

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y203/01 Summer 2025 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper Y203 series overview

Y203 is one of twenty-four units in Paper 2 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about 100 years through a short answer essay question and a traditional essay question. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay. Candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short answer essay question, candidates need to consider the significance or importance of both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

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

This paper is about the Crusades and the Crusader States 1095-1192. There was quite an even split between candidates answering Question 1 and Question 2, with only a slight preference for Question 1.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- supported their answers with good specific knowledge of the events - had a confident grasp of the chronology of events - made clear judgements in relation to the question, including in a well-explained conclusion - compared the relative importance of factors.	- confused key events and individuals - did not focus well on the wording of the questions.

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Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii)

1

(a) Which of the following contributed more to the weakness of the Crusader States in the 12th Century?

(i) The death of Baldwin II

(ii) The events of 1183–1186

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This question was often answered well. Candidates displayed a good knowledge of the events following the death of Baldwin II. They were able to discuss the problems of ruling Queen Melisende experienced because she was a woman. They also discussed the factional problems associated with her marriage to Fulk of Anjou and the issues of her regency for Baldwin III. Responses were sometimes less successful on the events of 1183–86. Those that were successful usually discussed Guy of Lusignan's failure to challenge Saladin effectively, as well as the issues associated with his rule alongside Sybilla.

Less successful answers focused too much on the role of Saladin in 1183–86 and did not link this effectively with the weakness of the Crusader States. Some less successful answers were detailed and accurate but did not reach a judgement about which factor contributed more to the weakness of the Crusader States, therefore limiting the mark they could achieve.

Assessment for learning



To access Levels 5 and 6 in the mark scheme, candidates must be able to make a substantiated judgement in relation to the question. This will often come in the form of a well-explained conclusion, and students are encouraged to practise this before the examinations.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* 'The military tactics of the Crusaders were the most important reason for the success of the First Crusade.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This question was not always answered successfully. While many candidates knew some of the reasons for the success of the First Crusade, knowledge of military tactics themselves was sometimes more limited. More effective responses discussed the use of siege tactics such as towers and engines at Antioch and Jerusalem. Some also included detail of how the Crusaders adapted their European methods of warfare based on the local knowledge they gathered on the Crusade.

Less successful answers focused too heavily on the fact that Crusaders exploited Muslim disunity but did not really explain how they did this. In successful responses, however, candidates used Muslim disunity as a contrasting reason for the success of the First Crusade. Other popular counterpoints included religious zeal, particularly how the discovery of the Holy Lance at Antioch spurred on the Crusaders to continue fighting. Less successful responses spent too long discussing how religious zeal prompted people to go on the Crusade in the first place. This was not the focus for this essay question.

Exemplar 1

		military tactics of the crusaders such as cavalry tactics, siege warfare and psychological warfare were instrumental in bringing about the success of the first crusade. Cavalry warfare was important as the Turks were not able to stop the cavalry charges. For example at Dorylaeum in July 1097, the Turks fled after the rearguard charged and at the Battle of Ascalon in 1099, the cavalry tactics allowed them to decisively defeat the Fatimid relief force. This was significant as it meant the crusaders were victorious in open battle, contributing to their success. Secondly, siege warfare was a strong military tactic, and was used at both Antioch^{in 1086} and Jerusalem in 1099, where Godfrey of Bouillon dismantled and rebuilt siege towers to get them over the walls. This was significant as it allowed the crusaders to capture cities and fortified
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		towns, which was vital for their success
		as it meant they secured their place in
		the Levant and were able to dominate larger
		areas. The most important tactic used by
		the crusaders was psychological warfare,
		notably at Mawat an-Numan where cannibals
		radicalised crusaders. This was significant
		as it spread fear across the Islamic world,
		leading to territories letting them through,
		allowing them to reach Jerusalem only 6
		months later. For example sultan Ibn
		Mungidh provided them with provisions,
		horses and guides. Therefore, the tactics of
		the crusaders were an important reason for
		the success of the First Crusade as it
		meant they were victorious in battle and
		even given support at during their journey.
		However this is not as significant as the
		other reasons, as they lost many horses
		due to drought and heat, showing it was
		not vital, and the support of Alexios Komnenos
		at Nicaea and Antioch contributed more to
		their success than the siege tactics.

In this exemplar, the candidate includes specific examples of how military tactics were used, such as the use of cavalry at Dorylaeum. They then link the use of the tactics with the eventual success in the First Crusade. They include three different examples of the impact of tactics and, each time, they connect them with the question. This is an effective approach.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2

(a) Which of the following was of greater importance in contributing to the outcome of the Third Crusade?

(i) Events at Acre and Jaffa

(ii) Negotiations with Saladin

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Question 2 was slightly less popular than Question 1. For events at Acre and Jaffa candidates discussed the deterioration of Richard I and Phillip II's relationship following the victory at Acre. They linked this with its longer-term impact on the Third Crusade, such as Phillip's alliance with John on his return to Europe. Candidates also talked about the massacre of prisoners of war at Acre and its effect on Saladin's resolve. In less successful responses, candidates had limited knowledge of Acre and Jaffa and did not include any specific detail.

Knowledge of negotiations with Saladin tended to be more detailed. Most candidates discussed the truce over Jerusalem in the Treaty of Jaffa and how it ended the Third Crusade. Higher-scoring responses also discussed other factors such as the poor health of both Richard and Saladin. Many candidates concluded that the events at Acre and Jaffa were more important because they were what convinced both sides to try to negotiate in the first place.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* 'The survival of the Crusader States in the 12th Century was dependent on western aid.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

Successful answers analysed the importance of trade routes to the survival of the Crusader States, particularly those in the Italian peninsula. They also talked about how the West provided manpower, both for the military and settlement. However, overall, knowledge of Western Aid was quite general, which meant that some answers were less focused. Many candidates knew about the importance of Military Orders, some linked this to Western Aid, while others used it as an effective counter-argument, usually by connecting it with the use of castles such as Krak de Chevalier by the Knights Templar. Most responses also discussed Muslim disunity and how effective leaders were able to exploit this to aid the survival of the Crusader States. Less successful answers did list factors but did not link them back to the question or compare their relative importance with each other.

Exemplar 2

		Overall, the Crusader States were not dependent on Western aid due to Muslim weakness. While Western aid was vital in securing borders and mounting attacks, as well as crusader strengths such as the building of castles, these factors
		were facilitated by Muslim weakness. The disunity in the Muslim world allowed the States to develop their strength by further incursions. This also allowed them to be in a position of strength, securing peace treaties. Moreover, the crusaders were not dependent on Western aid, as the nobles that were supplied were often damaging, introducing feudalism, which harmed the peace, such as the power struggle between Falk and Maudslade. Therefore, while Western aid was important in the survival of the crusader States, it was ultimately the presence of Muslim weakness that allowed for the flourishing of the States, diminishing their dependence on Western aid.

In this exemplar, the candidate has made a well-explained judgement. Factors are compared in terms of importance. Connections are made between each factor, before the response reaches a final judgement that Western Aid was not the most important factor. This is an example of an effective conclusion.

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