

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/41 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 answers 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 41 series overview

Paper 41 was the Norman Conquest, 1065–1087.

To do well on the British Depth Study, candidates need to be able to analyse and compare interpretations; devise historical questions; and recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a historical interpretation in an essay-style question.

It was clear from the majority of 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 3.

However, fewer candidates performed as successfully on Question 2: while most were able to make comparisons of detail, many were unable to consider the overall impression given about English resistance and/or Hereward the Wake. Many fell back on simplistic comparisons of provenance in their attempts to explain the differences between the two.

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"> • picked out a general feature in Interpretation A in relation to how the book made William look like a hero and then supported this with two points of development (Question 1(a)) • used Interpretation A to ask a historical question i.e. based on a second-order concept such as causation, consequence or change and gave some kind of indication of how that might help us to further understand William's rule in Normandy before 1066 (Question 1(b)) • compared the overall message about Hereward in Interpretations B and C and went on to give a reason that they differed, on the basis of these specific interpretations, e.g. given the audience of B or the purpose of C (Question 2) • effectively deployed a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their responses (Question 3 and Question 4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pointed out different features/methods in Interpretation A instead of focusing on one way the book presented William as a hero (Question 1(a)) • did not actually ask a question or tell us something they wanted to find out from Interpretation A; or asked a question relating to England after 1066 rather than Normandy before 1066 (Question 1(b)) • summarised Interpretations B and C separately, or pointed out smaller/individual points of similarity and/or difference (Question 2) • made accurate but generalised points which they were unable to support with precise evidence in the essay question; or else gave precise evidence but did not explain how it helped to address the question being asked (Questions 3 and 4).

Question 1 (a)

The Norman Conquest, 1065–1087

- 1 (a) In **Interpretation A**, the book makes William, Duke of Normandy seem like a hero.

Identify and explain **one** way in which it does this.

[3]

The aim of this question is to get candidates thinking about the methods used by writers, artists, filmmakers, etc to put forward a particular interpretation of a historical figure, period or event.

The vast majority of candidates were able to access the interpretation and they understood the question. Most scored 1 or 2 marks by picking out a specific feature, e.g. 'William is shown sitting on a throne' or 'The text says that "his destiny is to conquer"' and then going on to develop their response by explaining how that feature made William look like a hero. Where candidates started with a very specific feature such as these, they often struggled to make two points of development about their feature and sometimes neglected to say why this made William appear heroic. The most successful responses were the ones which began with a more general point e.g. 'The book uses religious imagery' and then went on to give an example of this e.g. 'For instance, William is shown sitting in an abbey with light surrounding him' and then say how this made William appear heroic e.g. 'This makes William seem like a hero because it's suggesting he has God on his side.'

Responses which picked out several features rather than one feature as the question asks e.g. 'William is shown on a throne with a sword in his hand. It says that he is destined to conquer' were unable to move past 1 mark.

Advice to centres

In this question, candidates should aim to pick out just one method used in the interpretation and go on to make two points of development about that to address the question asked.

Question 1 (b)

(b) If you were asked to do further research on **one** aspect of **Interpretation A**, what would you choose to investigate?

Explain how this would help us to analyse and understand William's rule in Normandy before 1066. [5]

The idea of this question is to test candidates' ability to come up with a genuine historical enquiry, using the interpretation as a starting point.

The vast majority of candidates were able to ask a question, or questions, or indicate something that they would like to find out. At the lower end, these were typically things such as finding out about who the people were attacking William and investigating Norman tactics in battle. Better responses framed their questions around a second-order concept, such as causation, with the most frequent question being why there were clashes such as these in Norman society between William and those surrounding him. Or, the reasons behind Normandy's power and success in this period, sometimes comparing to the impression given by the interpretation i.e. that it was the impact of William himself. Fewer candidates were able to go on to indicate how this might help us to analyse and understand William's rule in Normandy.

A minority of candidates misunderstood the question or the interpretation and either told us things they knew rather than asking a question or identifying an area for further investigation, or asked a question relating to the Normans in England from 1066 on. Several candidates had clearly been told to use certain words such as 'significance' or 'diversity' but their attempts to place these within their response often betrayed a lack of understanding and came across as muddled or contrived.

Exemplar 1

1	b	
		In Interpretation A I would choose to do further research on William who is sent on a twere with a sword in his with a caption saying "The conqueror Conqueror will rise." This will shows us that William was already a great ruler in Normandy but he was meant to do far get greater things than to just rule Normandy. This helps us to understand that that William had secured his rule after over Normandy before coming to England. in

This is an example of a response which neglected the question. In their response, the candidate does not identify something which they would like to investigate. Instead they make inferences from the interpretation about William's power and status. This meant that the response got zero marks. To address the question, it's vital that candidates ask a question, or identify something that they would like to find out more about.

Advice to centres

This question does not require candidates to answer their question and it is not asking what candidates already know. Furthermore, although it is expected that candidates should be familiar with the concept of historical enquiry, there is no requirement that they use particular words or phrases and sometimes it is counter-productive to instruct them to do so. Candidates should also make sure that they consider the second part of the question, i.e. pick a question that will help further understanding of X.

Question 2

2 Interpretations B and C both focus on Hereward the Wake and resistance against the Norman Conquest.

How far do they differ and what might explain any differences? [12]

(✎) Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology [5]

This question offers candidates the opportunity to show that they can identify the different ways that historical events, periods or figures are presented and explain why they may differ.

The interpretations in this question, about Hereward the Wake and the resistance to the Norman Conquest, were accessible to most candidates. Most were able to at least pick out individual points to show how they were similar or different. Most frequently, this was pointing out that the interpretations both agreed that Hereward led resistance against the Normans but that while B claimed he was English, C discussed his Danish ancestry. Many candidates were unable progress beyond these details. However, some were able to explain the different overall impressions given about Hereward, or about the resistance more generally. Most typically, this involved the comparison of B's admiration of Hereward, describing him as 'important', a 'national hero' and a 'symbol' of English resistance, with how his role was somewhat downplayed by C e.g. placing his role alongside the involvement of the Danish royal family. Where candidates were able to move towards impression/ message, some were then able to explain why B and C had portrayed Hereward in these different lights. Successful responses usually explained the differences in terms of either the local audience of B, pride in a significant individual originating from the area, or the purpose of C, emphasising the different/new angle to promote a new book. However, most candidates tended to fall back on undeveloped comments about provenance, such as that the Wake Hereward Society was 'biased'.

A minority of candidates' responses stayed in Level 1 because they either dealt with the interpretations separately, with no valid comparison, or else on compared the provenance of the interpretations rather than their content. It was positive that only a very few candidates misunderstood the question and attempted to evaluate the interpretations by explaining how reliable they were given what they had learned.

Exemplar 2

2	<p>Interpretations B and C differ in their conclusions of Mereward the Wake's background. In interpretation B Mereward is portrayed as a true Englishman - 'an English patriot'. In contrast, interpretation C presents Mereward's origins as 'not really English at all'. Interpretation C says he was actually Danish. Another way in which the interpretations differ is their use of language to show how heroic Mereward the Wake was. Interpretation B shows him to be a 'national hero'. He uses words such as 'symbolises', 'standing up' and 'leader' shows him to be a positive English symbol of the resistance against the 'oppressive' rule of the Normans. Interpretation C however is very different. Interpretation C shows Mereward the Wake as less heroic. Interpretation C mentions he was helped by the Danish - 'a small army to help him'. This makes it sound as though he was struggling with his rebellion and needed assistance in it. This makes him seem less heroic.</p>
	<p>One reason for the interpretations difference is their purpose. Interpretation B is from a member of the Wake Mereward society. This shows the person is trying to raise awareness of Mereward and show him to be a national hero that should</p>

		<p>not be forgotten. Whereas in interpretation C, the extract is from a newspaper article this could suggest that the purpose is to shed a more accurate interpretation of what happened. The newspaper is there to educate on what really happened, the interview is to try to preserve Hereward's legacy as a heroic Englishman. Another reason for these differences is the audience. Interpretation B is for people of the local area - likely Ely. The audience want a hero to have been from their area and see him as a hero. Interpretation C is for a wider audience of the UK. They are less interested in Hereward and want a true history of his origins.</p>
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Exemplar 2 does a good job of taking a step back and thinking about how the authors of each interpretation wanted us to see Hereward. The candidate also considered these interpretations specifically, as opposed to generically, in their explanation of why they differed.

The response starts off by comparing individual points of difference, i.e. B says Hereward was an 'Englishman' whereas C says he 'wasn't really English at all' but was actually Danish (Level 2). The response then begins to compare the overall impression that each interpretation gives of Hereward, i.e. B leaves us thinking he was a hero, a positive symbol of English resistance, whereas C gives him less of a starring role, mentioning how he needed help from the Danes (Level 3). The response moves into Level 4 towards the end, where the candidate offers a developed explanation of why B is so positive about Hereward, i.e. the interpretation is aimed at a local audience, likely Ely, who will be happy see someone from their area as a national hero.

Advice to centres

Candidates should take a moment before beginning their response to consider, 'What impression does the author (or artist) want to give me about X?' They should then select details from the extract (or image) to support their response. They should also be encouraged to consider specific reasons that a particular organisation or individual might want to give us that impression. As these will be interpretation-specific, it is important that candidates are given numerous opportunities to 'bump into' historical interpretations to practise this kind of thing routinely. Generic or pre-learned responses will rarely make it to the higher levels.

Question 3

- 3*** In his 2010 pamphlet 'Anglo-Saxon Democracy', writer Tony Dyer argued that late Anglo-Saxon society was 'fair, creative and prosperous'.

How far do you agree with this view of late Anglo-Saxon England?

[20]

() Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology

[5]

Candidates had clearly studied Anglo-Saxon England and knew what the question was asking. This was the most popular choice of the two questions. Candidates that chose this question tended to perform better than those that selected Question 4.

The quality of the responses varied enormously but the depth and range of knowledge of many candidates on this topic was particularly striking. Most often, the points raised by candidates to support the interpretation were: the position of women in Anglo-Saxon society e.g. the legal right to own land or property and the ability to divorce an adulterous husband, supporting the idea that society was 'fair'; the 'creativity' of Anglo-Saxon art and culture, demonstrated, for instance, by literature such as Beowulf or finely crafted silverwork like the Fuller Brooch; and the efficiency of Anglo-Saxon coinage, taxation and trade making the country 'prosperous'. To challenge the interpretation, candidates argued that the hierarchical nature of society, particularly the existence of thralls and the Wergild system, meant that it was not entirely 'fair'; that women's rights in practice rarely matched the theoretical sexual equality or 'fairness'; that the corruption and simony/pluralism of figures like Stigand meant the Anglo-Saxon church was not 'fair'; and that Anglo-Saxon architecture was generally limited rather than 'creative', with rare exceptions such as Westminster Abbey.

However, in a number of cases, candidates were unable to direct their knowledge at the specific question being asked about fairness, prosperity or creativity. Instead, they fell back on generalised responses about 'good things' and 'bad things' about Anglo-Saxon England or instead used their knowledge to address whether or not there was an Anglo-Saxon 'Golden Age'. This analysis, although of course related, is not what the question was asking. Some candidates used their knowledge in an invalid way, for example by using the existence of Stigand's corruption to argue that England was not 'prosperous'. Knowledge and understanding can only be credited at Level 2 and above where it is being used to address the question set.

Weaker responses tended to list facts they knew rather than make a wider point and then use specific evidence to support it, or else made accurate but vague assertions which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. These responses were generally placed in Level 1. A small minority of candidates misunderstood the term 'late Anglo-Saxon England' and did not address the question at all because they discussed the impact of the Norman Conquest.

Exemplar 3

		Anglo-Saxon England did come with its downsides, however. Nearly ten percent of the population were thralls, who were property of their masters and forced to do tiring work all day. They were often castrated by their owners, just like animals, and anyone born to a thrall remained one. Even the ceorls, the majority of the population, did not live comfortably and were deprived of land and money by their superiors, the thegns. Most, especially in the West, were forced to rent out houses for extremely high prices.
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This is an example of a paragraph from a Question 3 response where the candidate clearly has some specific knowledge about slavery and hierarchy within Anglo-Saxon society. However, the knowledge is not used to address the question asked; there is just a generalised comment at the beginning that Anglo-Saxon England had its 'downsides'. This means that this particular paragraph cannot be credited as an explained point because the knowledge contained within it has not been directed at the question.

Question 4

4* The website 'gethistory.co.uk' argues that 'the most important impact of the Norman Conquest was its effect on Anglo-Saxon earls and thegns'.

How far do you agree with this view of the impact of the Norman Conquest, 1066–1087? [20]

(✎) Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology [5]

Most candidates seemed to understand what the question was asking and some were again able to offer a range of points. To support the interpretation, evidence from the Domesday Book about changes in land ownership was most often cited, alongside knowledge about the migration of English elites and individuals such as Edwin and Morcar. To challenge the interpretation, candidates argued that the effects of the Conquest weighed more heavily on ordinary Anglo-Saxons e.g. Murdrum Fine, Forest Law, Harrying of the North, Norman Lords ruling their lands harshly; that it was the impact on the thralls which was most important because the Normans began to get rid of slavery; or that it was the long-term cultural impacts of the Conquest which were most important e.g. changes to architecture, language and the Church.

Knowledge of how the Conquest affected ordinary people tended to be better, with many candidates unable to progress their points about the earls and thegns beyond the simple statement of fact that they were replaced with Normans. Again, as with Question 3, candidates who had specific evidence at their fingertips were more successful at reaching the higher levels.

Advice to centres

Candidates who have revised thoroughly and have a wide range of precise evidence at their fingertips to support their points will do best on these questions. It is also very important that candidates are familiar with the terms laid out by the specification, and that they are explicit in their responses about how the evidence they have presented supports or challenges the interpretations.

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