

History B

Advanced GCE A2 H508

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H108

OCR Report to Centres

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F981, F982 Historical Explanation

Relatively few candidates sat the Explanations papers in this session, the last January setting, of course. As ever, it was a pleasure to read some very good responses indeed among essays which augur well for the further development of candidates' skills at A2, and perhaps beyond at University. It is worth reminding centres and candidates that one of the aims of this distinctive Specification from the planning stages was that students should develop competencies at AS which build into their A2 Units, in this case the Controversies unit and the Coursework unit. Understanding how and why the study of events, actions and beliefs can help explain complex historical periods or problems should help our students in their attempts to analyse how and why historians interpret the past as they do, using the approaches and methods which they do. These are not the accidents of History. The best of our AS candidates, in essays which an examiner colleague called 'truly impressive', can demonstrate this critical (in the most rounded sense) ability to apply causal, empathetic and intentional explanations to an issue with clarity and conviction. To repeat what has been said in past Reports, and to remind Centres of long-standing practice, marks of 23 and above are reserved for those responses which explicitly and convincingly use a modal structure as a 'way in' to a problem. It is still possible to achieve Level 1 without explicitly using the modes, or without having done so convincingly and appropriately, provided that the other qualities noted in the Mark Scheme are present.

There are encouraging signs that many January responses have reflected repeated advice to apply the modes with a 'light touch'. Each and every title on the F981 and F982 question papers is designed to benefit from analysis in terms of the attitudes, beliefs and ideas discernible at the time, the states of affairs or contexts in which those attitudes and beliefs were held, as well as the actions and events which occurred within those contexts. This should not be a straightjacket, however, or a formula, or a mechanical process for students to learn and regurgitate. These are merely tools to deploy in the writing of strong, confident, well-argued critical History which explains complex problems using analysis, not excessive description or narrative.

One theme which has emerged in this January session is the need for candidates to be flexible in their application of knowledge. This applied equally to F981 and F982. Some candidates were clearly very keen to answer a question on the Elizabethan church settlement, but that is not what was directly asked. Responses could use elements of the settlement for F981 Q3b, and many did so effectively, but other knowledge, too, had to be selected and deployed. Correspondingly, Q7b for F982 might have asked about the causes of 'Bloody Sunday'. It didn't, and assessing the *importance* of that event required careful planning and the selection of relevant material. A friend who is now a distinguished First World War historian reminds me of examination advice from his parents: 'Look at the question. *Read* the question. Answer the question.'

Here are some continued areas of weakness in responses, for future reference:

- Descriptive paragraphs or pages – still especially prevalent to 'set the scene' for just about any answer relating to Ancien Regime France or to Russia pre-1905
- A failure to recognise change within a period: the Philip II of the late 1590s is living in a different context to the Philip of the 1550s; the Russia of 1918 cannot be seen as being identical to that of the 1890s, but weaker candidates assume unchanging states of affairs and fixed situations
- Understanding of the arts in Elizabeth's reign, still less notions of 'Gloriana', does not match the corresponding grasp of the religious settlement or the Armada; social and cultural history is not as well supported and reinforced as political and religious history

One more general piece of advice will I trust be helpful for the future. A number of students are tending to offer a general summary of their major points at the end of their essay. This may or may not be accompanied by an often quite random selection of one factor as ‘the most important’. Such summaries add little or nothing to candidates’ responses. A summary is not the same thing at all as a conclusion; the latter may show how previous points overlap with each other, or connect to each other, or depend upon each other. In other words it will often add something new or different to what has already been said. In particular, a good conclusion may well offer an argument about which mode of explanation has been found within the body of the essay to offer the most compelling ‘way in’ to a question, and why. So, in order to be able to explain the importance of political clubs in Revolutionary Paris, looking at their reactions to rapidly unfolding events is crucial – events which they in turn help to drive and influence. In seeking to explain why the Conservatives won the 1970 general election, if we look at changing beliefs and attitudes in the weeks, and indeed days beforehand, we can see that the victory was not at all unexpected.

F981

Questions 1 and 2 on the Wars of the Roses were well answered where candidates knew the material, and much less well answered where they did not. Q1a tended to produce weaker responses, at times with a narrative of English losses. To avoid ‘scene setting’ responses, Q1b might have started with the St Albans skirmish itself and then worked backwards and outwards to explain why matters had come to a head in this fashion. Likewise Q2a saw some reasonable analysis of factional struggles, often supported by particular examples of inter-family feuding, which is a sensible way to break down what is otherwise potentially a demanding question. Imaginative answers to 1b questioned whether in fact the conflicts did have a serious effect on society and culture in those areas which were outside the conflict zone. The ever-popular Elizabeth questions saw some impressive responses to Q3a on the Armada, looking for example at whether longstanding religious differences were sufficient in themselves to prompt an expedition on such a scale; in other words, responses at the higher levels moved away from a ‘shopping list’ approach and began to weigh and rank a range of factors. As mentioned above, the opportunity to discuss change over time takes answers further, very often: how and why do Philip’s attitudes towards Elizabeth and England fluctuate over such a long period to include perhaps toleration, weary resignation, outright hostility and a proposal of marriage? Several responses noted that far from being just a rich country, as weaker answers asserted, there were periods of economic difficulty for Spain which meant that a major invasion expedition was impossible to contemplate. So, why there and why then? Q3b produced some very weak responses in instances where candidates knew little about Jesuits. Better responses were astute in assessing the scale of the ‘threat’, its geography and class associations, and the relative importance of, for example, the longevity of the Elizabethan settlement and the efficacy of her direct legislation and similar actions. As some answers showed, linking topics nicely, Jesuits based in the south of England were likely to face the full force of Elizabethan propaganda and progresses, not to mention direct action taken against them or their supporters. Q4 brought out some good knowledge of music, theatre, literature and drama, as well as the patronage of the arts by the wealthy. References were made to education and grammar schools, which had not been anticipated but were equally valid. Conversely, some candidates knew little. Centres may judge quite rightly that we know much less of the Elizabethan poor and their response to the arts, and this imbalance was taken into account as scripts were marked. One excellent response to Q4b stated: *As time passed and the hopes of Elizabeth getting married disappeared, her councillors had to guide the arts into a direction so that the queen’s virginity and lack of a husband would be seen as something glorious and god-like. That is why the image of the Virgin Queen married to her country was developed in both painting and literature. Also towards the end of the reign (1590s in particular) when the queen seemed to be losing control, the government had to cover the problems of Elizabeth’s indecisiveness and ageing by instructing the best artists to create paintings such as the Rainbow Portrait.* Another L1 response:

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

Few responses were seen in this session to Q5. Q6 produced better quality answers to Q6b than to 6a, addressing for example Stanley Baldwin's role in channelling, or serving as a focal point for backbench discontent, among a range of causal factors. Asquith's personal failings were well charted, but knowledge of changing states of affairs from 1914 was often thin. On Wilson's Labour Governments of 1964-70, factual support for assertions made was likewise often sketchy and unconvincing. Even the devaluation issue, which Q7a needs to address squarely, was often poorly handled, to examiners' surprise. Candidates knew about Powell and immigration but knew less about Castle and 'In Place of Strife'; the basic politics and economics of the period are often discussed weakly. Some candidates struggled to turn an expected question on why Labour lost in 1970 to an unexpected question on why the Conservatives won. Heath's introduction of internment left candidates reeling who did not know what internment was, and/or were only able to explain how it had come into force rather than why. Better responses pointed out the irony of a British government seeking admission to the EEC pursuing a policy disapproved of by the European Commission on Human Rights. Weaker responses to Q8b alleged that Arthur Scargill led the miners' union during the conflict with Mr Heath, an honour belonging to Joe Gormley. That aside, the 'Who Governs Britain' issue was well handled and responses were sometimes impressive.

F982

No responses were seen on Charlemagne or Luther. As has been noted in past Reports, there is some highly productive teaching and learning of the French Revolution happening in centres, evidenced again by some strong and lively responses here which juggled a number of complex issues. The National Assembly reforms offered some rich opportunities to discuss ideas as well as actions, on taxation and legal matters, for example, although weaker responses spent excessive time and energy charting the events of the summer of 1789 before briefly commenting on how an Assembly had been created. A modal response lent itself very well to an assessment of the states of affairs, the intellectual climate and the actions of the King and leading politicians which characterised the period 1789-91. The term 'important' in Q5b could be interpreted freely: important for whom, over what period, and for which members of society – and why?

Knowledge of the types and memberships of political clubs was mostly very good. Likewise, factual support for Q6 could often be impressive, with an overview taken both of French aims and intentions and those of Austria and Prussia. The actions and beliefs of Brissot and his followers were well explained, as was pressure from Dumourriez. War was explained in terms of a state of affairs which meant that each side had high motivation to fight it: to protect the new constitution or to stop it spreading. The Battle of Valmy showed some French people that they were right to believe that they could win a war without a King. Linking ideas to actions and circumstances made for some thoughtful work. Better answers appreciated the implications of a move to total war and the changing climate of panic and optimism as the fortunes of war changed.

Q7a required a focus on 'many groups'. As an examiner reports, 'students seemed to have prepared for a question about why life was miserable for many groups in pre 1905 Russia. When faced with explaining conflict they usually relied on their knowledge of discontent (unhappiness) and then asserted that this was the cause of conflict with the Tsar.' Generalised, lengthy contextual remarks about the size, poverty and enormous problems facing Russia at this time were all too common, and were unhelpful. Why 'conflict', and in what forms – political, social, ethnic? A more successful approach started with the Tsar and linked his conflict with particular groups to his refusal to modify or discard some of his beliefs – and hence his policies and actions. This automatically brings into play different ways of looking at the question, none of which involve pages of contextual material. Bloody Sunday's importance was fruitfully examined

in several ways, for example by reference to the breaking of an attitude of trust shown in 'the little father' and the explanation of how the events of that day linked to the 1905 Revolution. By contrast weaker candidates jumped straight into the October Manifesto and Dumas without showing such linkage. Generally speaking, the lack of focus on the key term 'importance' was what weakened many answers already anticipating a 'causes' question.

War Communism answers saw the most able candidates balance practical considerations against ideological ones. Some responses were able to demonstrate how and why war communism was able to address production issues in agriculture and industry rendered urgent by civil war. One full-mark response linked states of affairs ie nationalisation and the civil war by explaining that war communism killed two birds with one stone: It brought factories under state control and ensured war supply efforts – so was the most important factor. Allied support for White opponents brought in events and actions, and beliefs were likewise discussed, demonstrating a response where the candidate controlled the material, rather than letting it run away.

Q8b Here again there were good opportunities to connect together ideas about Tsarist rule and its longevity with the notion of the royal family acting as an obstacle to Bolshevik legitimacy; these notions could in turn be joined to the circumstances of White advances and the immediate trigger of the actions of the Czech Legion. Many candidates did address 'and his family', recognising that if the tsar could be a figurehead/rallying point then so could surviving members of the family – so all needed to die. As one examiner writes: *candidates who were well-versed in the situation in the Civil War in the summer of 1918 and those who had considered the other options available to the Bolsheviks (exile in England or a trial) were better able to answer the question than those who had only the vaguest of ideas that the Tsar might be a figurehead for the Whites.*

F983, F984 Using historical evidence

There was a relatively small entry in both options, with the majority of candidates re-sitting from previous sessions. In F983 the entry was split fairly evenly across the four options. In F984 by far the largest entry was for Option 4, Race and American Society 1865-1970s although each of the other options was represented by at least one Centre.

There were some very impressive answers to (a), with candidates constructing complex arguments based on the evidence from sources that were cross-referenced and evaluated. Those who look for some kind of patterning, be it through time or based on a different factor – geographical variation or social class, for example - are likely to do better than those who group evidence more simply. Fewer candidates work through the evidence source by source, suggesting that the need to create an argument is increasingly understood. In terms of organisation of material, the best answers often start with direct reference to the interpretation together with an overview of what the evidence in the sources suggests. "In order to prove the interpretation, the sources must give sufficient evidence to suggest that of all the agents that may have held back the civil rights of black Americans, poor leadership, the federal government, the people themselves, the individual state authorities were primarily responsible. The sources demonstrate this through the tension they reveal between a fairly progressive federal government and the reluctant 'state authorities'. In many cases these sources show the stubbornness of states to enact or maintain progressive federal policies." [F984 Q4] Such an introduction gives a clear sense of direction to the ensuing argument and serves the candidate better than immediately presenting an amended interpretation that can distract from an evaluation of the one provided.

Good answers considered the provenance of sources as an aid to judging how much significance could be attached to the evidence they contained. For example, in using F984 Q4 source 1, better candidates used the source to show considerable and rapid progress by African-Americans at a political level in the south, but recognised that this was linked to the Reconstruction era and did not survive the introduction of Black Codes and Jim Crow laws. They were able to pick up the clue from the source about the clear hostility of white politicians to show the temporary nature of change. It is this seamless integration of own knowledge and use of evidence from the source that marks out the outstanding answer. Equally, good candidates read sources in different ways to show that they can be used both to support and challenge the given interpretation. It is worth remembering that with only seven sources on the paper, examiners select them carefully to ensure that they give maximum value and there is rarely just one possible view that can be taken. For example, when using F984 Q1 source 2, the activities of Unn the Deep Minded clearly establish the idea that this woman at least had high enough status to persuade others to go with her, but the source also points out that she was exceptional and that her status only became possible because of the extreme circumstances the family was in.

Unfortunately, there are still many candidates who use sources in the most basic way. Simply deciding whether a source supports or challenges the interpretation before moving on to the next and occasionally throwing in some additional information hardly reaches the level of complex thinking needed to move beyond level 3 on the mark-scheme. Typically, these answers deal with sources one at a time (still often starting with source 1 and working through to source 7) and do not stop to consider the strength of the evidence provided or to cross-reference evidence to show patterns of continuity or change. Own knowledge occasionally appears, but added for the sake of it rather than to evaluate. For these candidates we can only urge that careful attention is given to the advice in this and other reports.

It remains the case that answers to (b) are relatively weak, even where candidates write at length. The key distinction is between those who recognise that historians interrogate sources of

evidence and those who see sources as providing information about a topic. In the latter case sources are judged useful because of the amount of information they provide. There is no recognition that historians need to engage with a source to decide how much weight to give to the evidence it contains. The term ‘use’ in the question is intended to refer to this engagement to interrogate the source rather than reading simply to gain information. There is much evidence of formulaic answers where the candidate attempts to go through the requirements of the mark scheme but without recognising that the key is to look at what these sources are, not simply what they say. Even candidates who answer (a) at a high level, revealing the ability to use sources in context, often revert to generalised claims about types of sources in (b). The tendency to stock answers that do not engage with the specific sources provided on the paper persists. Many candidates are of the opinion that the only purpose of literary sources is to entertain – a narrow and often unhelpful view. Too often candidates forget that speeches by elected officials are as likely to reflect the views of the listeners as to seek to persuade them of the views contained in them, whether the official be seeking re-election or simply addressing the electors. It was encouraging to note, however, that more candidates were showing some awareness of how historians use sources to answer their questions. The report for June 2012 made clear what candidates should aim for in (b), and is worth re-visiting.

F983

Q1. The impact and consequences of the Black Death in England up to the 1450s.

Candidates were generally able to distinguish where the sources related to urban and rural areas, the exception being Newark (despite the heading for the source). The most successfully-argued answers suggested that while everywhere was devastated in the short-term, urban areas recovered more quickly and therefore it was indeed rural areas that were more seriously affected in the longer-term. (b) was less well done, with candidates better able to suggest lines of enquiry than to recognise the uses, issues and problems with particular sources.

Q2. Protest and Rebellion in Tudor England, 1489-1601.

In the past there have been many scripts on this topic that simply referenced sources, then went on to provide lengthy descriptions of the rebellions concerned from the candidates’ own knowledge. Although this tendency had been on the wane, this approach was prevalent again in this session. This extract is typical of such responses: “Most of these sources support the interpretation – the simple demands of Kett’s rebels and the Pilgrims of Grace in sources 5 and 2 clearly reflect the worries of the lower classes at that time, especially considering the Pilgrimage of Grace was the largest rebellion with the most participants, and the vast number of demands in the original document suggest that a lot of people contributed their ideas, which would make the Pontefract articles a more than reliable summation of the commoner’s views on politics and the church. Both of these rebellions were conservative and backward-thinking, the rebels in each wanted something to be restored to the way it was. Source 2’s demands could only be from the common people as most of them featured concern the eradication or protection of nobility, however, it is notable that a nobleman (Hussey) joined the Pilgrimage of Grace and had some bearing on the demands and the way they were voiced.” This response makes claims about what the sources show without providing evidence of this. It would have been strengthened if the candidate had provided clear evidence from the sources to support the claims being made.

Q3. Radicalism, Popular Politics and Control, 1780-1880s.

The new interpretation that most candidates suggested was that radicals became increasingly effective in politics in the period. This worked up to a point, although a consideration of what constituted radicalism/a radical led some candidates to recognise that the last two sources did not reflect the kind of radicalism displayed in the earlier sources. There was evidence in the plans drawn up that some candidates looked for a pattern of change over time, with graphical

representations of the effectiveness of radicalism as shown in the sources. A few candidates misconstrued the source, taking it to suggest that radicals were affected by politics rather than that they were effective.

As with question 1, few candidates wrote adequate evaluations of the sources provided in (b), although many could suggest valid lines of enquiry and showed understanding of methodology of using sources. The practice of listing missing dates and events or movements is unhelpful as it pushes candidates towards a focus on sources as providing information to help the historian find out about a topic, rather than evidence to help answer a question.

Q4. The Impact of War on British Society and Politics since 1900.

A problem for most candidates was that the later sources did not refer directly to wars, so the candidate needed to use his or her knowledge to link the developments cited in the sources to wars where appropriate. Some tried to do this regardless, for example suggesting that the reason fewer dwellings were constructed 1980-2000 (Source 4) was that the Cold War had ended. Many assumed a link between events after 1945 and the Second World War without explicitly stating the link. This led to weak arguments as while a case could be made for the need for the NHS being highlighted by war, the points in Source 7 about population growth, expectations about lifestyle and immigration were not as obviously linked to war.

There were some good examples of cross-referencing sources 2 and 3 where candidates recognised that Source 2 was making promises but that these were not put into effect (Source 3). The best answers used their knowledge to explain why this was the case. These sources could also be cross-referenced to Source 4. Other sources were grouped around the theme of health care (sources 1, 5, 6 and 7).

F984

Q1. The Vikings in Europe

There was a wide range of conclusions about the role of Viking women. Candidates who tried to identify change over time or geographical variation were generally less successful than those who differentiated between women of different social status or, better still, those who were widows. This last approach led to some convincing and complex conclusions about where women derived their status and the extent to which, as wealthy widows, they had a more significant role. Queen Emma, as the target of Knut's marriage ambitions, seemed to prove the exception. There was also some interesting discussion of the importance of domestic roles and farm work, given the praise received by Odendisa in Source 6, and the possible absence of husbands on raiding or trading journeys.

(b) was less well done, with too many candidates simply listing missing information (generally dates and geographical locations) with no reference to historical methodology or enquiry questions. Understanding of the use of literature was limited to its entertainment value, and the atypicality of Unn the Deep-Minded's activities was based on reading Source 2 ("Everyone agrees it is hard to find another case of a woman ...") rather than the atypicality of a heroine (female hero?) in sagas.

Q2. The Italian Renaissance c1420-c1550

The issue here was what motivated patrons. Many candidates analysed the sources effectively to infer religion as well as other factors, including the desire to glorify their city, their guild or to flatter their employer. There was interesting discussion of the distinction between 'papacy' and 'religion' (Source 2). The issue of saving one's soul or ensuring a safe-passage to heaven was less well addressed, with few candidates recognising that Cosimo de' Medici's motivation was religious (Source 6). While some candidates simply included additional factors in their amended interpretations, better answers recognised the complexity of the motives displayed. One argued (and demonstrated from the sources) that since religion underpinned pretty much all thinking in

this period, it was behind most actions. Source 4 was the only one that was really difficult to link to this idea, since not only was there no mention of religious motivation, but many of the library's texts were quite clearly from the pre-Christian era. None of the sources presented particular problems, although one candidate did interpret Source 7 to mean that the artist had executed Donna Brigida rather than the painting.

Q3. European Nationalism 1815-1914: Germany and Italy

This question was generally well done. Candidates were well-informed and used their knowledge to evaluate the sources. The term 'rulers' presented some problems. Kings were clearly rulers, but candidates were less secure about how to categorise Bismarck. The best answers established a relationship between rulers and other factors such as the leadership offered by other people and the circumstances in which they were acting.

Q4. Race and American Society 1865-1970s.

The issue of who or what held back civil rights for African-Americans is central to this topic, and most candidates displayed some awareness of how civil rights were denied and who was responsible. Most were able to distinguish state from federal authorities accurately. There were, however, gaps in knowledge and unthinking comments from too many candidates.

Very few candidates were aware of what went on during the period of Reconstruction and even where they mentioned it they were unclear about what it meant in terms of the government of the southern states. This led to some erroneous comments about the typicality of Source 1 and meant that the opportunity to cross-reference the scene in Source 1 (white Democrats ... glum and scornful) with Source 2's claims about how white southerners tried to share government with the Negro after the war, but the Negro declined to share it ... was missed, or, perhaps more surprisingly, accepted at face value as evidence that African Americans were responsible for their problems. Another misconception is that Washington DC is in the north. This led many candidates to claim that the Washington Post (Source 6) represented a northern view. However, there were candidates who made something of the context of Source 6, coinciding as it did with Johnson's legislation to introduce greater equality before the law. A few recognised the federal-state tension here, represented by the US badge on the jacket of the man confronting the standing Ku Klux Klanner. Governors are elected, yet candidates sometimes suggested that, 'we do not know if these views [expressed in Sources 2 and 5] are typical.' Source 4 proved difficult to interpret fully, although most candidates recognised that the state of Texas had had a role in denying voting rights.

Sources 2 and 5 were cited as the best evidence to support the interpretation. Candidates who said that both were speeches by governors of Mississippi managed to group the sources but did not cross-reference. The key difference is that grouping looks only at the type of source while cross-referencing considers the evidence in the sources. Answers that successfully cross-referenced made the point that despite there being a fifty year gap between sources 2 and 5, the attitudes expressed had not changed.

The obvious conclusion was that there were other factors besides the role of state authorities that held back African American civil rights (the role of and quarrels between African American leaders, the KKK etc.). Interpretations suggesting that it was southern but not northern state authorities which held back rights were difficult to sustain in the light of missing evidence from other areas of the USA, while those who looked for change or continuity over time often tried to find a simple pattern that could not be deduced from the source evidence.

In (b) there was a propensity to list missing information and 'voices'. This will not gain additional marks unless it is linked in to an enquiry that could also be addressed through the sources. For example, pointing out that there are no sources about Native or Hispanic Americans was not a productive move.

F985, F986 Historical controversies

General comments

There was an entry of just a few hundred for the January sitting with the great majority of candidates entering for the Non-British options. Witch-hunting and the Holocaust accounted for most of the candidates. The overall performance of the candidates was in line with previous years. There were several ways in which the candidates' answers demonstrated a gradual improvement in technique. Most of the answers were shorter, more concise and focused on the questions from the start. They did not contain large amounts of descriptive or irrelevant material and avoided the temptation to produce a survey of the historiography of the topic.

There is no one 'right' way to approach and answer the questions but it might be useful to outline some of the key characteristics of the best answers. While this is not meant to be prescriptive, some candidates would have done better if they had followed this, or similar approaches.

In response to part (a) the best answers usually had the following characteristics. First, they focused on, and based all of their answers, on the extract. Whenever they made a point about the interpretation, the approach or the methodology of the extract, they explained it through reference to the extract rather than paraphrasing sets of notes about learned interpretations, approaches and methods. The whole of these answers were rooted in the extract.

Second, the extract had clearly been read all the way through before the candidates began writing. This enabled them to focus on the overall interpretation or argument of the extract rather than summarizing each paragraph. They then explained the interpretation in an holistic way that was rooted in the extract. Often, at least half the answer was taken up with a careful explanation of the overall interpretation. This was usually supported from text without falling into the trap of using long quotations and leaving them to do the work. The candidates' own explanations are crucial. When candidates thought there was more than one interpretation in the extract they explained which they thought was the central one and then demonstrated how the others contributed to, or were related, to this main one.

Third, brief references were made to other historians who have come to similar interpretations. These were used to further explain the extract; they were not bolted-on with no link being made to the extract. The references were brief and to the point. No attempt was made to try and guess who the author of the extract was.

Fourth, only after fully explaining the interpretation, did candidates move on to the approach demonstrated in the extract. Candidates again based this on an overall reading of the extract and this usually led them to one or two main approaches across the extract as a whole. They did not claim to find a different approach in each paragraph, nor did they allow a certain phrase or word to suggest another approach e.g. claiming a Marxist approach as soon as the word 'economic' appears. The best answers used the content of the extract to support their argument that certain approaches were present instead of simply describing every approach that has existed as a bolt-on to the answer. Candidates do not get more marks for 'spotting' more approaches than other candidates. Nor are they credited for simply describing approaches.

The next important characteristic of the best answers was that they showed an understanding of the difference between approaches (e.g. history from above) and methods (e.g. using trial records). These answers used the extract to concisely and clearly explain how certain methods are evident and how they have contributed to the overall argument of the historian. They did not criticize the historian for failing to use other methods.

The best answers were also completely devoid of any attempts to evaluate the extract. The task for the candidates is to understand and explain the interpretation/argument of the extract. An extract that is only a page in length will not cover every possible interpretation, approach and method. Nor should it. The work, even of book length, of one historian can never produce the definitive and complete account of the topic. It is therefore pointless for candidates to list all the interpretations, approaches and methods that the historian has not used. However, a brief mention of another interpretation, approach or method that is not present in the extract can be useful to provide a contrast with the extract as a way of further explaining it. It does not read well when a candidate criticises the author of an extract because they have been silly enough to forget to use, for example, a history from below approach.

Finally, the best answers linked either the approaches or methods to the interpretation. They did not claim that an approach made a particular interpretation inevitable. They simply explained how there was a linking e.g. it is not surprising to find in the witch-hunting extract the interpretation that the elite were responsible for a reduction in witch-trials resulting from work where the historian has 'prioritised' trial records.

To sum up: the best answers come from candidates reading and understanding the extract as a whole, making careful notes and plans before writing and rooting their answers in the extract but informing their answers from their wider knowledge and understanding.

The best answers in response to part (b) focused on the named approach as a general approach to the topic and did not focus on just one historian or interpretation. In witch-hunting candidates were not being asked to provide a critique of the work of Margaret Murray nor where they expected to focus on only David Irving for the Holocaust extract. Candidates should critically examine the approach as a whole. This can be challenging when the approach is e.g. Holocaust denial, but the best candidates used this as an opportunity to explore the issues that are raised by considering the issue of Holocaust denial. They did not evaluate the claims of Holocaust denial. Such an exploration did involve considering the work of individual historians but only as a way of explaining and evaluating the overall approach. The best answers explained what has been learned by using a particular approach, and how some of what has been learned could only have come from that particular approach. It is also important to explain what the approach, by its very nature, prevents us from learning. However, this should not descend into a survey of every conceivable approach.

Comments on specific questions

F985 British History

Very few candidates were entered for the British options. Imperialism attracted the biggest entry and most of the answers were good. Many of the explanations verged on an holistic reading of the Imperialism extract although some paid too little attention to the final paragraph. There were some excellent evaluations of approaches that focus on factors in the colonies. Most were focused on how this approach had added to our understanding of de-colonisation.

F986 Non-British History

Nearly all the entries were for Witch-hunting or the Holocaust. Most candidates were able to understand that the Witch-hunting extract was an explanation of why witch-hunting declined. The extract suggests several reasons for this and only a few candidates realised this. Many answers were limited to social stability. There was general understanding that the author had adopted a 'history from above' approach but a disappointing number of candidates criticised the author for not using many other approaches. There was also much generic evaluation of a range of approaches and methods that was not specifically related to the extract. Answers to part (b) were usually limited to Margaret Murray. A few candidates made good use of Carlo Ginzburg but no one referred to the work of Le Roy Ladurie. Some answers focused so much on the

deficiencies of Margaret Murray as an historian that social revolt was ignored. There were many reasonable readings of the Holocaust extract although the central importance of 'empire' was not always understood. Part (b) was answered well with candidates avoiding the trap of entering the denial debate and instead writing some thoughtful explanations of the issues raised about the Holocaust by the debate.

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