

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y101/01 Summer 2024 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

Y101 is one of thirteen units in Paper 1 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about fifty years through an Enquiries or source-based question and a traditional essay question. The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A, candidates have to answer a compulsory source question based on four written primary sources. The question requires them to use all four sources to assess the validity of a view. In Section B, candidates are required to answer one essay 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. The judgement should be based on an evaluation of the reliability of the evidence given, not on the topic or contextual knowledge. To reach Level 6, a judgement should be made at the end of the analysis of each source, with an overall judgement in the conclusion.

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. To reach Level 6 candidates should also make an overall judgement as well as interim judgements when assessing each factor.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> considered the provenance of the source(s) and used relevant contextual knowledge clearly linked the contextual knowledge 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 discussed at least two issues in depth in answering the essay question 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 use contextual knowledge to evaluate the sources wrote an unbalanced response 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 response with relevant material did not focus on the precise wording of the question made unsupported comments about issues which were assertions.

Section A overview

There is one compulsory question in this section. This question requires 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.

The Enquiry section in Paper Y101 is focused on the seriousness of the threat posed to Alfred's power by the Vikings.

Question 1

Alfred the Great

- 1 'The Vikings were a serious threat to Alfred's power.'

Use the **four** sources in their historical context to assess how far they support this view. [30]

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the events described in the sources, particularly those in Source A which led to Alfred seeking refuge in the marshlands at Athelney.

Candidates were able to draw on a range of contextual knowledge to support their analysis of the sources, including: the battle at Chippenham in 878 from where Alfred was forced to flee; the links between the Viking bands in England and those operating in France on the Loire and the Seine; Alfred's military reforms, particularly his development of the navy; and his treaties with Guthrum.

In some responses, such as in Exemplar 1, the level of contextual knowledge used was high, which helped to demonstrate sound understanding of the issue in the question. The handling of provenance was not as effective. Asser, in A, was generally well known. His close links to Alfred were often cited, as well as his consecration as bishop of Sherborne in the 890s. In some responses, Asser's life of Alfred was described as 'propaganda' intended to persuade a Welsh audience of the king's suitability as a ruler. Judgements on the source therefore varied, with some candidates suggesting that its record of Alfred's flight recommended its reliability, while others suggested that this low point was included deliberately to accentuate Alfred's subsequent military successes.

By comparison, the provenance of B and C was explored less effectively. Some simply commented on the date attached to each source, concluding that since they were written long after the events, they were unreliable. Others noted that both authors were monks and so their accounts could only be truthful and unbiased. In some responses, candidates noted that Florence, in B, might have written nostalgically about Alfred's reign if he had Anglo-Saxon heritage. The same, however, could not be said about William of Malmesbury, in C, since by his own admission (not in the source), he came from mixed (Norman and Anglo-Saxon) heritage. Knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's provenance and its likely ties to Alfred's court were often commented on. It, too, like A, was generally seen as being written in favour of the king.

Reasonable evaluation of the sources can be seen in Exemplar 1. Its mark in Level 5 reflects the high level of knowledge noted above, as well as the attempts at evaluating the provenance of the sources. It is also reflective of the judgement in the final paragraph which is based on the provenance of the sources. For a higher mark in Level 5, or a mark in Level 6, more judgement is needed throughout the response.

Exemplar 1

A	1	<p>Source A ^{indicates} argues that the Vikings were a serious threat to Alfred's power: "they forced many men to sail overseas, both through poverty and fear" by 878. This is plausible: the Great Army, led by Ivarr the Boneless, had arrived in East Anglia in 865 and had swiftly subjugated Northumbria (867), East Anglia (870) and Mercia (874). Such a critical threat would certainly have prompted many to flee. For instance, in 874 King Burgred fled to Rome. The Vikings' military prowess is ^{had} been evident from their successes in Wessex in 871: they defeated Alfred and Athelstan ^{at} Reading, Basing, Meretun and Wilton - the legacy of fear which had been fostered by these defeats would have reawakened with their et return in 878. Asser claims that "very nearly all the inhabitants ... submitted" ! This is true: Guthrum's Summer Army had sufficient manpower to occupy Chippenham and its immediate environs, compelling Alfred to take refuge on Athelney in March 878 with his guerilla band. The lack of support from the shires of eastern</p>
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Wessex before Alfred's levy at Eglbert's stone in May 878 reinforces the idea of despair.

However, Asser may have exaggerated the Viking threat to glorify Alfred's counter-attack. He knew Alfred intimately, personally instructing him from 887-893; Alfred even rewarded him with jurisdiction over the monasteries at Bangor and Congresbury and in 893 with the bishopric of Sherborne. Asser was likely writing to acquaint his Welsh audience with Alfred's personal valour, wisdom and judiciousness - for example, he emphasises his role at the Battle of Ashdown - so this source is ~~slightly~~ not entirely useful in providing a reliable picture of the scale of the Viking threat.

Source B suggests the Vikings were not so formidable a threat. For example, on Alfred's arrival, they "abandoned their fort" and "fled to their ships." This provides a representative description of the warfare after Alfred's construction of the burghal system. Burhs were constructed such that none was more than 32km from its nearest burh, and protected the shires from Viking seizure. The "strong fort" which protected the Rochester was a burh, so this account is most likely an accurate depiction of the ~~reduced~~ reduced Viking threat after Alfred's burghal reforms. Similarly, Alfred transformed the fyrd from a sporadic levy of thegn and

their retainers into a standing army, explaining the "powerful force." Further, the naval victory in the mouth of the Stour in 885 described by this source is accurate and not an anomaly: Alfred defeated four crews in 882 with his navy and, in 896, commissioned the construction of longships which he designed. In 896, there was a successful naval engagement along the Devon coast. Therefore, Florence of Worcester is providing an accurate portrayal of the nature of warfare in the 880s after Alfred's reform of the fyrd and building of burhs like Winchester, Worcester and Wareham, and Alfred's successful employment of the navy. Although Florence of Worcester was a monk, so particularly incensed by piracy among the Danes (e.g. in 793, they burned down Lindisfarne monastery), his neutral tone increases the reliability of his account: he reports both victories and defeats ("the Vikings... gained the victory.")

William of Malmesbury describes the nature of warfare from the return of the Vikings in the 890s, when 250 ships landed at Kent and formed a host of c. 3500. Source C claims that ~~fight~~ the threat posed by the Vikings was less intense because "the defenders... more ready to resist, but also to attack." This is certainly true: Alfred's improved success is evidenced by the destruction of

Question Part

		<p>Viking ships at Benfleet in 893, ^{and by the River Lea in 895} the collaboration of Wales, Mercia and Wessex against the Vikings at Buttingdon, and Alfred's trapping of the Danes near Hertford in 895. Also Further, according to Abels, "The horsing of the fyrd emulated the Danes. As a result, Alfred's army was as mobile as the enemy they pursued." The mobility and readiness to attack of Alfred's army is accurately captured by Source C in its claim that Alfred's army was "more ready... to attack."</p> <p>Although William of Malmesbury's loyalties are clear from his description of the Danes as "the northern pest of barbarians" and although he was indebted to Alfred given the educational and religious revival he inspired from the early 880s with his recruitment of Werferth, Plegmund, Athelstan and Werwulf, his account tallies with the realities of the conflict: Alfred's newly-horsed standing force and the burh system (manned by c.27,071 men - an extraordinary war effort) successfully neutralised the Viking threat by 896.</p> <p>Source D corroborates Source C in that it displays Alfred at the height of his military power in the 890s. However, it is important to note that the ASC was probably a product of the court circle, given Asser managed to obtain a copy immediately after its publication and given the depth of intellectual research on royal genealogy. Further, its publication in</p>
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893 was occasioned by the renewed Viking threat with the aim of strengthening the resolve of the English to unite under Alfred. Therefore, Source D's description of the siege with the Vikings devouring "the greater part of their horses" is unreliable, and likely designed to paint Alfred as ^{an}intimidating and powerful ruler. ~~These source's unreliability~~
 The view of Source D as unreliable is reinforced by its ~~tone~~ hyperbolic tone, claiming, "the enemy were weighed down with famine." Nevertheless, Source D - though not very useful on its own given the author's intentions - does corroborate William of Malmesbury. However, it is important to note that ~~Source C~~ ^{Source C} might be stained with the same ~~agenda~~ ^{agenda} as Source D given William of Malmesbury used the ASC as a source - he was not contemporary.

All these sources are pro-Alfred. Source A suggests that the Vikings were a formidable threat in 878, a plausible suggestion given the incessant Viking raids of the 870s, but one which might be exaggerated due to Asser's inclination to portray Alfred as a Christ-like figure: by exaggerating the Alfred's defeat, he could frame the Battle of Edington in May 878 as a quasi-resurrection. Source B suggests that

the Vikings were successfully resisted in the mid-880s, a notion that tallies with Alfred's focus on the recruitment of scholars such as Grimbold, a monk at St Bertin's ⁱⁿ c.886, and John the Old Saxon: the Vikings cannot have been such a ~~forbidable~~ critical threat or else his attention would have been diverted from the recruitment of scholars. Sources C and D ~~both~~ agree that, in the 890s, the Vikings were not a serious threat. Despite Source D's agenda (to ~~e~~ portray Alfred's positive qualities) and its potential influence on William of Malmesbury, who used the ASC, the events described in the two sources are plausible, given Alfred's reforms of the army, navy and establishment of a system of 81 burhs so he was "more ready to resist" and "to attack". Alfred's improved track record against the Danes in the 890s further reinforces these accounts. Therefore, the sources - as a group - contradict the view that the Vikings were a serious threat in the 880s and 890s, yet Asser's suggestion that they were a serious threat in the 870s is certainly valid: the reason they were not a critical threat from c.885-896 is because they were such a grave threat in the 870s that they counteracted radical defensive measures which subsequently came to fruition.

Exemplar 1 is an example of a Level 5 response to this question. It includes some source evaluation, using provenance and relevant knowledge of the historical context relating to each one, although comments might be more developed. There is a judgement – albeit a less developed one – which refers to the provenance of A (Asser).

Assessment for learning

Candidates should focus on how far the sources support the view in the question rather than simply explaining each source in light of the issue.

Assessment for learning

Judgements need to reference the provenance of each source if they are to be developed fully, rather than simply noting whether each source supports the view or not.

Section B overview

Candidates are required to answer one essay from a choice of two. Each question is taken from a different Key Topic and requires candidates to weigh up the importance of a range of factors or issues.

Question 2*

The Making of England 899–1016

2* How extensive was Edward the Elder's power by 924?

[20]

The question allowed for what often proved to be detailed discussion of several key aspects of Edward's reign, including the revolt of Æthelwold, his relationship with Æthelflæd and Mercia, and his extension of the network of burhs.

All three factors were often used as evidence for the extensiveness of Edward's power by 924. The revolt of Æthelwold, for example, was discussed as the first obstacle overcome by Edward as he sought to consolidate his power in the early part of his reign. More was said about Mercia, with many candidates referring to how Edward was able to extend his power over the region, although some cited contested evidence concerning the rule of Æthelflæd and her husband Æthelred which countered this view. Edward's extension of the network of burhs, particularly in northern England, was usually seen as a manifestation of his power. Edward's success in asserting his power over the Vikings in both the north and the south of the kingdom was also noted in some responses, as was the submission of the Welsh kings.

Candidates needed to discuss several factors, using detailed knowledge, in order to reach a substantiated judgement. This can be seen in Exemplar 2, where the response culminates in an effective judgement linked to the question. There is also judgement elsewhere in this response, such as at the end of the penultimate paragraph, which pushed the mark into Level 6.

Exemplar 2

2	2	<p>In judging the extent of Edward the Elder's power in 924, it is important to consider the threats he had faced during his reign, and how well he had been able to deal with them by 924. This would include the relationship with Mercia and Aethelflaed, as well as the threat posed by the Danes and the Vikings. Moreover, it is important to consider how far his influence stretched, and whether the meeting at Eborac was truly conclusive in terms of his relations with the Scots and Strathclyde.</p> <p>On the one hand, it could be argued that Edward's power was indeed extensive by 924, as he had successfully conquered the S berangs and secured the allegiance of the Scots at Northumbria following the Eborac.</p>
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summit in 920. Through his construction of Burhs, such as ~~the~~ ~~Burh~~ 2 Burhs at Hertford built in ~~911~~ 911 or the one at Bakewell in 920, he had ~~the~~ secured submission of much of England. Combined with his use of force, such as in 917, when he took Tamworth and Colechester, forcing the submission of much of East Angles, and his later campaigns against the S. boroughs along with Athelstan, he was able to largely deal with the Danes. However, his control over the Northumbrian Vikings remained uneasy, with Ragnar being part of the meeting at Bakewell in 920, but it being uncertain whether this represented merely a peace treaty ~~or~~ or full submission. The resurgence of the threat of the Vikings from Northumbria during Athelstan would point to ~~the~~ ~~loss~~ ~~of~~ ~~submission~~ control over Northumbria still being tenuous. As such, by 924, while on the one hand his network of Burhs and selective use of force had secured the submission of the Danes, the extent of his power is limited by the fact that his control over

Northumbria was still undivided.

Where perhaps the extent of Edward the Elder's power is clearer is with regards to Mercia. ~~that Edward~~ Not only was Edward able to secure the submission of Mercia following the death of Aethelflred in 918, but by sending his son Aethelstan to be fostered by Aethelred and Aethelflred in Mercia, he secured control of Mercia for his future generations.

The ASC chronicle mentions Edward gaining the submission of Mercia in 918, thus being despite Aethelflred having on her. The fact that Edward was nonetheless able to secure its submission not only points to his influence, but also suggests that, as much as Aethelred and later Aethelflred ruling independently, Edward had always been the senior partner in the relationship. This is further strengthened by Edward being the commander of a joint Wessex and Mercian force in 910 at the battle of Tettenhall. Therefore, in terms of securing the submission of Mercia, it is clear that Edward was indeed in a powerful position in 921, so much so that

Aethelstan became King of ~~England~~ Mercia before he became king of Wessex

The final facet of Edward the Elder's power in 924 is the influence over states such as Scotland, the ~~Strathclyde~~ Welsh as well as Kent. Through his marriage to Eadgifu of Kent in 918, he had successfully obtained the use of Kentish troops and helped to further centralise control. With regards to the conquest of the Scots and the Welsh, the Welsh had submitted to his control in 918, according to the ASC. However, the high likelihood that this was merely just a truce, reinforced by the fact that the Welsh had had conflicts with Mercia previously, as such Edward would have been seeking peace, implies that the agreement in 918 did not represent a formal submission.

~~Similarly for the Scottish who supposedly submitted to him in 920 this agreement at Bakewell was~~ In the Scottish submission at Bakewell in 920, the ASC entry states that they "chose" Edward as their father in law. Chose, implies free will, suggesting that this treaty was more like an

2		alliance than it was forced submission.
Continued		As such, it is clear that Edward's control over the Welsh and Scottish was indirect at best and nonexistent at worst, and therefore the extent of his power in 924 is perhaps not as great as the ASC indicates it to be.
		In conclusion, while by 924, Edward had successfully secured the submission of Mercia as well as that of the 50 boroughs, his lack of effective control over Ragnar of Northumbria as well as the Scots and the Welsh limits the extent of his power. The treaty of 918 with the Welsh and meeting at Eborac 920 do not provide sufficient evidence to suggest that Edward had secured control of the states bordering Wessex. Moreover, the fact that Aethelstan would have to renew these these these reform these submissions during his own reign suggest they were little more than peace treaties, limiting extent of Edward's power.

Exemplar 2 is an example of a Level 6 response. It provides a discussion of several key factors with largely detailed knowledge throughout. It reaches a substantiated judgement and includes some interim judgement, all of which pushed the response into Level 6.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should provide a judgement in response to the question which is focused on the key issue and substantiated with a convincing explanation.

Question 3*

3* Assess the reasons why Athelstan developed England's relations with the continent.

[20]

This question was not as popular as Question 2. Some candidates who answered it referred to several reasons for Athelstan's development of relations with the continent, notably his desire to build up alliances to resist the Vikings. This was achieved chiefly through the marriages of his half-sisters to – among others – the kings of the West and East Franks, as well as Hugh the Great.

Other factors included: spiritual reasons, such as the development of monasticism, which were usually attributed to the need to gain God's favour in the struggle against the Vikings; education, by attracting scholars to the court; and the need to boost his reputation so that he might be compared favourably to such kings as Offa.

In some responses, such as in Exemplar 3, knowledge was less developed and even confused in parts. This led to responses with only a partial focus on the question.

Exemplar 3

3		Athelstan developed a variety of links with the Continent particularly with Eng Germany, France and Norway. However the reasons for these relations variety such as military reasons, religious reasons as well as personal reasons.
		In terms of military, Athelstan

developed closer links with the Continent to provide more security to his kingdom. ~~He~~ Most significantly he developed a close relationship with Fairhair who was the ruler of Norway and the Norwegian Vikings. He did this through gift giving such as gifting him a sword, or fostering as he fostered his child. This close alliance prevented Vikings attacks from Norway which proved to be successful as Athelstan's reign remained or largely peaceful from external attacks. Furthermore the relations allowed him to share ~~successes~~ efficient tactics with each other such as on the creation of burhs adding more security to his kingdom. The relations additionally prevented other nations such as Germany from ~~gtr~~ forming alliances with the Vikings, adding further militant protection to his kingdom.

Another reason for developing links with the continent was religion. Using the relations he developed

Aethelstan was able to import monks and religious figures into his kingdom which what he believed added a layer of God's protection to his land. He made many of these monks into secular leaders such as in charge of monasteries to further improve monasticism in England.

Lastly, Aethelstan had a variety of personal reasons for forming links with the continent such as knowledge. He imported many scholars - international scholars into his kingdom to obtain more knowledge. He ~~used~~ utilised these scholars to improve education in his kingdom which proved to be largely successful as literacy rates greatly improved across the kingdom. Furthermore, Aethelstan liked to have young men in his court which led him to import many from overseas suggesting personal reasons such as pleasure to be a key factor in forming links

		With the Continent.
		To conclude, Aethelstan's main reasons for developing links with the Continent was military, religious and personal. Military included forming alliances to prevent external Viking attacks while religious reasons included improving monasticism by importing skilled monks and lastly, personal reasons include which involved the went to improve education and literacy rates across the throughout the kingdom.

Exemplar 3 is a Level 3 response which only partially addresses the question. It has only some relevant knowledge, which is less detailed (seen clearly when compared to Exemplar 2). There is little judgement; only a basic view is provided in the final paragraph.

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