

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411

For first teaching in 2016

J411/11 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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 11 series overview

This paper incorporates the Thematic Study and the British Depth Study, each accounting for half the marks of this paper. To do well on the Thematic Study, candidates need to be able to present a historical summary of an area of content they have learned (Question 2), offer an explanation in response to a historical question (e.g. explaining the causes or consequences of something) in Question 3 and recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a statement in an essay style question from either Question 4 or Question 5.

To do well in the British Depth Study, candidates need to be able to identify and explain how producers of interpretations portray historical events, utilise second order concepts to develop an enquiry (Question 6a and 6b), analyse and compare historical interpretations (Question 7) whilst recalling and applying their knowledge in a further essay-style question from either Question 8 or Question 9.

The ability of candidates to use different techniques, from employing second order historical concepts to organise their responses around, to comparing historical interpretations, was impressive across the range of questions. Areas which continue to require further preparation are being analytical in Question 2 and selecting valid historical investigations in Question 6(b).

OCR support



Please note the date of the upcoming Exam Review session which is 15 October 4-6pm. Booking link is [here](#).

Section A: The People's Health, c.1250 to present overview

The thematic study requires candidates to understand change and continuity from c.1250 to the present. The study requires them to consider historical development over a long period and to identify and explain why certain developments occurred. The questions test various historical skills from the ability to deploy second order concepts in their answers to writing explained arguments for or against certain views.

It was clear from the majority of answers that most candidates had been well-prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately, particularly on Questions 3 and Question 5.

However, on Question 2, while it was clear that many candidates had considered how to analyse air quality since 1900, for example by examining the causes of poor air quality, fewer were able to support their responses with specific examples, falling back on generic statements. Similarly, candidates opting to answer Question 4 tended to offer only very general descriptions of living conditions which lacked precision.

Candidates who did well on this section generally:	Candidates who did less well on this section generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recalled at least two valid answers (Question 1) analysed air quality since 1900 by organising their response around a historical concept (most frequently: changing quality over time; reasons why air quality has been poor or why it has improved; or impact of air quality on health) - supporting their response by referencing precise examples which showed they had studied this topic well (Question 2) fully explained at least one reason why public health improved in the second half of the 1800s (Question 3) effectively deployed a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise, period-specific evidence to support their answers (Questions 4 and 5) offered specific actions taken by one or more town authorities as evidence of 'care' about public health (Question 4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not produce a valid answer to any part of Question 1 correctly identified causes or consequences of poor air quality, or identified a pattern of improvement/deterioration in air quality but offered very general or simplistic examples which were not rooted in developed historical understanding (e.g. 'cars', 'factories', etc.) (Question 2) identified valid reason(s) in Question 3, but were unable to develop their response with precise evidence and/or link their cause to a specific public health improvement made accurate but generalised points which they were unable to support with specific evidence in the essay question; or else gave precise evidence but did not explain how it helped to address the question being asked (Questions 4 and 5) made overly-generalised comments (e.g. waste being 'thrown out of windows', etc.) describing living conditions (Question 4).

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Give **one** example of how people responded to outbreaks of plague in the 1600s.

[1]

This question was not problematic for the vast majority of candidates. There was a very wide range of creditable answers. Most frequently rewarded were isolation, burning barrels of tar, sniffing flowers/herbs and clearing the streets of cats/dogs. Answers which were clearly identifiable as medieval (e.g. 'flagellation') were not credited.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Give **one** reason why food in towns was of such low quality in the early 1800s.

[1]

Although, again, most candidates were able to provide a correct answer, this question was less successfully answered than 1a. The most frequently credited answer was food adulteration. Other valid popular answers included lack of refrigeration and lack of regulation surrounding the sale of food.

There were numerous answers which referred to poverty or lack of food, but as the question asked about food **quality**, these did not receive any credit. There were also some invalid answers which were clearly outside of the time period given, e.g. answers relating to medieval markets.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Give **one** way that technology has made lifestyles less healthy since 1900.

[1]

This question was answered correctly by most candidates. The most frequently credited responses were: the development of cars leading to people walking less; technology in the home or workplace meaning work or housework is less physical; TVs, phones, consoles or tablets creating more sedentary forms of entertainment; and microwaves encouraging people to eat less healthily.

Quite often, where candidates missed out on a mark, it was because they hadn't fully engaged with one part of the question. For instance, answers which simply identified a technology (e.g. 'cars'), without saying how it had made lifestyles less healthy, did not receive any credit.

Question 2

2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses air quality since 1900.

Support your summary with examples.

[9]

Most candidates were able to include some relevant knowledge about air quality since 1900 in their responses. While there were some responses which contained unorganised descriptions, most also did approach their summary in an analytical way. Most frequently, candidates considered change over time (improvements and/or deterioration in quality of air since 1900); causation (reasons why quality of air was poor, or reasons why it improved); and consequence (the impact of air quality on health).

However, there were still many responses which did not move past Level 1, or were marked at the bottom of Level 2. The main reason for this was a lack of precise examples. For instance, many responses correctly identified that poor air quality was caused by factories or by cars, or that it resulted in smog, but did not develop their responses beyond these basic points. There were also many candidates who incorrectly assumed that widespread car ownership was the cause of poor air quality right from 1900. Similarly, many candidates knew the name of the Clean Air Act but were not able to identify accurately its terms or its effects. Some thought that it was brought in in order to combat pollution from cars.

To move into Levels 2 and 3, responses needed to contain precise examples relating to quality of air. Better responses were able reference things such as:

- the increase in the use of coal in homes and factories in the first half of the twentieth century
- the 'Great Smog' of 1952 and its impact
- the subsequent Clean Air Act of 1956, and its provisions or impact
- the rise in car ownership during the 1980s and its impact on air/health
- recent national and local government initiatives to combat the impact of the rise in car ownership
- government action to prevent poor air quality as a result of smoking.

A minority of candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about quality of housing or about health problems which result from smoking more generally (as opposed to passive smoking). These types of responses could not receive any credit.

Advice to centres



Candidates need to be able to include specific historical evidence to support their responses. They need to make sure they don't rely too much on 'general knowledge' to answer these questions as this can often lead to imprecise examples.

Question 3

3 Why did public health improve in the **second half** of the 1800s?

Explain your answer.

[10]

Candidates typically attempted to tackle this question through examining changes or legislation (e.g. the Public Health Acts) and explaining why they improved health; or through examining the root causes of improvements (e.g. the extension of the franchise) and identifying which changes these factors led to.

The overwhelming majority of candidates were able to identify at least one reason why public health improved in the second half of the 1800s. Common valid responses were:

- The 1848 and 1875 Public Health Acts leading to changes such as the establishment of boards of health, authorities taking responsibility for sewers, improvements in provision of clean water and the appointment of medical officers.
- Bazalgette's building of the London sewer system which greatly reduced deaths from Cholera.
- Local initiatives such as those taken by Manchester and Birmingham which resulted in better water supply or healthier housing.
- The 'Great Stink' of 1858 which prompted the commission for Bazalgette's sewers.
- The extension of the franchise in 1867 which led to changes such as the 1875 Public Health Act.
- The abandonment of a *laissez-faire* attitude and an acceptance of an increased role for national government in public health (reflected in both Public Health Acts).
- Chadwick's 1842 report which led to the 1848 Public Health Act.
- Pasteur's Germ Theory which boosted support for government action such as the 1875 Public Health Act.

There was a good number of responses which offered at least one full explanation, supported by precise evidence/examples; these were rewarded at Levels 4 and 5.

However, some candidates were unable to progress beyond Level 2 or Level 3 because they lacked specific detail to support their response and/or were unable to identify the resulting public health improvement. This was often the case with candidates selecting Pasteur's Germ Theory.

There was also a significant number of responses which simply described the work of John Snow, or went on to argue that his investigations into the causes of cholera had an impact on the government's decisions to bring about public health reform. This was not valid and could not be credited above Level 2.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates tended to make accurate but vague assertions about improvements resulting from scientific or technological advancement in this period, which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. These responses were generally placed in Level 1. Some, but not many, responses veered away from the question's focus, instead addressing a different question, for example how effective the changes were, or why there was a lack of action. Some candidates wrote about the wrong time period (usually about housing and the NHS in the 1900s, although a few wrote about the Gin Acts or about actions on plague). These were not credited.

Question 4*

- 4* 'The authorities in towns and monasteries in medieval Britain (1250–1500) cared very little about public health.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

This question was not quite as popular as Question 5 and was generally not as well answered. The question was asking how much the authorities in medieval towns and monasteries 'cared' about public health. The vast majority of candidates had clearly studied the period and were familiar with the terms referred to in the question. Almost all candidates who chose to write something about monasteries knew what a monastery was, which was a noticeable improvement from 2023.

To challenge the statement, the best responses tended to offer detailed knowledge about various local measures taken by town authorities (most frequently in places such as York, London, Bristol, Norwich, Winchester and Shrewsbury, although other areas were successfully cited too). There was also good use made of movements in many towns to restrict the harmful effects of butchers and tanners and move them to the outskirts of towns, and the widespread employment of rakers by 1500. Some were able to use their knowledge about public health provision in monasteries to good effect as well, arguing that 'care' was taken over things such the layout of the monasteries to deal with waste (e.g. latrines over rivers) and the provision of clean water.

Candidates tended to find it more difficult to argue successfully in support of the statement, although there were some good responses about the lack of care relating to the disposal of waste in medieval towns, with candidates citing precise evidence such as gongfermers dumping waste in rivers; unpaved streets; and the pollution caused by butchers or tanners before restrictions were introduced. There was also frequent citing of the limited action taken during the Black Death.

Responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

However, although most candidates were able to identify valid points for Level 2, far fewer were able to reach the higher levels by developing them beyond generic description. This was often the case when candidates came to describing poor living conditions in medieval towns. A large number of responses described medieval towns in the most general of terms, e.g. as places where human waste was constantly being thrown out of windows and onto the streets.

Similarly, there were many responses which veered away from the question about the authorities and whether they cared, and drifted off into descriptions of what people believed caused disease and/or what ordinary people did in response to the Black Death. These were rewarded at Level 1 or Level 2 only.

Exemplar 1

		However on the other to hand towns
		clearly did care for public health
		because of the removal of industries
		that created bad air, (miasma). Towns
		like Exeter expelled industries like Butchers
		and fishmongers to the outskirts. This
		clearly demonstrates that they did care
		about public health as it very clearly
		acknowledges that they saw how unsan-
		itary the waste disposal of these
		companies were. Furthermore in 12329
		in Winchester the guild of butchers
		employed 2 people to check the quality
		of meat. This was important because
		it ensured that much of the meat that
		was consumed was safe for consumption
		and therefore demonstrates that
		towns did take a care for public
		health.

The extract in Exemplar 1 provides a good illustration of section which is definitely rooted in the medieval period in question, provides specific evidence, and directs it at the question of whether authorities 'cared' about public health. The candidate identifies that in many medieval towns and cities, action was taken to expel polluting industries such as butchers and fishmongers to the outskirts, arguing that although done for incorrect reasons, it nevertheless demonstrated care. They go on to offer a further local example of care – Winchester's employment of people to check the quality of meat and why that also showed care. These are precise, period-specific examples which demonstrate the 'care' of town authorities and this section more than meets the criteria for an explained point.

Question 5*

5* 'The gin craze was the most significant public health problem in the early modern period (1500–c.1750).'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

On the whole, candidates scored more highly on this question than on Question 4 and there were some excellent responses.

The vast majority of candidates were familiar with the gin craze and understood what the question was asking. Most wrote about the correct time period. They argued in different ways that various public health problems were (or were not) 'significant', e.g. by showing how dangerous they were for health; by examining how widespread or long-lasting they were; by looking at how much attention they drew from the authorities; and by assessing the ability of the authorities to deal with them. All of these were acceptable approaches.

Therefore, a wide range of points was credited as valid by examiners. Frequently credited points in favour of the statement included:

- The Gin Craze was a significant public health problem given its impact on health, families, and crime.
- The national government clearly saw the Gin Craze as a significant public health problem as they introduced numerous pieces of legislation to attempt to control it.
- The fact that it took a long time and various Gin Acts to control the craze is evidence of how serious a problem it was.

In opposition to the statement, the following points were regularly credited:

- The Gin Craze was not the most significant problem because (compared to other problems) it did not last for very long, and/or government legislation did manage to end it eventually.
- The problem most commonly argued as being a more significant health problem was the plague. Here, candidates made a variety of arguments for its significance, including:
 - National and local authorities legislated to deal with it through isolation, the Plague Acts, etc. This shows they considered it a serious problem.
 - The fact that its causes were unknown meant that attempts to tackle it were not always successful.
 - Plague was a recurring problem throughout the period and there were major outbreaks – on average – every twenty years until 1670. It could wipe out 30% of a community.
- Other problems were less frequently (and on the whole, less successfully) attempted, but included: problems of pollution, clean water and waste management in towns; the ongoing problem of famine, particularly at the beginning of the period; and problems relating to the diet of the richer classes (e.g. an increase in consumption of sugar leading to obesity and rotting teeth).

At Level 3 and above, candidates were credited for demonstrating specific historical evidence to support their points and using this evidence to address the question about significance.

Again, responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

Candidates whose points were awarded at Level 2 usually had a lack of precise detail and/or did not use their knowledge to address the question. Quite often, examiners saw responses which provided lengthy descriptions of people's beliefs about plague which didn't get around to explaining why the disease was a significant problem.

There were a number of responses that mixed up plague (as a recurring feature in this period) with 'the Great Plague' of 1665, or mixed it up with the Black Death. These candidates usually made incorrect assertions that the Great Plague of 1665 killed 30% or even 60% of the British population, or made references to flagellants.

As with Question 4, attempts to argue that living conditions were a significant public health problem were quite often not credited beyond Level 1, as they tended to be overly generalised with references to waste being thrown out of windows, etc. Better arguments credited at Level 2 and above were more period-specific, and made good use of things like cesspits only being emptied every year or two, by carrying barrels of excrement through houses; increased use of coal as its price dropped, leading to respiratory problems; or overhanging 'jetties' in streets.

Advice to centres



Candidates need to be comfortable with the four different time periods on the specification, and be able to differentiate between them. It is also really important that candidates remain focused on answering the precise question in front of them.

Section B: The Norman Conquest, 1065–1087 overview

To do well on the British Depth Study, candidates need to be able to:

- analyse and compare interpretations
- devise historical questions
- 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 for Questions 6 and 7, although many candidates still struggled to think of wider, historical questions or lines of enquiry for Question 6b. Most candidates remain comfortable with the premise of Question 7 and were able either to compare the overall impression given about the Battle of Stamford Bridge, or else compare details between the two interpretations.

In the essay style questions, most candidates opted for Question 9 and were able to deploy accurately their knowledge about the reasons why William transformed England. There were fewer candidates who opted to answer Question 8, and this question tended to be answered less successfully. Generally, candidates focused their responses on the argument and emphasised points of agreement and disagreement. However, some responses lacked the detail necessary to reach the higher levels and were identifying or describing rather than explaining.

Candidates who did well on this section generally:	Candidates who did less well on this section generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified and explained (supported with two points of development) one way the interpretation portrayed Anglo-Saxon culture as spectacular (Question 6(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 Anglo-Saxon culture (Question 6(b)) • compared the overall message about the Battle of Stamford Bridge (or the people involved), and went on to give a reason that they differed (e.g. given the nature and purpose of Interpretation B as a saga) (Question 7) • effectively addressed the seriousness of the threat of Northern resistance in Question 8 or the extent of transformation in the Norman Conquest in Question 9 • effectively deployed a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their answers (Questions 8 and 9). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not explain how Interpretation A portrayed Anglo-Saxon culture as spectacular or identified more than one way the interpretation did this (Question 6(a)) • asked for more details about Interpretation A; or identified elements or objects from it, rather than concentrating upon a second-order concept; or didn't ask a question or tell us something they wanted to find out; or stated what they knew about Anglo-Saxon culture; or tried to contrive the use of particular phrases like 'diversity' or 'causation' (Question 6(b)) • summarised Interpretation B and Interpretation C separately; or only compared their provenances; or wrote about how reliable each interpretation was (Question 7) • did not fully engage with resistance in different parts of the country in Question 8; or made accurate but generalised points but did not provide sufficient supporting evidence in either Question 8 or Question 9; or told a narrative of events in Question 9 including the events of 1066 itself.

Question 6 (a)

6

(a) In **Interpretation A**, the website portrays Anglo-Saxon culture as spectacular.

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, film-makers, 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. 'It says that visitors will 'marvel at the humour and wisdom of the Anglo-Saxons') and then going on to develop their response by explaining how that feature made Anglo-Saxon culture seem spectacular. Where candidates started with a very specific feature such as this, they sometimes struggled to make two points of development about their feature.

The most successful responses were the ones which began with a more general point (e.g. 'The website repeatedly uses positive verbs to describe the actions of visitors at the exhibition'). Then went on to give an example of this (e.g. 'For instance, it says that visitors will 'marvel', 'discover' and 'encounter'). Then said how this made Anglo-Saxon culture seem spectacular (e.g. 'This implies that the visitors will be amazed and stunned at Anglo-Saxon culture').

Responses which picked out several features rather than one feature as the question asked were unable to move past 1 mark.

There was a definite improvement from 2023 in respect of candidates remaining focused on the interpretation itself, and the techniques used by its creators to give a certain impression. Examiners saw fewer responses which ignored the interpretation and drifted off into recounting features of Anglo-Saxon culture from their own knowledge.

Question 6 (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 the culture of late Anglo-Saxon England.

[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 Level 1, these were typically things such as finding out more information about the items in the interpretation, such as how the Anglo-Saxons made objects out of metal, or what the content of the letter was.

Responses rewarded at Level 2, framed a wider historical enquiry around a second-order concept, such as consequence or diversity. These tended to be things such as, 'How important was religion in Anglo-Saxon culture?'; 'How much did the Norman Conquest change Anglo-Saxon culture?'; or 'Did different areas of the country (or different social groups) share a common culture, or were there differences between them?'

A few candidates were able to go on to explain how this might help us to analyse and understand the culture of late Anglo-Saxon England (Level 3).

However, many candidates did not achieve any marks because they didn't ask a question or identify something they would like to know, or find out about. These responses tended simply to identify objects named in the text (e.g. 'I would investigate the Codex Amiatinus') and sometimes go on to recite information they already knew about Anglo-Saxon culture, which was not rewardable in the mark scheme as this is not what the question was asking them to do.

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. Similarly, some candidates came prepared with an enquiry question which didn't bear any relation to Anglo-Saxon culture or to Interpretation A (such as 'How different were the lives of different kind of people?') and were again not creditable.

Exemplar 2

6	6	Give Interpretation A states that there were "stunning discoveries unearthed in Suffolk and Staffordshire" which are "finely crafted metalwork and sculpture". I would like to investigate how widespread the
		metalwork and sculpture are throughout the country, and the diversity of different pieces found in different places. This can help us understand the richness of the culture of late Anglo-Saxon England, and how it differed between different groups of people. This would help us analyse the culture of these people

Exemplar 2 is a good example of a wider, historical question about Anglo-Saxon culture based on this interpretation. The candidate has identified a valid line of enquiry based on geographical diversity. This response was placed in Level 2 and received 4 marks. For Level 3, instead of just repeating their investigation at the end, they need to offer a clearer explanation of how this would help us to analyse and understand the culture of late Anglo-Saxon England.

Misconception



This question does not require candidates to answer their question and it is not asking what candidates already know. 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 they consider the second part of the question, and explain how their question will help further understanding of X.

Question 7

7 Interpretations B and C both focus on the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

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

[12]

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 vast majority of candidates were able to pick out individual points from the interpretations to show how they were similar or different and were rewarded at Level 2. Most frequently, this was pointing out that the interpretations both agreed that the Norwegians were caught without their armour. Differences at this level included contrasting the armies' actions or events in the battle (e.g. Interpretation B said the Norwegians 'bravely held back the attack from the English', while Interpretation C said they were 'slaughtered without mercy' or 'frantically tried to escape').

Plenty of candidates were able to explain the different overall impressions given about the battle, the armies, or their leaders. Most typically, this involved comparing Interpretation B's sympathetic portrayal of Harald Hardrada and/or the Norwegians' performance with Interpretations C's more critical one. Another popular approach was to compare how Interpretation B attempted to persuade us that the battle was quite close, whereas Interpretation C made it seem like the Norwegians were just completely destroyed. A few candidates chose to explain how the focus of each interpretation was different, with Interpretation B being much more focused on the bravery of the Norwegians and Harald Hardrada, whereas Interpretation C was telling us more about what a great victory it was for the English. These responses were placed in Level 3 and awarded a higher mark within the level where valid support was given from the interpretations.

A fair number of candidates were then able to explain why Interpretation B painted such a flattering picture of Hardrada or his army, and these responses moved into Level 4. Successful responses went beyond duplicating the lines in the provenance. Responses which simply repeated, for example, that 'Interpretation B was favourable towards the Norwegians because Snorri had links to the Norwegian royal family' did not meet the Level 4 criteria. Better responses explained what Snorri was trying to do as a result of this, e.g. 'Interpretation B focuses on Harald's bravery and the Norwegians' courage because Snorri had links to the Norwegian royal family, so he wants to make the King of Norway seem like a hero'. The very best responses examined the nature of this piece of writing as a saga, and considered what impact this had on how Hardrada is presented, i.e. Snorri was focusing on the personal story and courage of King Harald in order to glorify his achievements and make it seem like he died a hero's death.

A minority of candidates' responses did not proceed beyond Level 1 because they either dealt with the interpretations separately, with no valid comparison, or else compared the provenance of the interpretations rather than their content.

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 (this is not what the question is asking).

Advice to centres



Candidates should take a moment before beginning their response to consider, 'What impression does the author (or artist, etc.) 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. Because 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 8*

8* According to the website 'worldhistory.org', northern resistance was 'the most serious threat to William's rule in England' in the years **1067 to 1071**.

How far do you agree with this view?

Give reasons for your answer.

[20]

This was less popular than Question 9 and not as well answered.

Candidates who chose this question had clearly studied resistance to William's rule in the period identified, and understood what the question was asking. Valid points raised to support the interpretation included:

- The widespread/ recurring nature of the northern resistance, meaning William had to make repeated trips to deal with the threat.
- The fact that Edgar Aetheling and the Danes lent support with 250 ships, increasing the threat.
- The impact of the rebellion on York.
- The difficulty William had in capturing the rebels and dealing with the rebellion.
- The harsh response from William as compared to other rebellions, the Harrying of the North, demonstrates how serious a threat he perceived it to be.
- Some candidates argued the less serious nature of other rebellions, e.g. Exeter, in comparison to northern resistance.

Valid points raised to challenge the statement included:

- By paying off the Danes and carrying out the Harrying of the North, William was able to deal with northern resistance and it therefore did not constitute a 'serious threat' in the end.
- Other rebellions (e.g. Exeter, Ely), or Danish involvement generally, were more serious. Rebels repeatedly gathered under the leadership of Edgar, Edwin & Morcar, Hereward the Wake/ Danes in Ely.

At Level 2 and above, candidates included precise evidence to support their point and, crucially, explained how it addressed the question of why something was a 'serious threat' (or not) to William's rule. Responses that reached Level 5 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

There were many responses, or parts of responses, which demonstrated good knowledge by offering extended narratives (e.g. of events during the Exeter or Ely rebellions) but did not meet the criteria for an explained point because they did not make a case for why these were a 'serious threat' or not. These kinds of responses could not be credited beyond Level 1.

Less successful candidates 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 also generally placed in Level 1.

Exemplar 3

		<p>This is further highlighted when comparing resistance in the north to the rebellion in Exeter. The Exeter rebellion of 1067 was lead by Cythra - Harold Godwinson's mother - and William responded quickly and effectively, the and most notably - with mercy, showing that Northern resistance would have been the most serious threat since the contrast between how he handled the Exeter rebellion and how he handled the Northern rebellions highlights how threatened he must have felt by the North. William initially asked for peace in exchange for him not killing everyone in Exeter, but Cythra initially refused. This lead to William beiging ^{besieging} the city and gazing at the edges of an Anglo-Saxon hostage. Despite his brutality, he once more asked for peace, which Cythra now ^{then} accepted, and he kept his word - not killing anyone. This dramatic difference between the Hanging of the North is further evidence that William felt most threatened by northern resistance, since the peace he showed at Exeter was devoid when responding to northern rebellions.</p>
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Exemplar 3 is an example of a candidate's section on the Exeter rebellion, which, unlike many we saw, did use their knowledge of the rebellion to address the question of 'threat to William's rule'. The candidate sets out their argument at the beginning – that the Exeter rebellion can be used as evidence that the northern resistance was a more serious threat, because William's response at Exeter was more merciful by comparison. They then offer a good description of the rebellion and William's response to it, supporting their point that William's response was more low-key than his response to the northern resistance. Towards the end, they address the question head-on. It was this direction and use of evidence which was absent from many candidates' responses in Question 8.

Question 9*

9* In the 2010 TV documentary 'The Normans', historian Robert Bartlett argued that the Norman Conquest 'transformed England' between **1066 and 1087**.

How far do you agree with this view of the impact of the Norman Conquest?

Give reasons for your answer.

[20]

This was the more popular choice of the two essay-style questions.

On the whole, candidates seemed well-prepared for this question, which asked candidates to consider to what extent England was 'transformed' by the Norman Conquest.

Most candidates opted for a '3-1' approach, making three points in favour of the interpretation. A wide range of valid points was credited to support England's 'transformation' and included:

- Evidence in relation to dispossession/changes in land ownership, with only 5 per cent of English land being in the hands of English landowners by 1086.
- Changes to the social hierarchy, e.g. the introduction of the feudal system, ceorls having less freedom, and the gradual abolition of slavery.
- Changes to language, both written and spoken with Latin becoming the official written language.
- Introduction of new or harsher laws such as the Murdrum Fine or the Forest Law.
- Changes to the Church, e.g. the replacement of the people at the top with Normans like Lanfranc and the eradication of Anglo-Saxon saints. By 1080, only one of the sixteen English bishops remained in office.
- Loss of Anglo Saxon religious traditions/culture, e.g. saints of the Anglo-Saxons disappeared, traditions of stone crosses replaced.
- Changes to architecture, e.g. the introduction of hundreds of motte and bailey castles and the rebuilding/revival of cathedrals and monasteries, e.g. Canterbury, York and Durham – much larger and more beautiful than Saxon buildings.
- Increased taxation.
- The long-term impact of the Harrying of the North.

To challenge the interpretation, candidates were mainly credited for points such as:

- The feudal system was very similar to the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy.
- There was continuity in law enforcement, e.g. trial by combat was very similar to trial by ordeal, which also continued under the Normans.
- For some sections of society, daily life continued as usual: England continued to be a rural society with 90 per cent of the population working in agriculture.
- Spoken language was, for most people, only enriched by the introduction, or blending, of new words; this did not constitute a 'transformation' as the English language survived.
- The Normans retained Anglo-Saxon systems of law, administration and coinage.

As with Question 8, candidates were rewarded at Level 2 and above when they included precise evidence to support their point and explained why this meant England was or was not 'transformed'. Responses which attained Level 5 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

Examiners came across a number of misconceptions in these responses. For example, many candidates incorrectly asserted that William forced everyone to speak French; that he had built hundreds of stone castles by 1087; and that it was William who made the Anglo-Saxons Christian instead of Pagan.

There were several reasons why responses (or parts of responses) were not awarded above Level 1. Firstly, many candidates made valid points but were unable to develop these sufficiently with precise evidence. There were also many responses which did not fully engage with the question of 'transformation'. For example, they gave detail about things such as the Forest Law, but did not say why this was a change or transformation. Some candidates tried to say that the Norman feudal system was a complete change to Saxon traditions because it introduced a hierarchy which was not valid. References to the Domesday Book being a new way of taxing people was also not valid. Finally, we saw some responses which tried to argue that the Conquest 'transformed' England on the basis of very simplistic or incomplete evidence, for example, that lots of people had died in the Battle of Hastings or in rebellions; these responses did not fully get to grips with the long-term impact required for a 'transformation'.

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