

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y108/01 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 Y108/01 series overview

There are thirteen British period study and enquiry units from which to choose. Each unit has two elements: a Period study and an Enquiry. The Enquiry element either precedes or continues the Period Study element so as to provide increased coherence and coverage of the chosen period of British history. The Enquiry element consists of one compulsory question based on four sources where candidates are required to explain and evaluate the sources using both contextual knowledge and provenance to reach a judgement about the sources in relation to the question. The Period study element is assessed through essays, with candidates choosing one question from a choice of two.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to be able to consider both provenance of the sources and apply contextual knowledge to them in order to reach a judgement about the sources in relation to the issue in the question.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to address the issue in the question using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considered the provenance of the source(s) and used relevant contextual knowledge • linked the contextual knowledge clearly to the source being discussed to show whether the view of the source was valid or not • reached an overall judgement as to the extent to which the sources supported the view in the question • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not consider both the provenance and did not use contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources • wrote an unbalanced answer in their treatment of the sources, with very little consideration of one of the sources • reached a judgement based on their knowledge rather than the sources • 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.

Section A overview

The focus in this section is on the critical use of evidence in investigating and assessing historical questions, problems and issues. The focus may be on depth of one key topic or breadth, using parts of several key topics for the evaluation of a theme. The critical evaluation of sources is central to this element, with all marks given against AO2. The sources selected are all written and contemporary to the period. Candidates have to evaluate four sources, answering one question which sets the sources in their historical context.

Question 1

The Execution of Charles I and the Interregnum 1646–1660

- 1 Using these four sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that Cromwell dissolved the Parliaments of the Commonwealth (1649–1653) because their main concern was to preserve their own power. [30]

Most candidates were able to explain the sources in relation to the question and were usually able to comment on the provenance of the sources. However, a number found it more challenging to apply relevant contextual knowledge to the sources. Most argued that Sources A, C and D supported the proposition, although stronger answers noted that even within these sources there were other reasons offered as well. Responses also commented that Source B was the strongest source in challenging the argument and often used the provenance of the source to support the argument that it was Cromwell's desire for power that led to the dismissal of the Rump, noting that Edmund Ludlow's attitude would lead to his belief that Cromwell was to blame. The strongest responses were able to bring in own knowledge about Ludlow's political beliefs to support their argument, similarly with Source D some noted that it was in fact the more moderate members of Barebone's parliament, or Nominated Assembly, that voted to dissolve itself rather than Cromwell and this led to comments about the reliability of the Venetian ambassador. Comments on the provenance of the Sources was often quite strong and went beyond the stock comments about an ambassador's job. In discussing Source A there were comments about lawyers in the Rump parliament and their own concerns and how this might impact on the reliability of the source, which was balanced against it being a diary and also Whitelocke's relationship with Cromwell. In discussing Source C most were able to comment on the purpose of the speech and used that to question the reliability of the Source. In applying own knowledge to the sources a considerable number of answers considered the legislative record of the Rump, Cromwell's belief in Divine Providence and his alleged desire for power seen in later constitutional developments. The strongest answers applied both contextual knowledge and provenance to each source and then reached a judgement as to how far each source supported the view in the question and arrived at an overall judgement about the sources in the final paragraph, taking them into Level 6.

Section B overview

The two questions set are drawn from different key topics and candidates are required to recall, select and deploy appropriate knowledge and communicate this clearly and effectively. Candidates are expected to demonstrate abilities to explain, assess, analyse and reach substantiated judgements.

Question 2

The Early Stuarts 1603–1646

- 2* 'The most serious cause of James I's disputes with parliament was his belief in Divine Right of Kings.' How far do you agree? [20]

This was the more popular question. Responses did need to consider the issue of James' belief in Divine Right and weigh this up against other issues. Most were able to discuss factors such as finance, religion and foreign policy, providing most candidates with plenty to write about. However, knowledge of James' belief in Divine Right was not always strong, although at the higher levels candidates were able to comment about his belief and differentiated between theory and practice. These responses often commented on his two short accounts, 'The Trew Law of Free Monarchies' and 'Basilikon Doron', where he asserted that the king was above the law and used this to argue that this caused concern, however some did develop this and note that James also stated that there was a clear difference between a king and tyrant and that these works were for the guidance of his son and had less reference to England than Scotland. The strongest answers also linked Divine Right to prerogative powers and this enabled some high level analysis, particularly of foreign policy and marriages and finance to be made. A significant number of candidates simply listed the causes of disputes without really addressing the issue of 'most serious' and this often led to lengthy comments about why finance was an issue and were not always well focused on the precise demands of the question. Responses were also able to link the question of religion and foreign policy, particularly with concerns over the Spanish marriage and Catholicism. There were a some who did link his beliefs, in the books, to concern that James wanted to rule as an absolute monarch, despite his comments that he would rule according to the laws and that he did just that, suggesting it was less of an issue. This was also linked to the question of his prerogative rights and the strongest answers considered the tensions that arose over disputed elections, purveyance and wardships.

Question 3

3* How successfully did James I deal with the Puritans?

[20]

Although this was a less popular question, there were still a number of responses. The strongest answers considered the whole of James' reign, while the less strong responses tended to focus on either just the early years of his reign or the Thirty Years War and the Spanish marriage. A number of responses considered Puritan hopes at the start of James' reign and assessed how far James was able to deal with them. This often led to consideration of issues such as the Millenary Petition, the Hampton Court Conference and the 1604 Canons. Many were able to analyse these and argue that James was largely successful, and this was balanced against the appointment of Bancroft as Archbishop, who was seen as anti-puritan. Responses also commented on Puritan concerns about Catholicism following the Gunpowder Plot and the extent to which James was able to calm concerns. Similarly, responses commented about Puritan concerns over James' attitude towards the Thirty Years War and the lack of support for Frederick and this was often linked to the Spanish marriage issue, which also caused concerns. There was some discussion of the growth of Arminianism and the extent to which James was able to allay Puritan fears, but the strongest responses commented that this was more of an issue under Charles than James. The strongest responses were able to analyse the issues and make a series of judgements as to the success or otherwise of James' policies, with most concluding that James was relatively successful at the start of his reign, but was less so towards the end.

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