

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y233/01 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper Y233/01 series overview	4
Section A overview.....	5
Question 1	5
Question 2	5
Section B overview.....	6
Question 3	6

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Please note: This is the final series for this AS unit. A resit opportunity is available in summer 2019. For more information, please see: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/siu/as-history-withdrawals-060618/>

Paper Y233/01 series overview

Y233 is one of seventeen units for the revised AS Level examination for GCE History. The units present a borehole approach so that candidates can see change and developments, and make substantiated judgements over substantial lengths of time and see issues in a wider perspective

In Section A, candidates have to answer one essay question from a choice of two. In Section B the question requires them to evaluate a given historical interpretation using their knowledge to evaluate its strengths and limitations.

Overview of candidate performance

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- in answering the essay question, discussed at least two issues in depth
- gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic
- reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question
- made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question
- in answering the interpretation questions, were able to evaluate the strengths and limitations of that interpretation using contextual knowledge that was relevant to the issues raised by the quotation
- made reference to other interpretations and had good knowledge of the historical debate.

Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:

- showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay
- were unable to support their answer with relevant material
- did not focus on the precise wording of the question
- made unsupported comments about issues which were assertions
- described the interpretation without analysing its strengths and weaknesses
- did not link their contextual knowledge to the specific issues raised in the quotation.

Section A overview

In Section A Questions 1 and 2, candidates who did well had a consistent focus on the question with generally accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of the background and of the particular issues raised by the question. The best answers reached substantiated judgements, but there may have been variation in the development of these judgements. Often these answers will draw their evidence from across the period, or even from a geographically wide area.

Candidates who did less well may have partly addressed the question with some relevant knowledge and understanding. The distinguishing feature of these answers will be description of the factors, partial focus on the question, often in the final paragraph.

In Section B the best answers produced a very good analysis of the interpretation in which its strengths and weaknesses were highlighted. The analysis showed very detailed knowledge and understanding of the historical context and often of the historiography.

Less confident answers would have a partial analysis of the interpretation, perhaps focusing on with strengths or weaknesses, or the analysis might have been uneven with a limited treatment of either strengths or weaknesses.

Question 1

1* How important was the appeal of Urban II in starting the First Crusade?

[30]

Most answers did examine the impact of Urban's speech at Clermont and then described other factors. These included the appeal of the Emperor Alexius, the impact of the Seljuk victory at the battle of Manzikert, the need for some general focus for the warrior class rather than fratricidal warfare, the need for Urban to rebuild the status of the papacy after the spat between Gregory VII and the Emperor Henry IV. Only some of these factors were relevant to 'starting the crusade'. Candidates needed to define 'crusade' and then they would realise that most of the factors mentioned provided background to the support that came after Clermont.

Question 2

2* 'Circumstances in Outremer in the 1130s and 1140s were responsible for the weakening of the kingdom of Jerusalem.' How far do you agree?

[30]

This question was less popular than Question 1 and those who did attempt it were generally successful in developing analytical essays. Definitions of the 'circumstances in Outremer' and 'weakening of the kingdom of Jerusalem' were usually helpful and the range of other factors – like the strengthening of the Muslim forces and domestic difficulties in Christendom were used. The stronger responses addressed the question of extent. Some, possibly most, tended to produce a succession of paragraphs with an overall conclusion in the final paragraph.

Section B overview

Overall, the supporting knowledge was very general or so overwhelmingly detailed that the point of the question was lost.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation and then answer the question that follows:

'Had the Muslims of the Near East united in the face of the First Crusade it could not have prevailed.'

From: Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, published in 2005.

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied. **[20]**

Candidates were generally able to evaluate the strengths of the interpretation but its limitations were often less prominent. Many candidates, however, were unsure about what they were meant to do in their evaluation. Some candidates discussed reasons for the crusaders' victory often arguing that the religious enthusiasm of the crusaders was the main reason without engaging with the interpretation. Many cited the discovery of the Holy Lance as the incident which drove them on from Antioch. Others explained in great detail the origins of the Sunni/Shia split and the impact of the death of Malik Shah.

The best answers explained the impact of Muslim disunity on the First Crusade and then evaluated this in terms of other factors. Some looked ahead to the Second Crusade and argued that it was Muslim unification principally under Zengi that led to Muslim success.

Copyright acknowledgements

Section B, Q3

T Asbridge, 'The First Crusade: A New History', p334, Simon & Schuster UK, 2005.

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