the hallmark of the best answers. The most difficult source on the paper proved to be source 6. A significant minority of candidates had little knowledge of the Southern Manifesto and resorted to guessing that it might be, variously, a black response to the Brown ruling or a Republican manifesto for that year’s elections. There was better judgement of

other sources, though fewer than expected picked up the cue from the provenance of source 3 that the judge disagreed with the majority verdict so could not be considered a typical voice at this time. For once, a source about Malcolm X's recollections led to fewer generic remarks about his supposed addiction to violent methods or how the autobiography was written to 'sell copies and make money' and produced some more informed comments about how vivid this recollection was given that he was a small child at the time.

In (b) more candidates seem aware of the mark scheme and were trying to access higher levels by referring to issues of purpose, reliability and typicality in sources. While some seem unable to break free of generic remarks – sources are either there to inform, entertain or persuade - more wrote persuasively about the specific sources in front of them. Again, it is worth emphasising to candidates that they should direct their remarks at a few sources they feel comfortable with and not try to cover all seven badly.

## F985/F986 Historical Controversies

### General comments

The performance of the candidates was again encouraging. The overwhelming majority of candidates understood the extracts and also had a clear idea of what they had to do. It is most encouraging to see so many candidates engaging with historians' interpretations at such a high level – and appearing to have enjoyed their experience.

The non-British options were more popular than the British options. Witch-hunting and the Holocaust were the most popular topics and a reasonable number of candidates answered on the American West, Imperialism and Appeasement. The Crises of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Crusades were studied at just a few centres and there were no candidates for the Norman Conquest.

It is not the purpose of this report to suggest only one way of organising and answering the questions. However, it is possible to identify approaches that do not work and to identify the key elements in answers that will lead to good marks.

The fundamental task in **part a** is to work out and explain the overall interpretation in the extract. The mark scheme makes this clear by starting of each level descriptor with a statement about the interpretation. Some candidates were much happier writing about approaches and methods because they could rely more on prior knowledge and less on their analysis of the extract. The best answers focused on the extract and analysed it thoroughly. They did not move on to writing about approaches and methods until they had explored all aspects of the extract and teased out an overall interpretation. This cannot be done satisfactorily in half a page. Some candidates clearly struggled with what is meant by the term interpretation. One way of defining what is meant by interpretation is to talk about the main argument of the extract.

The best answers explained the interpretation in their own words and resisted long quotations from, and paraphrasing of, the extract. They also resisted the temptation to identify an interpretation as e.g. intentionalist, and then write all they knew about intentionalist historians. This brings us to the issue of the use of own knowledge. Candidates should try and inform their reading of the extract and their explanation of the interpretation by the use of own knowledge and wider reading. However this should be done for one purpose only – to throw more light on the interpretation and to improve the quality of the explanation. Candidates should also avoid answering in a mechanical way. The practice of following every statement about a part of the extract with a summary of the ideas of a historian is often counter-productive. It often achieves little and disrupts the flow of the answer. The best answers only brought in wider knowledge when there was a good reason to do e.g. to explain a particularly important part of the extract. It cannot be emphasised enough that the bulk of this part of the answer should come from a careful reading of the extract, not from candidates notes or books.

Although there were many instances of excellent discussion of approaches and methods a minority of candidates struggled with this part of the question. Often their explanation, or description, of approaches became detached from the extract. Some candidates managed to detect six or seven approaches in the extract with some of these resting on just a sentence or two of the extract. For example, just the mention of judges in the Witch-hunting extract does not necessarily mean that the approach of the historian is one of 'from above'. Candidates should try and work out the overall approach or approaches. There are unlikely to be more than two. Instead of then writing down everything they know about the approach, they should try and explore its relationship with the overall interpretation in the extract. This is what the mark scheme means in Level 5 when it says 'explaining how the approach/method of the historian had led to this interpretation being written.' Some candidates, often very surprisingly, managed to detect evidence of six or seven methods in their extract. They then found it necessary to list historians who have used these methods. This ended up, for example, with candidates informing examiners that certain historians have used court records in their study of witch-hunting. This did not lead to much improvement of their answers.

To sum up – the best answers focused on the extract, did not answer in a mechanical way and brought in wider knowledge to throw light on the extract.

Answers to part **b** are improving. Most candidates made a real attempt to assess the named approach rather than simply describing it. Some still struggled with the difference between the named approach and interpretations by various historians that are based on the approach. The ways in which named approaches have contributed to our understanding of historical topics were generally explained more satisfactorily than disadvantages or shortcomings. When explaining the latter the best answers pointed out how useful perspectives on a topic would not be likely using the named approach. This is a more productive line of argument than the claim made by many candidates that the named approach was mono-causal and therefore limited. Nor is it a valid criticism of an approach that it does not include other approaches. This often came from candidates who were struggling with the difference between approach and interpretation. There were many good answers where candidates explained how the named approach has contributed to our understanding because of the nature of the approach and it was encouraging to see more candidates than last year focusing on the contribution of the approach as a whole rather than on interpretations of particular historians. These can be used to explore the contributions of the overall approach but answers should not develop into critiques of one historian after another.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

There were no candidates for this option.

#### **The debate over Britain's 17<sup>th</sup> century crises 1629-89**

Most of the small number of candidates answering this question were able to explain that the interpretation focuses on the impact of the war on ordinary people and on comparing how the two sides dealt with this impact. Responses to the second part of the question were more varied with some candidates clearly familiar with the ideas of Court and Country but other candidates struggled as they were clearly not familiar with the terms or the approach associated with them.

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

Many candidates produced detailed analyses of the extract to tease out the main interpretation. This was often well explained and supported with references to the extract and wider knowledge with John Mackenzie being mentioned often. Some candidates misread the first paragraph and built their answers on the misunderstanding that Porter was the author of the extract. Others made excellent use of the criticism of Porter and it helped many with the methods underpinning the extract. Candidates were very knowledgeable about an economic approach to imperialism. The main weakness of some answers was a tendency to suggest that historians focusing on economic factors would naturally ignore all other approaches.

#### **The Debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s**

Some candidates saw this extract as one that synthesised intentionalist and structuralist arguments. This line of argument did produce good answers as many were based on a close examination of the extract. However, the best answers were those that demonstrated an understanding that the historian is arguing that although other factors were important, Chamberlain was the key. There were many good answers about the contribution made by focusing on constraints and about the disadvantages of such an approach e.g. downplaying the significance of human agency and Chamberlain.

### **Different approaches to the Crusades 1095-1272**

A good number of candidates were able to explain what the extract argues about how the Crusades developed out of pilgrimages. Other key aspects of the extract about ideas about a just war and differences of view between the East and the West were often built into the answers in a convincing way. Assessments of the approach of viewing the Crusades as a form of colonialism were stronger on shortcomings than on how they have contributed to our understanding,

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

Many candidates were able to use the extract to explain the overall interpretation. There were good explanations of how the impetus for witch-hunting came from below but pressure that led to its decline came from above. Some candidates focused too much on changes in judicial structures and not enough on changes in attitudes.

### **Different American Wests 1840-1900**

Most candidates understood the argument about the popular portrayal of the West as a place of violence being a myth. Many went on to develop the point that the gun could be said to actually have had the opposite effect. However, not many candidates gave enough attention to the historian's arguments about how the myth was created. Focus on the frontier as an approach was welcomed by many candidates and there were many good explanations of contribution to understanding and of shortcomings.

### **Debates about the Holocaust**

Many candidates picked up the points about how central Judenpolitik was to the Nazi Party, the complexity of the process and the fact that there was no single moment of decision making. Fewer candidates understood the point made at the end of extract about the patchy nature of the source material leading to the method of starting with what happened and then working backwards from there.

## F987 Historical Significance

### F987 Principal Moderator's Report

#### General Comments:

- The marking of centres was accurate and, in the majority of cases, within tolerance. It was particularly satisfying to see that both strong and weak work was appropriately recognised and rewarded. The general standard of coursework was higher than it was last year. This is evidenced by the slightly higher average mark achieved for the component, by the development of more confident and complex narratives of significance, and by increasing competence in the critical use of evidence. The quality of the Diary is also improving, in the sense that desperately weak offerings have been virtually eradicated. There seems to be a growing realisation – to be emphasised below - that the best guarantee of a good Study lies in a good Diary.
- There was much excellent work on view; there were some highly historiographical approaches, heavily slanted towards AO2b, which worked well in terms of integrating the two chronological perspectives. On the other hand, some managed to include sources and interpretations adroitly in their arguments, making evaluative comments which were to the point of the assignment. In both cases, wide reading and meticulous planning were crucial factors.
- Having said all this, however, the following comments will focus necessarily on the commonest shortcomings, with a view to promoting general improvement.

#### Presentation:

- Please be advised that the 3,000 word limit for coursework Studies has been more strictly enforced this year – by centres as well as by OCR Moderators. There were several examples of 'lines being drawn' by one or the other when the word limit was reached. On the rare occasion where the infringement was widespread within a centre, coursework samples had to be returned to centres – for the length of studies to be reduced and for the Studies to be re-marked. With this in mind, **please be sure to indicate word length in the space provided on the cover sheet** and ask candidates to include a cumulative word count on each page of the Study. Please remember also, that the limit of 3,000 words applies only to the Study; the Diary has a separate limit of 1,000 words. We insist on a word limit, not only to ensure fairness between candidates but also to encourage the production of more coherent and tightly argued pieces of work. The use of additional words and pages rarely, if ever, enhances the quality of a coursework study.
- Please complete the checklist that appears at the bottom of the Cover Sheet (CCS363). The purpose of this is to ensure that the two crucial documents – the Centre Authentication Sheet (CCS 160) and the Record of Programme of Study Form are included in the sample of work sent to each Moderator. OCR cannot moderate without sight of these documents, so failure to include them triggers e-mailed requests and other delays to the moderating process.
- It would be really helpful if centres could ensure, either that the pages of each study are stapled together or that the whole of each Study is placed inside a polypocket.

### Marking.

- The vast majority of centres now offer helpful formative commentary in the side margins, as well as summative level scores at the end in respect of each component (AO1; AO2a; AO2b) – which is then transferred to the front cover sheet.
- As in previous years, however, there is a tendency to award ‘levels’ in this or that component too quickly, bearing in mind that candidates need time to construct their narratives or adjudicate between competing interpretations. It may be better to describe what the candidate is doing that can be rewarded ‘on the way’ (e.g. ‘establishes immediate impact’ or ‘cross-references in support of claim’ or, simply ‘critical use’), leaving the awarding of AO ‘levels’ until it is clear that the candidate has achieved them.
- There is still a tendency to inflate AO judgements. Typically, this can happen at levels 4 and 5 of AO1 when significance ‘over time’ is far less clear and less well developed than significance ‘at the time’; or at various levels of AO2, where candidates have evaluated sources but said very little about interpretations.
- In the latter case, stock comments (e.g. ‘this source is likely to be biased because it was written by a woman/Tory/supporter/opponent etc.’) can be over-rewarded at times. There are various distinguishing phrases in the mark scheme (e.g. ‘*beginning* to make critical use of source material’) that can be used in recognising the difference between what might be termed ‘simple’ and ‘more complex’ evaluation of a source.

### Titles.

- It is almost not worth saying that ‘some titles work better than others’. However, it is well worth observing the corollary that ‘the perfect title is worth waiting for’. One such this year concerned itself with the historical significance of the Battle of Culloden. This is because its immediate consequences – devastating military defeat followed by the Highland Clearances – could be set against the notion of a turning point in Scotland’s political, cultural and economic development. By *merging* these two assessments, it becomes clear that the significance of the battle lay in the fact that the event and its consequences were *so severe* as to set in train a sequence of developments that would destroy the fabric of Highland society.
- Though reducing in number, there remains a minority of titles that are ‘causal’ in nature. For example, a title such as ‘How significant was the Wall Street Crash in bringing Hitler to power in 1933?’ is likely to lead the candidate into a causal explanation, in which the *importance* of the economic crash is compared with that of other causal factors in bringing about the outcome. Whilst discussion of the immediate impact of the Crash is likely to count in terms of significance ‘at the time’, it is difficult to see how significance ‘over time’ can be measured over the short period of 1929 to 1933. On the other hand, ‘What was the significance of the Wall Street Crash?’ could work well across both dimensions because it is not limited in temporal scale by the wording of the question. Significance is a developmental, not a causal construct.
- In some cases, causal factors are so familiar or well rehearsed that they appear ‘automatically’ in answers about significance – for examples several candidates, in answering the question, ‘What was the significance of the sinking of the Titanic?’ gave dutiful accounts of the causes of the disaster instead of - or as well as - assessing the *impact* of the event.
- In some cases, the wording of questions can have the effect of closing down the perspectives by adding too much to the title (e.g. ‘...in the Second world War’, ‘...in the Russian Revolution’). On the other hand, ‘How significant was Louis Pasteur to the history of medicine?’ works, because the expected response is developmental, rather than causal; liberated rather than confined.
- There are still problems with titles setting up significance between two individuals (typically Martin Luther King and Malcolm X; Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole). Rarely do they deliver comparative analysis and evaluation; rather they tend to look at each in turn with limited comparisons of significance.

- It is worth repeating that careful choice of topic, and then deciding on a good enquiry question, are essential to success.
- There can be problems in choosing individuals as the focus of this Unit. Analysing their significance in the past, while apparently easier, can lead into straight biography. Significance over time should deal with the *legacy* of the individual, which can be difficult to research in some cases, as distinct from reputation. This is precisely why candidates who take the 'legacy' or 'resonance' route need to go beyond references to statues and commemorations and think more critically about the crucial distinction between 'legacy' and 'reputation'. In some cases, of course, the significance of the individual dwindled considerably after their death, and this presented difficulties for the student. There needs to be some assessment of the place the chosen person or event occupies in history: consequently, care over the choice of individual needs to be thought through at an early stage.

### **Attributing significance:**

#### AO1

- The opening paragraph of the study is important for setting up what is to follow. In particular, candidates should use the opening paragraph to rehearse arguments about the significance of the event, individual or site. There is no need to beat around the bush – candidates need to set up the stages of their investigation.
- Some candidates also use the opening paragraph to announce that they propose to use this or that set of given criteria for assessing significance; these can help candidates, but they should simply be 'borne in mind' and *used* - there is no need to announce their coming. Another problem of the 'prior announcement' is that some of these candidates, having laid the criteria out in the opening paragraph, fail to use them to structure the assignment.
- The Specification makes clear that the significance of a historical events or person should "be measured over time and across time". Some candidates took this to mean using contemporary sources and historians' accounts. In such cases, there needs to be some analysis of how, and particularly why, these might differ.
- Weaker candidates, as expected, tended to deliver a basic narrative around an event, descriptive and chronological; at times, with explanation and occasional analysis. Similarly, when writing about an individual, uncritical biographies or unsupported assertions about the impact of the individual tended to be the order of the day.
- There is continuing uncertainty about significance 'over time' and it is worth repeating some of the advice given last year. There are at least 3 ways of approaching this:
  - The 'developmental' approach: candidates locate the event/individual/site inside a much longer 'story', so that the significance of him/her/it can be expressed in developmental terms – e.g. trend, turning point, 'false dawn' etc. This 'longer story' need not be a detailed narrative – just enough salient developments (prior and subsequent) to allow the significance judgement to be made.
  - The 'resonance' approach: candidates address the notion of legacy (as distinct from 'reputation'). How long have the achievements or consequences lasted? Is this consistent with the 'reputation' of the individual, event or site?
  - The historiographic approach: candidates look at how the views of historians about the significance of an individual, event or site have themselves changed over time – and what reasons may be advanced for such changes?
- The better and best candidates were able to blend, or merge, both initial assessments of significance. This approach finds, and attempts to explain, a relationship between the initial assessments which effectively creates a third – in other words, a synthesis. (If candidates merely combine the two, with each effectively retaining its own identity, then this cannot reach the top level)

- Candidates choosing to assess the significance of an individual should treat the current fashion for newspaper and TV polls to do with the ‘100 greatest...’ etc. with considerable caution. These represent the views of people who buy newspapers or watch television – the polls have no more substance than that.

AO2:

- As already mentioned, there is a continuing tendency to conflate the mark given for work on AO2a and AO2b, despite the fact that success on AO2b is much less in evidence. In AO2a, it is the candidate’s critical use of sources – primary and/or secondary - that is being rewarded. In AO2b, it is the candidate’s critical use of historians’ interpretations. Since the use of secondary sources can be used in both AO2a and AO2b, it is important to know the difference. This can be simply stated: when a secondary source is being used, together with primary sources perhaps, to negotiate some detail within a line of argument, it is part of AO2a; when it is being used to reflect a historian’s overall interpretation of the significance of an individual, event or site - to be compared with that of another historian perhaps - it is part of AO2b. In either case, primary sources, ‘secondary sources as evidence’ and ‘secondary sources as interpretations’ need to be considered in context and viewed with a critical perspective. *If, in the latter case, there is no attempt to treat interpretations in this way, then a low mark must be given for AO2b*
- Candidates seemed to struggle with how to make sensible critical comments on sources and interpretations. There was considerable over-rewarding by teachers here, sometimes of banal comments, or sweeping statements, or of simply finding historians with differing views.
- Sources and interpretations were frequently used to support the writer’s views, rather than generating the arguments over significance which is the thrust of this task
- Placing the authors of sources and writers of history into their contexts (see above) would have opened up this area for candidates. It was interesting to note that critical use of source material could sometimes be found in the Diaries, but did not make their way into the Study itself.
- Critical evaluation should not be laboured, or generalised: the point is simply to evaluate the source or interpretation in the context of the argument being made.
- Given that the issue of the *historian’s context* is critical, the purpose of steering candidates away from websites becomes clear. Unless basic contextual information about the author of a source and/or the circumstances of its production is available, it is difficult to see how candidates with this approach can go far beyond illustrative or face-value use of source material.
- Where candidates do go beyond face-value evaluation, they often use cross or counter-reference as a means of strengthening or undermining a line of argument. However, this needs to go beyond simple statements that two sources/interpretations agree or disagree; its contribution to the line of argument needs to be made clear, adjudications need to be explained; and some sort of evaluation of the ‘mini-debate’ needs to be made before moving on.
- Use of quotations can become excessive; it is often used to emphasise quite unremarkable words or phrases, or used simply to illustrate a claim. Prior thought should be given to whether or not the quoted section is adding to the debate about significance.

**Footnoting and bibliographies:**

- It is generally better to provide a shorter bibliography containing a number of books that have been read and understood than a lengthy list of books that have not. It follows that there should be a clear link between the Diary, the Bibliography and the deployment of evidence in the finished Study.
- Be wary of web sources without reputable authors. These can offer little more than information and, when quoted, can elicit little more than face-value responses. There are good websites and web sources – it is simply a matter of finding them.

- Footnotes are a useful device for organising a narrative or an argument. By giving all of the essential information about a quoted source, they are the key to successful in-context use of evidence. Nevertheless, some candidates tried to do it all in the text – with predictable results: “Overall, Stalin’s industrialisation policy is best summed up by Michael Lynch’s (*Stalin’s Russia 1924-53*), statement that ‘Stalin’s aims....’” Keeping good footnotes is tidier and simpler
- Having said this, there is a limit to the content of footnotes imposed by the overall word limit. Footnotes that go beyond the basic function described above are equally invalid. This is where the candidate uses the facility of the footnote, in which to insert copious detail relevant to the argument – *often as a means of circumventing the word limit*. Footnotes of this kind are simply ignored.

### Diaries.

- It seems that some Diaries were written after the process was complete, which seems a bit of a shame. Others were records of journeys made, books read and interviews conducted. They need not be extensive, but should provide the early stages of what will become the main argument of the written assignment. Early evidence of views held, and abandoned or modified, and why, would give candidates valuable material to draw on later.
- Some Diaries were thoughtful; analytical; evaluative of approaches, advice sought, discussions had, sources engaged; they reflected an on-going sense of purpose and searching for extra materials. Some displayed welcome initiatives. Others were thin, basic, sketches really, a list of ‘what I did next...’
- It is baffling to note that, in some cases, evaluation of books, articles and websites in the Diary were better than those that eventually found their way into the finished text.
- According to one Moderator, “*I do know of centres which value the Diaries highly and see them as very important components of the whole process. I am not sure all do, though – or indeed get candidates to understand the purpose of the Diary. **Research** is a key word*”.
- Wide reading, of books and websites, is essential for giving candidates a range of sources and of interpretations to utilise. Some candidates, with less reading to draw on, wrote considerably less than 3,000 words.
- Developing judgements of significance needs to be built in to the enquiry from the outset. It was clear from some Diaries that candidates’ main concern was ‘getting the story straight’ rather than establishing the basis for an investigation.
- The following is an example of how it is meant to happen. It is taken from the final retrospective section of a Diary. The study was on the significance of the 1832 Reform Act. *I was shocked when I realised the limitations of the Act because when I undertook my research I was convinced that the Act was going to be significant due to what it achieved. It was several books later that I realised, in actual fact, the reform it brought about was minimal. Although when I initially discovered this I thought my essay was going to fall apart, through several meeting logs with various teachers, I realised in actual fact I had just discovered a much stronger argument; what the Act reveals is more significant than what it achieved.”*
- It is important - particularly in the case of reluctant readers – to establish a disciplined way of working through the Diary. For example, one centre insisted that at least one diary entry/section between tutorials began with the heading ‘New reading’, followed by ‘Evaluation’.
- It is also important to give candidates an opportunity to present the progress of their research and to defend their developing ideas and arguments against the constructive challenges of their peers. The Powerpoint presentation is a regular feature in the coursework programmes of several centres.
- To end on a simple note – articles are easier to read than ‘big books’ (though both are needed). So it makes sense to talk nicely to the Librarian, requesting subscription to periodicals such as *History Today/History Review* – in order to give candidates a quick start to their decision making and choices of topic.

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