

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y137/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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.

Paper Y137 series overview

Y137 is one of a number of British period study and enquiry units. Each unit has two elements: a period study and an enquiry. The Enquiry element either precedes or continues the period study so as to provide increased coherence and coverage of the chosen period of British History. The Period study element of the Unit group is assessed by essays, with two set from different key topics and candidates are required to answer one. In the Enquiry element candidates are required to critically use three sources. The first question requires candidates to consider the utility of one source in relation to an issue and the second question requires candidates to use all three sources in their historical context to assess the validity of a view. In both questions, candidates are required to explain the source or sources in relation to the question and apply both contextual knowledge and consider the provenance of the sources in order to reach a judgement based on the sources on the issue in the question.

Section A overview

The Enquiry section in this unit comes at the start of the period and will provide candidates with a background of the events that influenced the reign of Elizabeth, which is the focus of the Period study element. The two questions require candidates to critically assess evidence and reach judgements. The critical evaluation of sources is the central theme in this section with all marks given against AO2.

Question 1

1 How useful is Source C as evidence for the reaction to the Marian burnings?

[10]

Candidates were able to explain how the source showed that many in London were upset by the first of the Marian burnings. While most were able to use some contextual knowledge to support their explanation, there were a number who did not read the attribution carefully to see that the incident was the first of the Marian burnings and therefore some of the comments about earlier burnings were erroneous. Many candidates made reference to the number of burnings carried out but pointed out that despite the reaction shown in the Source there was little evidence of people being converted to Protestantism as a result. Many used this an opportunity to explain how the burnings were often seen as a form of entertainment and used the example of the profits made by the Kent cherry pickers to support their point. A few strong answers went further and also noted that for the burnings to take place there must have been reports made by people to JPs of heretical beliefs and therefore there was not that much opposition, although some contrasted that with the changes made to the timings because of a fear of disturbances. Candidates were less convincing in their consideration of the provenance of the source, as is shown in Exemplar 1 below and this lack of development often prevented responses from reaching the top of their respective level. There were often stock comments about an ambassador and his role. However, the strongest answers were aware of Renard's relationship with Mary and his concern about Philip's position in England. Some argued that this would lead him to be accurate in his reporting, while others suggested that he might exaggerate the situation in order to persuade Philip to return to England and stop the burnings given both the ambassador and Philip's view of them.

Exemplar 1

Source C states that the people of London were unhappy about the "cruel enforcement of the An recent Acts of Parliament against heresy" referencing the heresy laws which were introduced in 1554. This source is useful in ~~the~~ showing the reaction to the laws as the public did not get a say in the laws and instead forced into a religion they may not want to practice. Furthermore "Rogers was burnt

yesterday" which refers to the first burning after the ~~uprise~~ introduction of the heresy laws in 1555 which shows how the laws must have been fully effective. The reaction to the Marian burnings is also demonstrated through the fact that "the Queen might be in peril" thus demonstrating the fury of the people who may have been willing to rebel

against Mary.

However this source is not entirely useful because it states how people prayed to "not convert back to Catholicism". Following the Lady Jane Grey crisis, Mary rose to power in 1553 in which she was greeted with people rejoicing and ~~still~~ singing mass. Not only does this demonstrate the high levels of support Mary had, but the fact people were carrying out an illegal Catholic practice highlights how the reaction to the Marian burnings were not necessarily all negative. Furthermore, it is Simon Renard, the Imperial ambassador, who was ~~abroad~~ sending the letter to King Philip. As he is an ambassador the usefulness of the source is decreased because the ambassadors were not always at the events when they took place meaning most of their information stems from gossip.

Overall, ~~also~~ although Source C ~~is~~ is useful in demonstrating some reactions to the Marian burnings, it is not entirely useful due to its provenance and slightly contradictory nature to ~~the~~ other historical accounts.

Question 2

- 2 Using these three sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that the aim of Mary's religious policy was reconciliation. [20]

The term 'reconciliation' was challenging for some candidates and led a number to misinterpret the sources in relation to the question. In order to access the highest level on this question candidates do need to explain the three sources in relation to the question, use both contextual knowledge and provenance and reach a judgement, in light of the evaluation, as to whether the sources support or challenge the view. Exemplar 2 illustrates where a candidate begins to make a judgement about the validity of the sources in light of their evaluation, but to go higher in the level this would need to be further developed. The sources were taken from across Mary's reign and provided candidates with the opportunity to consider how her views developed. Most candidates argued that Source A showed clearly Mary's desire for reconciliation, but went on to argue this was because it was from the start of her reign when her position was insecure following the Lady Jane Grey affair. Most were also able to consider the provenance by analysing the purpose of Mary's proclamation. Source B presented the greatest challenge with a number unsure as to whether it was supporting or challenging the view. In trying to resolve the issue of the ownership of former monastic lands many argued that Mary was, by eventually allowing the gentry and nobility to keep them, following a policy of reconciliation. The strongest answers placed this in the context of her struggles to get legislation through parliament. In discussing provenance responses considered the position of the ambassador and the purpose of his correspondence and his attitude to the issue. Some argued that the burnings were an example of reconciliation by forcing people to conform, but most argued that this was a sign that Mary had moved away from reconciliation and that her policies had become harsher. Contextual knowledge was readily available in the form of the numbers and type of people burnt. Provenance was also often well explored, not just through considering the role of the author, but also his purpose.

Exemplar 2

Overall, sources ~~A~~ and B^t^c do not support the view that the aim of Mary's religious policy was reconciliation as they entail how selfish she was in terms of restoring Catholicism. ~~Source C also~~

Section B overview

Two essays are set, each from a different Key Topic. The questions set require candidates to analyse causes and consequences of major historical issues and reach a supported judgement.

Question 3

3* How serious a threat to Elizabeth I was Mary Queen of Scots?

[20]

Nearly all candidates attempted this question and most were able to explain at least some of the reasons why Mary Queen of Scots was a threat to Elizabeth, however only the strongest answers were able to link this explanation to the focus of 'how serious'. At the very top candidates were able to make a series of judgements about the various issues they discussed before reaching an overall conclusion as to how serious. Exemplar 3 below shows the final two paragraphs of a response where this is done, with an interim and then an overall judgement. There were many issues that candidates discussed, with most focusing on the legitimacy of her claim in comparison to that of Elizabeth, often linking it to having son and Elizabeth's failure to marry and produce an heir. Most were also able to link this to her Catholicism and discuss whether that made her threat serious, with the strongest responses suggesting that although the country was still largely Catholic it did not bring about large scale support for Mary in the Rising of the Northern Earls. In many instances this also led on to a discussion of how serious the plots were and Elizabeth's reaction to them. Some argued that Elizabeth's unwillingness to execute her was an indication that she was not a threat whereas others argued that her link to foreign powers meant that she was and Elizabeth was unable to act. In discussing Mary's link to foreign powers candidates did display some confusion as to the French monarch she had married and were uncertain as to whether this meant Spain would or would not support her, further increasing or decreasing her threat. There was also some discussion of the papal excommunication and even her impact after her death with the Armada.

Exemplar 3

It can also be argued that Mary Queen of Scots was not a serious threat to Elizabeth. Due to the creation of Walsingham's spy network, the Privy Council was able to provide proof of Norfolk's involvement and in 1572 used various methods to put pressure on Elizabeth to execute Norfolk, such as the House of Lords putting forward a position for his execution which was in fact successful. Furthermore, the spy network proved that Mary Queen of Scots was guilty of treason and the Government Parliament met in 1586 to discuss her trial.

Once again, pressure was put on Elizabeth to execute Mary Queen of Scots as the Privy Council, House of Lords and House of Commons joined forces to do so - which again was successful. The spy network highlights how Mary Queen of Scots was not a threat to Elizabeth as they were extremely quick and effective in their handling of her involvement in the plots.

In ~~the~~ conclusion, Mary Queen of Scots had the potential to be a serious threat because she had a good claim to the throne and tried to exercise this 'right' through her involvement in the plots. However, overall she was not a threat because the plots often lacked the support needed to be effective and were extremely short-lived due to Walsingham's spy network which also caused her execution in 1587.

Question 4

- 4* How effective was Elizabeth I in defending the royal prerogative in the period from 1588 to 1603?
[20]

This was not a popular question, with very few responses seen. Those that did attempt it were unclear as to what was meant by the royal prerogative and instead turned it into an answer about whether she maintained her power. The defence of the royal prerogative is the first topic mentioned in the Indicative content for Elizabeth's later years and is therefore an issue that does need to be considered even if it is somewhat complex. Some who did attempt the question ignored the dates and covered the whole of her reign, while another response saw it as a question that should focus on the issue of faction.

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