

History B

Advanced GCE A2 H508

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H108

Report on the Units

June 2010

HX08/R/10

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F981, F982 – Historical Explanation

General comments

It is pleasing to report that the number of centres and students undertaking F981 and F982 units has increased since June 2009. As Specification B becomes better known and understood it is very much hoped that this trend will continue. The most popular topic within F981 by some margin is Tudor Finale, with some centres taking Liberal Sunset and an increasing number taking End of Consensus; Lancastrians and Yorkists has a smaller following. With F982, the Russia unit is the most popular followed by the French Revolution and Luther, then Charlemagne.

As in previous reports for these units the aim of the examiners is to reward as highly as possible good, analytical, well-supported historical writing. Here are outlines of two examples of essay structures which enabled candidates to access Level 1 in straightforward fashion.

An essay in response to the question “Why did Puritans cause problems for Elizabeth” was awarded over 85%. It successfully adopted the following approach:

Introduction: opposition took many forms including passing bills for reform, individuals preaching against the settlement, and meetings.

- A paragraph on Puritan beliefs and attitudes and why they might be a threat
- A paragraph on meetings and prophesying; viewed as a problem because this could cause further unrest
- A paragraph on parliament and Puritan attempts to use it for reform, eg Strickland actions
- A paragraph on opposition to the Episcopal system and desire for a Presbyterian church, which thereby threatened Elizabethan control over the church
- Opposition from Marian exiles and Calvinists: the Vestments Controversy

Conclusion: Puritans did not threaten Elizabeth’s life but did threaten her authority; a glance forward to Civil War in the 1600s.

From F982 there was an essay in answer to the question on the French Revolution ‘How would you best explain increasing hostility to the Church in the period up to 1791?’ that was given over 75%. It adopted the following structure:

- First paragraph on the Civil constitution of the clergy and its terms
- Paragraph on tithes and harsh winters and states of affairs
- Paragraph on the political role of the church and an explanation of why hostility increased
- Paragraph on the King and the religious underpinnings of his authority
- A paragraph explaining why in some respects hostility towards the church gradually disappeared

What matters here is not the marks these essays were given (which will obviously have depended on, among other factors, the quality and quantity of factual support which students provided) but that a clear structure enabled responses to be at high Level 2 or Level 1 because the essays answered the question set in an analytical fashion. The essay structures allowed a varied approach. The two outlines have in common a means of explaining what a monarch or government did and why. Explaining actions and why they happened is central to this unit. The two outlines make it possible to explain the aims and intentions of individuals such as Louis XVI or groups such as the Marian exiles. But these aims and intentions cannot be understood without some grasp of the state of affairs (for example political and religious) which produced them. This might encompass attitudes and beliefs prevalent at the time, revolutionary new ideas

about active citizenship, a long-standing economic situation or the long-term political context. Without encouraging a formulaic approach, modelling essay structures which enable responses to cover key elements relevant to the question being asked could be of real benefit to students and might be considered good practice from an early stage in AS study. This is not the same as pre-preparing learned plans in the hope that a particular question comes up, which is not a route to success.

Good responses do not have to be long. One team leader was struck by the concise nature of the following responses, which achieved Level 1 in slightly less than three sides of normal handwriting, in response to the very popular Q7a 'Why was there a revolution in Russia in 1905?'

- Introduction: a combination of factors will best explain this question
- Paragraph on the economic state of affairs of early twentieth century Russia; this paragraph led into a very brief discussion of the Russo-Japanese war and the trigger of Bloody Sunday
- Paragraph on the intentions of various groups especially peasants and workers
- Paragraph on beliefs and attitudes towards the Tsar and revolutionary groups
- Ranking of factors: it was the context which mattered most, with revolution caused by the catalyst of Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday.

One common link between these elements is the word 'because' in response to the question 'why?' Why is it relevant to write about the aims of revolutionary peasant groups in 1904-5? Because this climate of ideas led to political unrest and triggered harsh government reprisals. Why? Because the Tsar's own beliefs about his role and responsibility did not encompass notions of democracy or a division of authority. Why?.. and so on. This may sound patronising and simplistic, but such an approach would help obviate the tendency of some candidates on some questions to write descriptively. Fortunately, purely narrative writing was not often encountered this year, but *descriptive* writing sometime was. This was especially prevalent on the Russia questions, where some candidates spent inordinate amounts of time 'setting the scene', often starting with Alexander II and then regurgitating pages of learned material about the economic and political problems which Russia faced in the late 19th century; belatedly a paragraph on the Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday was bolted on and then the candidate ran out of time. The candidate is then disappointed to receive a band III mark for what they may have felt was a lot of energy and effort, largely misplaced.

As stated in previous reports, candidates can secure 23 marks out of 25 without direct reference to modes. For 24 and 25, responses will need to use terms such as 'casual mode' or 'intentional mode' appropriately and explicitly. This allows us to credit candidates who have thought carefully about how a particular question can be answered and how problems can be explained by using modes of analysis, as set out in the specification. This year there have been fewer examples of scripts that suggest terminology has been mechanically thrown in to a response, which is welcome news. Modes should be used to explain and organise, allowing candidates knowingly and deliberately to explain ideas and attitudes, an action or reaction, states of affairs, or intentions. In previous reports analogies have been drawn to outline what is intended.

Linking points and ideas explicitly within paragraphs or at the beginning or conclusion of an essay, is encouraged. The same can be said for the ranking of factors, although in weaker responses sometimes a chosen factor and its importance is 'bolted on' with no prior warning or justification, or an order of importance is given with no clear justification or explanation. Credit will be earned by demonstrating why hostility to the church was increasing more between 1789 and 1791 due to the attitudes and ideas of the monarch and royal family than through anything actually carried out by the National Assembly. However there will be no credit for asserting that of all the reasons for the 1905 revolution in Russia the actions of father Gapon were most important, with no further justification.

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Plans are desirable, and many centres quite rightly encourage candidates to write (or draw, see below) plans in front of their answer booklets although this must not be so time consuming that the second question has to be rushed. Rubric errors were found in a minority of scripts - eg attempting part a) from one question and part b) from another. Candidates need to offer two responses which are even in terms of length and detail.

Some students demonstrated a flair for language and expression. In contrast the use of 'would of' is becoming ubiquitous, and casual usage such as 'taking down the regime' adds nothing to the persuasive power of a response.

Summary

Key points which may help in future, using past papers that are available, include the following:

- Encouraging students from the very outset of the course to plan paragraphs and essays is vital
- These plans should be characterised by a *range* of approaches and modes, focussing every time on events, actions, intentions, ideas and beliefs and *relevant* states of affairs.
- Centres can devise their own range of metaphors (see previous reports) which help students to understand how to convert knowledge into a way of addressing the problem: looking at a church from different angles, driving a car, ripples in a pond and so on
- Descriptive writing and protracted scene-setting is never appropriate and will cause candidates to damage their chances of writing in an analytical fashion.
- 'Why.. because' paragraphs will often prove helpful.

Comments on individual questions – F981 – British history

Question 1: Some candidates had a better grasp of events in England than in France. A fruitful approach for the question on the religious devotion of Henry VI was to consider what was expected of a medieval king and how Henry's pious preoccupations caused him to fall short.

Question 2: Many candidates knew Warwick's career well but were rather descriptive in their approach. The Woodville marriage quarrel with Edward IV was very well explained. The question about lordship, affinity and 'bastard feudalism' was probably the least well answered in the paper. John Warren's *Access to History* book on the Wars of the Roses shows good coverage of definitions and the significance of these features.

Question 3: This question on Puritans was reasonably well addressed, and gave candidates who were willing to explore a variety of political and social dimensions to the question of the nature of the threat to Elizabeth as well as the religious dimension, excellent opportunities to flourish. The end of the Catholic threat was likewise effectively explained in terms of domestic and foreign policy, with very good detail and support in many cases. Better responses focused on the angle of 'change through time' and showed a sense of how the threat ebbed and flowed across such a protracted reign.

Question 4 was very popular. However, the simple format of the question produced some equally simple responses which saw the issue of Elizabeth and marriage in popular romantic terms. At worst, responses focused excessively on a string of suitors and engaged in speculation about the queen's psychological health at various points. Better responses put the marriage issue in a broader political and diplomatic setting by discussing, for example, divisions in the council and debates in parliament on marriage, or succession and dynastic questions. Elizabeth's aims, intentions and beliefs do play a part in this question, which should not just be a dry matter of high politics and international affairs, but students preparing the topic might be encouraged to think more carefully about fact, opinion or speculation, and write accordingly. This is a good example of a Level 1 paragraph which seamlessly integrates the state of affairs, Elizabeth's intentions and her actions:

Elizabeth's Privy Council persisted in persuading Elizabeth to marry to produce an heir. However she was well aware that a marriage would have meant forfeiting some powers and the Scottish Ambassador said to her that she preferred to be King and Queen. Elizabeth was intelligent and saw some key advantages in pursuing marriage proposals. She could firstly tell her Privy Council that she was pursuing requests but could also use her marital status as a diplomatic tool. A monarch in Europe who may have seen Elizabeth as a threat may have seen her as a potential ally if they or one of their nobility married her. A key example of this was France when she flirted with the possibility of marrying the King's brother Francis Duke of Anjou formerly of Alencon. This gave Elizabeth the temporary momentum to stem ties between France and Scotland. Remaining open for marriage gave Elizabeth many more options in the short term than marrying him.

The Essex Rebellion posed few difficulties for those who knew the subject, but was a major conundrum for those who could not identify the Earl of Essex.

Question 5: New Liberalism was very well explained by most candidates. Some useful comparisons were made between the ideas of Lloyd George and Gladstone, too. The Parliament Act was reasonably well grasped, but mostly as an add-on to the struggles to secure the passage of the 1909 Budget, invoking a certain amount of descriptive writing. The passage of the Act and the role of Irish groups were not always well explained.

Question 6: As with question 5, the particular roles and interests of groups of Irish Nationalists were not well explained. Even the Easter Rising was sketchily handled. The fissure between Collins and de Valera was not addressed by many, but those who did so offered well-crafted and relevant responses. One successful response to Q6 offered a paragraph explaining why the Home Rule Bill was no longer viable, another on hardening attitudes within the movement against the context of World War I, a discussion of the events of Easter Rising and reactions to them as a trigger factor followed by a paragraph on the emergence of Sinn Fein tied in to the terms of the question itself.

Question 7: Some answers looked back to 1945 and disguised a lack of knowledge of more recent events by writing in detail about a better known regime. Successful answers saw Conservative strength as a major factor, not least Macmillan himself. It was not always clear who was leading Labour at any one time. On Profumo, some candidates could not resist the temptation to tell the story in much of its lurid detail. Some effective links were forged with other contemporary government scandals, but the threat to national security against a context of a harsh Cold War was not often well discussed.

Question 8: There were a number of strong answers to this question, with some useful discussion of television footage of major incidents and personalities which had been used to good purpose in the classroom. Similarly, there were some robust discussions of Thatcher's resignation; the better among them focused squarely on Europe and the breakdown of consensus within the Conservative party. The roles of Lawson, Heseltine and Howe were well appreciated. This was a question where arguments for a prime cause for the resignation were readily achieved, be this Thatcher's personality or poll tax and popular protest. However, many responses did not mention that there was an election in 1987.

Comments on individual questions – F982 – Non British history

Question 1 and 2: There were no responses to these questions.

Question 3: the weaker responses to these questions, as with questions 5 and 7 below, often started with a long contextual description, in this case outlining Luther's career, life and the problems facing the Catholic Church. Only then was the actual question matter tackled. A reverse approach, akin to the 'ripples in the pond' idea discussed in earlier reports, would have been far more beneficial: starting with the immediate reaction of Leo X, asking why it took the

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form it did, working outwards to the more distant 'ripples' or contextual circumstances. Many candidates were more comfortable with ideas and attitudes than with events, actions and their sequencing.

Question 4: this was the least popular of the Luther questions, and attracted candidates who knew the events of the 1520s well.

Question 5: Here is a structure for a very good essay on the Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen which was achieved over 90%:

- Ideas underpinning the declaration, looking forward to Constituent Assembly
- Paragraph on active and passive citizens and voting and politicisation of Third Estate
- Paragraph on the Declaration's impact on nobility
- Paragraph on its impact on the bourgeoisie
- Paragraph on religious and other civil equalities

In conclusion the Declaration of Rights was important because it echoed the sentiment of the common people to more freedom after the oppression of the Ancien Regime. It also made clear the intent of the bourgeoisie in power to allow greater social mobility and the dismantling of the 2nd estate and finally allowed the bourgeoisie to consolidate their position and become the driving force behind the revolution and its government. It was a declaration which promised equality between the different sections of society while quietly bringing the bourgeoisie to the forefront of future politics.

5b: Candidates struggled with 'increasing' hostility and often largely based their essays on the state of the Church in 1789. The need to respond to the actual terminology and dates of a question is paramount. Some responses discussed de-Christianisation, taking them beyond 1791.

Question 6a: It was inspiring to read some first-rate responses to this question which began with an immediate focus on key opponents. One outline which worked very well was as follows:

- Paragraph on Robespierre's ideas and his self-justification
- Discussion of Danton's actions and beliefs
- Herbert's role and beliefs both very much in context: references made to events
- Brissot and ideas on the left; the context of war
- Summary: links, ranking and factors

6b: One centre complained that the term 'return to moderation' was unknown. It is always distressing when candidates do not know how to answer a question. It is true that the phrase itself was not included in the specification, but the relevant paragraph does say 'how and why Robespierre came to be overthrown and the consequences of his fall', with an end date of this block in 1795.

Questions 7: These were by far the most popular questions, as alluded to above. They also produced some of the weakest responses, as well as some of the best. If centres can discourage candidates from writing long, descriptive accounts of the situation in Russia, regardless of which particular questions are set it, will be beneficial to their understanding of the aims of the unit and, ultimately, their results.

A good way of tackling both parts of question 7 was to use concentric circles, illustrated at the front of one candidate's booklet showing the centre of a small circle in which was written 'events B Sunday'. A slightly larger circle recorded 'actions eg repressions then groups eg Witte, NII'. Finally, ideas formed the outer circle. These had been crossed out, presumably as the essay progressed. The same approach characterised Q7b, moving from events eg Potemkin Mutiny to

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groups such as the army to the state of affairs on the outside. There are countless ways to write essays and no single model is being advocated, but concise, problem-centred paragraphs on different aspects of and approaches to the question will always be appropriate. Techniques that may help candidates include:

- Looking at the different aims and intentions of key individuals and groups and explaining why they differed;
- Explaining that a 'trigger' action occurred because of certain preconditions;
- Selecting relevant pieces of contextual information and deploying them by briefly, explaining that they matter to this question *because*.....

Question 8 was less commonly chosen, and some candidates knew little about what War Communism was, and still less why it was introduced. Better responses drew upon pragmatic and ideological reasons for the development of War Communism. A few mixed up the term with Communism itself. There is no substitute for knowing the material, of course, and none of the approaches outlined above will work if candidates have little knowledge of key terminology and events. The question on the execution of the Tsar similarly saw mixed responses, with some candidates happy to put events in quite a complex political and diplomatic context and other preoccupied by telling the story of what happened.

F983, F984 – Using historical evidence

General comments

It is pleasing to see the candidature for these units increasing in comparison with last year. It was even more pleasing that a large number of candidates coped well with the many and varied demands of the questions. The purpose of this report is to identify the successful strategies adopted by candidates and also to highlight the approaches that led some candidates to score less well, in the hope that readers of this report will recognise the approaches described and use the examples to deduce general advice to help future candidates preparing for the examination. As centres become more familiar with the demands of the unit, it is important that they do not lose sight of the guiding principles – that examiners will reward good history and are not looking for particular approaches to questions. The range of types of sources available for the different options and time periods covered by each paper mean that answers on different topics as well as to particular questions may be approached successfully in a range of different ways. Indeed, candidates who try to apply a formula often disadvantage themselves. It is important that candidates are familiar with the requirements of the mark scheme; given the time constraints of the examination they should aim to fulfil the requirements of the mark scheme as and when the opportunity arises from the sources rather than trying to apply all the criteria to all of the sources. In part (a) candidates should be encouraged to adopt an approach which enables them to perform at their best; there is no expected or ‘best’ structure for the answer. It was clear to examiners that the best answers to (a) had clear strategies – to define key terms (like ‘negotiation’ or ‘practical situations’) in the introduction then to test the interpretation for and against. In doing so, they avoided trudging through the sources one at a time and were able to make cross-references between ideas in the sources.

Many candidates start with an amended or new interpretation. This often reflects a prior evaluation of the sources and weighing of the evidence in them, which is clearly good practice. While some candidates employ this approach to good effect, showing how they have arrived at the new interpretation in the course of evaluating the given one on the basis of evidence inferred from the sources, a proportion fail to integrate these two tasks. Instead they focus on justifying the new interpretation, forgetting that the task starts with evaluation of the interpretation in the question. It is good practice to demonstrate how the amended or new interpretation improves on the original, but while it may not be perfect, a lengthy explanation of its drawbacks does not make for a convincing argument. It is sufficient to show how the new interpretation improves on that given, perhaps noting how, like any generalisation, it cannot account for every piece of evidence inferred from the sources.

On some occasions candidates who state the new interpretation in the introduction give the impression that it has been formulated from their contextual knowledge of the topic rather than from the sources. This is clearly not what is required and is often a sign that the candidate has not grasped the purpose of the exercise set. Such candidates often go on to illustrate their answer from the sources rather than allowing analysis of the sources to drive the argument. Again, this is poor practice, as selecting and using quotations in this way does not demonstrate the higher level enquiry skills of making inferences from sources on the basis of contextual knowledge or of evaluating the evidence on the basis of the provenance of the source or its context.

For some questions in this summer’s papers a good approach involved grouping sources according to the issues raised in them (for example differentiating between sources concerning Germany and Italy in F984 Q3, or between Native and African Americans in F984 Q4). In other cases a thematic approach worked well (for example distinguishing between rebellions with different causes in F983 Q2, and between women’s employment, and attitudes towards women

in F983 Q4). Grouping sources in this way allowed candidates to construct clear arguments and arrive at supported conclusions. While this approach may not work with all questions, it is always worth considering. Certainly examiners noted that those who simply analyse the sources in sequence in relation to the interpretation often fail to construct a convincing argument, as patterns of change and development are missed.

Candidates also need to address the issue of change over time, or, indeed, continuity where it can be shown to characterise a period. Candidates often demonstrate this by comparing the content of sources from different periods within the hundred or so years covered, hence establishing patterns. In many instances this engagement with the content also results in cross-referencing of sources as candidates analyse the material presented in more than one source. This produces more secure cross-referencing than simply grouping sources according to what they show, for example, support for or challenge to the given interpretation. Often, having stated that a group of sources all support (or challenge) the interpretation, candidates analyse them individually, so that this cannot be rewarded as cross-referencing at a high level.

In order to test the given interpretation candidates must use reliable evidence inferred from the sources. Accepting evidence at face value remains an issue in many answers. The best candidates pause to comment on whether evidence really is as strong as it appears. Good examples of this in F984 Q1 were those who argued that at first glance the Viking grave goods appeared to support ideas of a military culture, but had to be treated carefully because it was by no means clear that these were typical finds, or even intended for military use. Other candidates for F984 Q4 noted that Malcolm X appeared to be rejecting negotiation as a primary method of achieving goals, but commented both that his views developed on from this and that he could hardly be seen as representative of all African American opinion at this time. In F984 Q3, candidates pointed out that although the Hambach Festival seemed to support the importance of nationalism in bringing about developments, Metternich's actions against these gatherings and his other repressive measures bring the idea of their 'importance' into doubt. In these examples, candidates used their knowledge of the topic not simply to insert more information but to evaluate what was provided in the sources. They were, as a number put it, considering the 'weight' of the evidence.

The most common mistake made by candidates is to waste time by describing the sources, essentially telling the examiner what is on the paper: *"Source 4 is an account of a trial that happened in 1834, the account came from a rich landowner to the home secretary."* [F983 Q3] Some candidates go on to paraphrase or quote the source at length without including any commentary, thus failing to demonstrate any higher level thinking. Candidates should instead be advised to annotate the sources on the question paper to indicate points worth raising, rather than doing their thinking as they write the answer. Instead of describing the sources, candidates should focus on using the evidence provided by the source to move their argument forward. *"Source 2 appears to support the interpretation because it is a cartoon showing the working class being silenced (by a padlock symbolising the lack of free speech) and furthermore makes reference to the 'Law of Libel' referring to an act preventing the issue of radical newspapers."* [F983 Q3]

A second approach that cannot lead to success is when candidates use their contextual knowledge rather than the evidence in the source to build an argument. For example:

"Sources 6 and 7 cover the Northern Earls' rebellion and Essex's rebellion respectively. The motives behind both of these rebellions can be described as political, although the Northern Earls had more aims. The Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland and the Earl of Essex had all lost favour at court and planned one last, desperate attempt to improve their positions. The Northern Earls planned to replace the Protestant Elizabeth with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, while Essex wanted to curry favour with James I [sic] of Scotland who was next in line to the throne. Both of these rebellions planned to either change the monarch, or hasten the succession, and so clearly intended to undermine royal authority." [F983 Q2]

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While this candidate had a good sense of the nature of the rebellions in question, there is no reference to the content or provenance of either source, including how the aims could be inferred or, indeed, why different aims are stated in the sources than those the candidate has learned.

The following example [F984 Q1] illustrates good practice. It shows how an inference has been drawn using analysis of the source and information about the provenance of the source. Note that both points are developed to illustrate the point being made.

“Source 2 largely supports the interpretation, and the language used in the source highlights the ferocity of the Vikings. Words such as “slaying”, “harrying” and “slaughter” are used which would seem to indicate a very military-like culture. However it is important to look at the author of the source. The source is ecclesiastical which immediately proves bias against the Vikings. The Christian monk writing this source obviously wanted the “heathen” Vikings to be portrayed negatively, barbaric and vicious because of their slaughter of the “innocent Christians”.”

Contrast this with an example from the same question showing how a source prompted a candidate to include material that is related to the evidence inferred from the source, but is not used to aid its interpretation, instead simply adding to the evidence it provides:

“Other sources highlight the many other aspects of Viking culture. Source 3 for example shows the law-making skills of the Vikings. From contextual knowledge I know that Vikings actually boasted a very advanced political system. Their use of the ‘Thing’ was a great example of early democracy; by allowing common people to be involved in the important decisions affecting their lives.”

In (b) many candidates failed to capitalise on their good scores in (a) because they were unfamiliar with the requirements of the mark scheme. The mark scheme for (b) sets out clear criteria for identifying problems and issues with sources, such as their purpose, typicality or bias, as well as ways of debating their value such as how sources can answer different historical questions or allow historians to pursue lines of enquiry. While following these issues is not prescriptive since examiners will reward any interesting thinking about the given sources, they can provide a useful checklist to guide remarks. Unfortunately, some candidates appeared unaware of this, so floundered to find comments.

Moreover, many candidates feel the need to make a comment about every source, whether they know anything about it or not.

A formulation frequently encountered by examiners was the conditional mode. The candidate appears unsure about his or her suggestions and speculates on the use of the source. Examples of responses which were rewarded at Level 4 in AO2a are included below:

“...this is from a magazine which might be biased because the company wants to sell copies so will attack black people in its articles.” [F984 Q4]

“this is from a speech by a Native American but he might not speak English so it will have been translated and it might not be accurate.” [F984 Q4]

“Source 1 could be useful to a historian because it shows the feelings of the radicalists at this time. It would show a historian the feelings towards the government and what the general feeling of the people were in 1793.” [F983 Q3b]

“Many sources such as letters pose problems in terms of reliability and are often subject to bias. S2 for example is a personal letter to the author’s father. This author is male and is talking about women in the workforce. His opinion is likely to be heavily biased and there

may be exaggerations as a cause of this, hampering the source's credibility. Despite this bias factor the source may be a source rich in validity for example as a letter the author is not playing to an audience and the opinions may be private thus increasing the truth in the source..." [F983 Q4b]

The examiner's reaction was: So is his opinion heavily biased? What evidence is there in the source to show this? Is this a source rich in validity? What examples are there to demonstrate this in the source? Candidates need to ask and, more importantly, answer these questions themselves in order to progress to Level 3 and beyond.

Again, as a general piece of advice – candidates do not need to write about every source in (b). It would be far better to dwell in detail on three or four sources and examine their content to discuss bias, purpose, typicality and so on, from a base of knowledge. Examiners appreciate that sources are unseen and often unfamiliar to candidates. Rather than encouraging empty speculation, it would be better for candidates to focus on those sources they have some contextual knowledge of and develop comments about these.

Many candidates also offer comments about the set of sources, pointing out the date range, range of types of sources, people producing them etc. and going on to lengthy descriptions of what is missing from the collection – 'it would be useful to have a picture or a cartoon, maybe from a British magazine like Punch'. While these comments can be a good way of showing knowledge of the topic for marks in AO1, it is important that they are not just rehearsed without application. Candidates need to ask themselves – and answer – the question 'Why is it important that this has been missed out from the set provided'? It might be, for example, that a particular gap in the coverage misses out a period in which another critical factor occurred, or that someone who had a profound effect on the topic is not represented. Because this was not often done well, it seemed that some centres had just pre-prepared candidates to raise issues about coverage of time, place and people that they would have written irrespective of the question (for example, that none of the Renaissance sources were by the poor or women).

Many candidates tried to establish what makes a source useful, but the ideas were too often generic to a type of source or the point of view it contained and were not developed sufficiently to be credited as demonstrating understanding of the historian's purpose. This example [from F983 Q2] was written by a well-informed candidate who, unfortunately, did not engage with the sources provided to illustrate the generic points made.

"The three chronicles could be useful, as they describe the events, and come from people present at the time, or well-educated in what happened. For example, source 1 is from Raphael Holinshed, who was so well respected that William Shakespeare sampled his chronicle. However, they are also limited for several reasons. They have been commissioned by the monarch and therefore generally display an anti-rebel bias. They also select what information to use so it is hard to gain multiple viewpoints from them, although they provide a valuable insight into how serious the rebellions were taken."

It was clear that some candidates were using evaluative techniques learned in Critical Thinking examinations. This may be of use on occasion, but it should be remembered that whereas in Critical Thinking it is acceptable to argue that reputable media sources such as the BBC want to maintain that reputation for impartiality, historians must bear in mind that qualities such as balance, reliability and lack of bias lie in the eye of the beholder. Such qualities cannot be assumed, and candidates must always work with the particular source provided. As was the case in many scripts quoted above, the basic idea may be sound, but the candidate needs to take the reasoning a few steps further by testing whether or not the general principle applies to the example before them.

The ability to communicate in clear English was apparent in the majority of scripts, although as seems to be increasingly common, many scripts were littered with technical errors such as the

failure to use upper case letters even at the beginning of sentences and for 'I' and, more commonly, inaccurate copying of quotations from sources. Inevitably, where candidates struggled with the demands of the questions, meaning was, at times, obscured. At times poor handwriting made it difficult for examiners to follow the line of argument offered.

Comments on individual questions – F983 - British history

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

The most successful answers distinguished between the authority of the Church as an institution on the one hand and belief in Christian ideas on the other, recognising that while the institution of the Church suffered, many continued to believe. Equally it was recognised that the Church remained a powerful institution, as exemplified by the treatment of a heretic shown in Source 6. Many of the sources, however, were complex and required careful reading. Where this was not undertaken, candidates often misunderstood, or read more into the source than could be inferred.

In part (b) there were too many references to sources being unreliable because they were not from the time, or, in relation to Source 4, because they were written to entertain. Sources 1, 2 and 3 were seen as reliable because they were written by important people who would have 'known the truth' or official documents.

Question 2: Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England 1489-1601

Candidates were able to access this question at a range of levels. The best ones used the sources to engage in a debate about what constitutes royal authority and were able to draw inferences, for example, about the relationship between stated and actual aims, and about the perceptions of the chroniclers. Many were familiar with the types of sources presented, but commonly failed to exemplify their general points from the sources provided. Some candidates dismissed Source 3 as not useful without giving developed reasons and others were confused by the reference to Henry VIII in Source 4. Source 6's reference to 'foreigners' was taken in the modern meaning of the term.

Many candidates made sound use of contextual knowledge about ideas such as the Great Chain of Being to make inferences about who was actually being criticised by rebels, and why they tended to blame councillors rather than the monarchs themselves.

Question 3: Radicalism, Popular Politics and Control 1780-1880s

Candidates for this topic are generally well-informed about the context as well as specific radical groups. Most were able to group sources according to the different approaches taken by the authorities. The best answers engaged with the interpretation, for example by discussing what the term 'dealt with' could mean.

The analysis of the cartoon, Source 2 was generally successful, with candidates able to develop ideas based on their knowledge of the documents shown and actions taken by the authorities in relation to them.

Some students suggested that Source 4 might be dealing with the Tolpuddle Martyrs but there was some confusion over the meaning of the word 'execution'. Many took it to mean the carrying out of the death penalty.

Many students latched on to the word 'slaves' in Source 5 and did not acknowledge that this was talking about education.

Report on the Units taken in June 2010

The following examples show good practice in analysing and evaluating sources, the first from (a) and the second from (b):

S1: "The source is from a handbill in the 1790s, which was a time of revolutionary feeling due to the recent French Revolution, and as this is a handbill from the Revolution Society the purpose was likely to incite revolutionary fervour in readers. The emotive use of language supports this idea. As a piece of propaganda then its reliability can be questioned as exaggeration and inflation of point is to be expected in literature with such a purpose. The rhetorical language is perhaps disproportionately representing the level of repression employed by the govt at the time. With regard to the new interpretation [that the authorities dealt with harsh legislation prior to the 1820s; whereafter it adopted a more sensitive and moderate approach] it certainly adds support in that government reaction in 1793 was perceived to be harsh to some extent but this is supported when cross referenced to S2."

"S3 and 6 both disagree and agree over elements of radicalism which again could be both useful and problematic. Both sources seem to agree that the radicals pose a threat worth responding to as Source 3 tells of the 'violent character' surrounding the Combinations Act and source 6 of the intended 'general rising'. They are both in agreement of this level of violent threat posed. They do of course disagree over the way of dealing with the threat. These agreements and disagreements are useful to historians as they show how different governments over a decade apart were still experiencing the threat of violence from the radicals, which means that they are also both useful in telling us the methods used by radicals and that the actions of the Liberal Tories of 1822-27 had not gone far enough in satisfying the radicals."

The following conclusion shows how the change over time, deduced from the sources, as well as evaluation of the sources as a set has been used both in generating a new interpretation and in recognising its limitations:

"Overall my interpretation is more accurate than the original as it recognizes how the government's actions changed over time and became more open to change and reform once the threat of reform decreased. However my interpretation also has limitations because of the sources provided. For example between S6 and S7 there is a long gap of 43 years where the mid-Victorian boom happened and this could explain why the government became more reforming. Additionally there are no accounts from any revolutionaries such as Paine who would be able to give a different point of view on how the government actions were regarded."

Question 4: The impact of war on British society and government since 1900

The problem with the issue in the interpretation lay in the difficulty in separating the impact of war from that of a number of other factors affecting the role and status of women. The most successful answers focused on the impact of war on employment and on male attitudes to women, as these were the issues that arose in many of the sources and neatly distinguished between 'role' and 'status' in the interpretation. A few misread the interpretation, assuming it meant the opposite of what it said. Some candidates recognised the need to assess what might be meant by 'little' in the interpretation.

The sources were generally understood but too often taken at face value. The irony of the comment at the end of Source 1 was often missed. Too many candidates dismissed Source 3 as being unreliable because the historian 'was not there' and did not 'see for himself'. The statistics in Source 4 were often analysed in some detail. Candidates need to be careful to distinguish between percentages and figures. The best suggested other reasons than war for changes shown, and pointed out the problem of using figures that do not show what happened in the war years themselves. Source 7 was ignored by some, yet used successfully by other candidates, for example by comparing attitudes to the women at Greenham Common with attitudes towards suffragettes.

Comments on individual questions - F984 – Non British history

Question 1: The Vikings in Europe 790s – 1066

There were many good answers to this question with candidates able to make useful inferences on the basis of both contextual knowledge and provenance of the sources. Examples are quoted elsewhere in this report. The sources were all accessible and candidates often grouped them according to the aspect of Viking culture shown. Better knowledge was shown of literary sources such as Source 1 in this question than of similar sources elsewhere in the units. References to Valhalla and warrior culture in general were understood as literary devices. Equally, many candidates were aware of the dangers of drawing definite conclusions about culture from grave goods such as those shown in Sources 4 and 5. Many candidates were prompted by Source 7 to establish changes in Viking culture over time, and were able to make developed comments about Christian writers and their view of Vikings in relation to Source 2.

Question 2: The Italian Renaissance c1420-c1550

In part (a) there were some strong answers to a challenging question. Crucial to success was whether candidates defined what 'practical situations' entailed – such as the threat of war or the emergence of wealthy families. Where this was done, candidates could support the interpretation confidently and many saw that a rival argument – that the classical past affected developments – could be developed. Contextual knowledge of the period was often excellent and deployed effectively to debate the difference between face value and deeper 'against the grain' readings. At the highest level, candidates used the idea of weight of evidence with real confidence to justify amending the interpretation on the grounds that although it could be supported, it was by the weaker evidence.

After many strong answers to (a), candidates' second answers were often disappointing. In some cases candidates followed a formula to write about, producing many similar answers. In these cases, candidates usually spent too long making obvious comments about the set of sources (such as gaps in dates or missing cities) and did not spend enough time considering the use and problems of individual sources.

Question 3: European Nationalism 1815-1914: Germany and Italy

Candidates found the interpretation very accessible, but some still persist in treating it as a discussion essay and do not make enough use of the sources. Many candidates were tempted to write everything they knew about the Zollverein or Wilhelm's social reforms, but the point of the task is to use the evidence in the sources to make evaluations of the interpretation. Answers which did not have the sources as the main focus of the answer (and there were a significant minority) could not achieve strong marks, given the assessment objectives. Where candidates did focus on the sources they often identified a number of themes which contributed to developments such as nationalist ideas, economic developments and social reform. The best answers went on to show how war was connected in some way to these other developments (exemplified clearly by 'blood and iron') while good answers simply added all the elements together into a grand generalisation.

In part (b) the best answers went beyond generalisations about the set of sources and dwelt on individual issues, raising points such as the extent to which festivals in Source 1 really reflected popular opinion, or the purposes of some of the people, such as Metternich, involved in the sources.

Question 4: Race and American Society 1865-1970s

This remains the most popular option, but attracts some of the weakest answers. Some candidates expressed surprise in their answers that the question did not focus entirely on African

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Americans, but this was in keeping with other papers and the specification. The point of adding other racial groups is not to annoy candidates but to allow them to produce more sophisticated answers. Many did just that – noting that the interpretation seemed to fit the methods of Native Americans but was less effective at capturing the actions of African Americans. The best answers – as always – defined terms before they got going. ‘Negotiation’ was seen as contact and discussion with the majority white group, so the ‘plea’ in Source 3 was discounted as negotiation and the actions of the African American women’s groups in discussing action among themselves similarly regarded as something else going on. Weaker answers struggled to deal with the concept and instead shifted onto a tangent – whether rights improved. Lack of own knowledge to evaluate the sources was apparent in many cases. Candidates should become more familiar with groups other than African Americans – there are short sections looking at developments in both the Hodder Access and the Heinemann books on this topic. However, this did not excuse poor knowledge of Malcolm X and a failure to recognise that he hardly spoke for the majority of African Americans. Far too many candidates relied simply on summarising the sources and adding a comment along the lines of ‘So this shows that they did use negotiation’ rather than thinking beyond face value or seeing that sources could contain more than one relevant argument.

Good answers to part (b) understood that individual sources need to be treated with care and that historians have to be alert to the purpose of the evidence, potential biases and how representative any views were of the wider community. They illustrated these points from the sources by quoting and commenting on text – Source 3 for example was seen to show real desperation in the language used and candidates commented that this was a fair reflection of the miserable existence many Native American tribes faced on reservations.

F985, F986 – Historical controversies

General comments

These two units have proved to be outstanding successes. Most candidates were clear what was required of them and there were many very good answers. This is clearly the result of careful preparation and excellent teaching. The examiners are well aware of the considerable amount of work involved for teachers in preparing teaching and learning materials for these units. This hard work has resulted in impressive and sophisticated answers with candidates demonstrating not just an understanding of the requirements of these units but of the nature of the discipline of history itself. One of the aims of this specification is to build in genuine opportunities for progression during the two-year course of study. Several examiners commented on the fact that comparing the standard of work of these candidates for AS in the Historical Explanations units with the work they produced for the Historical Controversies units demonstrated the huge strides most had made in their understanding of the subject. It was almost difficult to believe that they were the same candidates.

The rest of this report focuses on actual, or possible, weaknesses. This is not meant to detract from the fact that most candidates wrote excellent answers and often carried out the good practice explained below.

Part (a)

In Part (a) candidates are required to comment on the interpretation, approaches and methods of the author of the extract. First and foremost this should involve analysis and explanation of the extract. Candidates who did not do well recognised the author or approach. They then proceeded to write down everything they knew about the author or approach only occasionally, if ever, returning to the extract. Thankfully, only a small minority of candidates made this or similar mistakes. However, it is worth stressing to candidates that they should not even try to guess who the author is. They should instead, focus on understanding and explaining the extract. Every paragraph they write should be based on some aspect of the extract.

Candidates are advised to deal with interpretation, approaches and methods in three separate but connected sections. They should certainly make clear to the examiner which they are writing about in all parts of their answers. Approaches were dealt with best and it was surprising to find some candidates struggling with the interpretation. It was clear that these candidates had no clear understanding of the difference between interpretation and approach. Candidates need to have a clear understanding of the differences between these three terms.

Interpretations

The 'interpretation' refers to the main argument of the historian in the extract - what is he or she arguing? For example in the extract on witch-hunting there is a clear argument about the connection between weather and incidents of witch-hunting. Candidates needed to explain what the argument is and how the historian explains and develops it in the extract. Their broader knowledge and understanding of the topic can be brought in to develop and improve their explanations (for example reference to historians who have reached similar conclusions, or more about this type of interpretation in general), but close use of the extract, including quotations, must provide the central part of their answers. In some extracts there may be subsidiary arguments as well as the main argument. Candidates should check whether this is the case and decide for themselves what the 'big' argument is.

Some candidates spent so long writing about the approaches of the historian that they barely made any explicit mention of the interpretation. Others kept to the extract but produced what

was little more than a paraphrase or summary with no explicit identification and explanation of the interpretation. There is a delicate balance to be struck between using the extract and using one's own broader knowledge and understanding of the topic. Examiners were impressed by the large number of candidates who got the balance just about right.

Methods

It might help some candidates if they explain the methods of the historian immediately after they have explained the interpretation. The methods will be closely connected to the interpretation. Candidates could ask themselves 'how is the historian supporting the interpretation?' For example in the witch-hunting extract the historian makes use of statistics and case studies to support the big argument being made. Some candidates tacked on to the end of their answer a brief section about methods. It was clearly an afterthought and had little connection to the rest of the answers. If methods are dealt with as a development of the explanation of the interpretation, then these parts of the answers will be more meaningful.

Approaches

Most candidates wrote very well about approaches. This was often the strongest section in answers. Candidates need to read the extract carefully to tease out the approach or approaches - some extracts might well contain more than one approach. For example, the extract about the Holocaust contains elements of both intentionalist and structuralist approaches. Many candidates spotted this, but those that did not wrote less satisfactory answers. The great danger in this part of the answer is that candidates will work out what the approach is and will then forget the extract and write a long account of the approach in general. This part of the answer must still be based on the extract; wider knowledge and understanding of the relevant approach can be used as long as it is being deployed to further the analysis and explanation of the approach as it appears in the extract. If an answer has written about the approach in general terms without referring to the extract in a couple of paragraphs then it is probably wandering too far.

Candidates should be encouraged to spend some time going through the extract carefully and annotating it. They should then plan their answers. The best answers are always those where the candidates knew what they are going to write before they start writing. Another characteristic of many of the best answers is that they were often the shortest. This usually meant they were planned, they were focused on the question and the extract, and were direct and followed a logical development. Many of the very long answers were long because they had not been planned and rambled on with little purpose or focus.

It was a relief to see so few candidates thinking that their task was to criticise the extract and pull it to pieces. However, there were a few who attempted to do this. Their answers showed a disappointing lack of understanding of the purpose of the Historical Controversies units. For example, they dismissed the extract on the American West because it used gender as a way of analysing and understanding the topic. Candidates who followed this approach usually commented that their extract was woefully lacking and biased because it was based on gender, or because it was intentionalist, or an example of history from below or, worst of all, Marxist. Candidates should understand that the historians writing the extracts used were not attempting to write comprehensive, complete and balanced accounts of their topics. They were instead trying to throw new light on aspects of their topics by asking particular questions and using particular approaches. The task of candidates in part (a) is to show an understanding and appreciation of the extracts, not to treat them as sources and write simplistic and crude evaluations of them.

Part (b)

In part (b) candidates are given an approach and are asked to explain how this approach has added to our understanding of the relevant topic and whether it has any disadvantages or shortcomings. There many good answers with candidates producing detailed, thoughtful and sophisticated evaluations of the named approach. Many of the answers would not have disgraced first year university students and demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the historiography of the studied topic.

It is important that candidates write an evaluation of the approach rather than producing a long general survey which lacks any focus. The best answers started with a short explanation of the main characteristics of the named approach. This should not be too long as it is no more than an introduction. In attempting to explain how the approach has contributed to our understanding, candidates who did well asked themselves several questions. Firstly, what new questions about the topic has this approach raised, and how do these questions help us to approach the topic in new and helpful ways? Secondly, what new insights into the topic do we have that we would not have had without the named approach?

Candidates were less sure when writing about the disadvantages and shortcomings of the named approach. A common line of argument was that by itself it was insufficient. This is an obvious and rather vacuous line of argument. A better way of tackling this is to consider what insights into the topic would not be forthcoming from the named approach. Candidates can use their wider knowledge and understanding although the answer should not turn into a general survey of every other approach used for studying the topic. The points being made should always be made with the effect of evaluating the approach named in the question.

Candidates should be careful to write about the named approach as an approach. A few candidates turned it into an interpretation e.g. in the Holocaust option some candidates explained the interpretation that the Holocaust was a product of German history. What they should have been doing was to explain how a focus on the role of German history and its relationship with the Holocaust deepens our understanding of the Holocaust. Candidates need to understand that an approach provides historians with a way of analysing, explaining and understanding the past. A new interpretation may well arise from a particular approach being adopted but it is different in nature from an approach. It is important that in their answers to part (b) candidates write about approaches and not about interpretations.

Finally, it is important to emphasise the conditions under which these answers should be written. They must be completed within the allocated time span and under controlled and supervised conditions. The work can be completed in one session of three hours or in a number of shorter sessions. During the three hours candidates have access to their notes, class work and text and reference books. However, they are not allowed to take any of their work with them when they leave these shorter sessions. Nor are they allowed to bring into later sessions any work completed outside the three hours.

Comments on individual questions

The Non-British history options were far more popular than the British options. The Debates about the Holocaust was most popular, with Different interpretations of witch-hunting not far behind. The debate over the impact of the Norman Conquest was the least popular option.

F985 - British history

The extract about the impact of the Norman Conquest allowed candidates to explain the claims being made about the importance of William, and to discuss 'great men' approaches to history as well as issues like change and continuity and concepts such as the Norman Yoke.

The extract about 17th-century crises led to some excellent answers about approach and methods. Candidates were clearly familiar with the approaches adopted by the historian and wrote well about Marxist history and the primacy of economic factors. There were also some interesting analyses of the author's claims about the role of religion. Part (b) was generally answered very well with excellent knowledge and understanding being demonstrated of the work of historians such as Conrad Russell.

Again, there were many good answers about the Imperialism extract with candidates able to discuss notions of formal and informal empire, the roles of the metropole and the periphery, and issues of continuity and strategic versus economic motivations. Part (b) was answered less well with some candidates confusing 'gender history' with 'women's history'.

The Appeasement extract produced much good work although there was a tendency on the part of some candidates to summarise the extract rather than explain the interpretation and approach. Most candidates did discuss possible structuralist and intentionalist aspects of the extract although an overall summary of the interpretation of the author was sometimes lacking. In response to (b) some candidates wrote about an interpretation rather than approach and ended up discussing whether or not Hitler was planning war.

F986 - Non-British history

The crusades extract produced many good answers about both interpretation and approach. Good points were made about the author's argument as it related to motivation and to the definition of the crusades. In response to (b) some candidates gave their own views about whether the crusades did bring benefits to a heathen world rather than discussing this as an approach to studying the crusades.

The witch-hunting extract gave rise to many interesting answers. Candidates were strong on approaches and methods but rather less successful at summing up the overall interpretation of the historian. Issues such as history from below, structuralism, and the use of case studies were discussed intelligently. Some candidates were a little less sure about part (b) and there were some misunderstandings about what was meant by 'exercise of power from above'.

The extract about the American West worked well with candidates able to identify an approach based around gender although some struggled with the overall interpretation of the extract. There were many excellent answers about Turner's 'frontier thesis' which candidates knew well. Sometimes they knew it too well and forgot to answer the question about it.

Candidates with better answers recognised the synthesis nature of the Holocaust extract although this did lead some to writing all they knew about historians such as Browning and Kershaw. However, there were also some excellent analyses of the extract. In response to part (b) some candidates attempted to produce answers that made little reference to German history and turned into discussions of Goldhagen. However, there were also many answers showing a good knowledge of key aspects of Germany history and their possible relationship to the Holocaust. Some candidates wrote about this more as an interpretation than as an approach.

F987 – Historical Significance

General comments

This was the first time that significant numbers of candidates had been entered for this unit and that teachers were involved in marking their candidates' work prior to OCR moderation of marks. There was an on-line consultancy service which offered guidance and gave centres the opportunity to submit examples of marked work to gain feedback on marking style and whether marking was being related to assessment objectives. The standard of centre marking was thorough and accurate, and very few pieces of work appeared with no annotation. Where there was variation between moderated marks and centre marks, there was information relating to this in the report written by the moderator for the centre. This report is available on Interchange.

Planning and Research

The quality of the diary was usually a reliable indicator of the quality of the study. In the best work it was clear that candidates had been positively affected by the experience – indeed they often said so – and enjoyed the opportunity to follow a genuine line of interest. The diary obliged good candidates not only to read more books but also to comment critically on them as interpretations or as secondary evidence. The more average pieces of work often included little more than chronological accounts (lists of meetings attended, books acquired, websites visited) with few references to either the content or value of the material used.

Critical use of source material and interpretations

Candidates who produced good diaries were able to move effortlessly between evaluations of primary/secondary sources and historians' interpretations in assessing significance (thus scoring highly on AO2). The best work in all three areas occurred when evaluation of source material was informed by contextual knowledge, a sense of the otherness of the past and an impressive understanding of how interpretations of significance have themselves changed over time (historiography). This was the area of greatest variation in the quality of candidates' work. There was general misunderstanding (candidates and teachers) of the difference between secondary evidence (AO2a) and historians' interpretations (AO2b) for example mention of a historian's name or illustrative use of quotation was rewarded as 'critical use of sources'. Where evaluation did occur it was often cumbersome or unhistorical ('specialist historian so more reliable' etc). There was an inverse relationship between the number of websites used and the quality of the study.

Choice of question

Many questions worked well. These were usually (but not invariably) those that had been through the validation process. The essential criterion was that the chosen title allowed the candidate to address both synchronic and diachronic significance.

Questions that caused problems included those:

- with no reference to significance in the title,
- that started with 'Why' (which confused significance with importance),
- calling for a comparison of two individuals
- in which significance is already assumed ('why was MLK so significant in the struggle for...')

Calculations of significance

The best work was very good, recognising, for example, that the integration or synthesis at Level 5 has a greater explanatory power than the separate narratives produced at Level 4. At all levels candidates tended to be more confident in measuring significance at the time than over time. Problems with the diachronic calculation occurred when the candidates:

- focused only on the immediate consequences of an event
- made causal links to the present day that were simply implausible
- confused significance reasoning with causal reasoning
- neglected the terminology of significance – trend, turning point, false dawn etc- and how to deploy it (eg considering prior as well as subsequent events)

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