

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY B**

## **(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)**

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**J411**

For first teaching in 2016

**J411/71 Summer 2022 series**

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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. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

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## Paper 71 series overview

Component 71 is the Viking Expansion c.750–c.1050.

To do well on this component, candidates needed to be able to recall essential facts about this period in Viking history; write a clear and organised summary about an aspect of Viking society; explain why settling in Greenland and/or North America was difficult for the Vikings; and recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a historical interpretation in an essay-style question.

It was clear from many responses that most candidates had been well-prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately on the essay-style questions, where some of the knowledge shown was particularly impressive, especially on Question 4.

However, fewer candidates performed as successfully on Question 3: while most were able to identify reasons why settling in Greenland or North America was difficult, several were unable to fully explain how such problems made settling especially difficult.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read the questions carefully and focused their responses on what was required</li> <li>• demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of all topics covered</li> <li>• considered essay questions fully by providing balanced arguments</li> <li>• used second order concepts confidently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• included irrelevant material into questions, for example, writing about achievements of Vikings other than the Volga Vikings in Question 4</li> <li>• missed the point about Viking kings in Question 2 and wrote about Viking society in general</li> <li>• did not answer the required number of questions, so lost marks.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Give **one** example of an item that Volga Vikings brought back to their homes from the Byzantine Empire or Arab World. [1]

Most candidates answered this question correctly. No credit was given for responses which identified an item the Volga Vikings **took with them** to the Byzantine Empire or Arab World, for example amber, or walrus ivory.

## Question 1 (b)

- (b) Name **one** kingdom in England attacked by the Great Heathen Army between 865 and 879. [1]

This was mostly done well. Candidates could have picked Mercia, Northumbria or East Anglia. We also accepted Wessex.

## Question 1 (c)

- (c) Identify **one** country ruled over by King Cnut. [1]

Most candidates correctly identified England. They could also have said Denmark, Norway, or Sweden.

## Question 2

- 2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses the Viking kings' approach to Christianity in the period c.950–1030. Support your summary with examples. [9]

To do well on this question, summaries had to be clear and organised by the candidate. The best way to achieve this was by concentrating on a second order concept, like cause/effect, similarity/difference, or change/continuity. These terms did not have to be spelled out specifically, but they had to be clearly apparent to the examiner that they were the organising feature of the response. Where this was the case, candidates did well. They wrote mainly about Harald Bluetooth, Svein Forkbeard and Cnut the Great. Reasons or motives for the conversion of the Kings was a popular focus. Where candidates did less well, either they did not have a clear second order concept, or they did not concentrate on Viking kings' approach as demanded in the question. Such responses usually stayed in Level 1, gaining a maximum of 3 marks.

### Advice to centres

Candidates need to be prepared to use second order concepts to organise their summaries. For instance, they could focus on the impact of changes made to religion by successive kings; how similar/different were the impacts brought about by Harald Bluetooth compared to Cnut the Great? Whose changes had the biggest impact on Viking society?

## Exemplar 1

2.	<p>During the reign of Harold Bluetooth, Christianity was becoming a more prominent religion which Harold Bluetooth believed in. This resulted in the entirety of Denmark (the country he ruled) being converted to Christianity. Harold Bluetooth achieved this by converting the <del>Christ</del> pagan Viking burial site - Jelling - into a wooden Christian church where he even moved his father's tomb the Old. This resulted in many consequences, including being killed by his own son Svein Forkbeard who led an <del>angry</del> army of angry Vikings who wanted the country to return to paganism.</p>
	<p>Svein Forkbeard was also a Christian and despite murdering his father - also believed in some of his ideals. Svein Forkbeard remained the country to be Christian as that was his religion but allowing paganism. He did this by keeping the church at Jelling and by letting other Vikings practise their religious beliefs. This was a change of the way Harold Bluetooth viewed Christianity as he viewed it as a religion everyone should've been part of. Whereas Svein Forkbeard viewed <del>the</del> Christianity as just another belief.</p>

Exemplar 1 is an excellent example of the clear use of second order concepts to write a clear and organised summary of Viking kings' approaches to Christianity. The concepts of cause and effect, change and continuity and significance are all used in the response, and the historical examples cited are extensive and accurate.

### Question 3

- 3 Why did Vikings find settling in Greenland and North America so difficult?  
Explain your answer.

[10]

There was evidence that candidates had learned this topic well. They had impressive knowledge about North America, and most were aware of the ongoing debate about whether the Vikings did settle there or not. Many candidates wrote about the problems caused by the climate and the difficulties for farming and growing crops. Fewer went into much detail about the hazardous journey the Vikings had to undertake, and the implications that had for settlement of either Greenland or North America.

#### Advice to centres

While candidates had some impressive knowledge about the voyages of Eric the Red and Leif Erikson, they weren't always able to fully explain how what they found in these places affected their ability to settle. Candidates need to refer their responses back to the question to make sure they have maintained their focus.

### Question 4\*

- 4\* 'The most important achievement of the Volga Vikings was simply reaching the Arab world and Constantinople.'  
How far do you agree?  
Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

Candidates that chose this essay question wrote well. They understood that simply reaching the Arab world and Constantinople can be classed as an achievement, given the difficulties encountered on the long journey. Most candidates successfully produced a balanced response, with frequent references to trade and success in forming positive relationships used as examples of other achievements. The main weakness of some responses was that examples were explained that were not related to the Volga Vikings. For example, there were a significant number of responses which described the Great Heathen Army, which was not relevant to this question.

#### Advice to centres

Candidates need to be secure in their knowledge and understanding of different groups of Vikings. There is a tendency for weaker responses to say that all Vikings were part of the same group, with the same homelands and similar fortunes in their development through time. This is clearly not the case.

### Question 5\*

- 5\* 'The main reason why Vikings left their homelands was the problems they faced in Scandinavia.'  
 How far do you agree?  
 Give reasons for your answer. [18]

These essays were usually done well. Many candidates had good contextual knowledge and understanding. Responses were strongest in the discussion of factors that 'pulled' the Vikings from their Scandinavian homelands. For example, there were a good number of candidates who explained the importance of the Vikings' sense of adventure, and desire for wealth from lands seen as weak and vulnerable. Fewer candidates referred to the pressures caused by a growing population in Scandinavia. There were some candidates (although not too many) who sought to dispute the statement. They argued that there were no problems in Scandinavia and so they were not leaving their homelands. Such arguments were not credited as they were historically inaccurate.

#### Advice to centres

Candidates need to avoid trying to change a question to fit one they would rather answer. In this question, some candidates tried to argue that there were no problems in Scandinavia and that the Vikings were happy to stay there. It is evident that some Vikings DID leave their homelands. The question was about understanding why they left; were they 'pushed' or 'pulled'?

#### Exemplar 2

Overall, I believe that the problems in Scandinavia wasn't the ~~only~~ main reason for the Vikings leaving, instead I believe that it was mostly due to their greediness and need to show off their power. Although the problems in Scandinavia were bad, most of the reasons for leaving Scandinavia ~~to~~ was to benefit in some other way, such as the Jarks gaining glory. Therefore, the most important reason why the Vikings left Scandinavia was to benefit selfishly and to gain power, as the problems in the homelands may have been able to be sorted, the Vikings didn't have to leave the homelands and cause chaos and destruction in the way they did.



Exemplar 2 is an excellent example of a 'clinching argument' in Question 5 on the Viking homelands. The conclusion is not just a rehash of earlier arguments, but an overall judgement of which reason explains best why they left.

Exemplar 3

5		<p>I disagree with the statements about Viking <sup>leaving</sup> <del>left</del> their homelands <del>was</del> because <sup>of the problems</sup> they faced in Scandinavia <del>is</del> because they were already men. For example, Viking has lots of lots of <del>Scandinavian</del> <del>wood</del> <del>which</del> <del>is</del> <del>special</del> <del>for</del> them at that time. This means that they are more higher class than most <sup>of the country</sup> <del>countries</del> and <del>trade</del> <del>to</del> <del>be</del> <del>more</del> <del>rich</del>. As a result, they didn't have <del>more</del> much problems <sup>only</sup> they face through because they <sup>tried</sup> <del>tried</del> to be more rich.</p>
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This is an example of a candidate who doesn't agree with the proposition that the Vikings left their homelands because of the problems in Scandinavia. That would have been a valid argument, but this candidate doesn't believe the Vikings left their homelands at all, so the question itself is not valid, in the opinion of the candidate. This gained no credit for this part.

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