

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

# HISTORY A

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

**Y302/01 Summer 2025 series**

# Contents

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                  | 3  |
| Paper Y302/01 series overview ..... | 4  |
| Section A overview .....            | 5  |
| Question 1 .....                    | 5  |
| Section B overview .....            | 14 |
| Question 2* .....                   | 14 |
| Question 3* .....                   | 19 |
| Question 4* .....                   | 27 |

## 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 Y302/01 series overview

Y302 is one of twenty one units for Paper 3 of the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of at least one hundred years through an interpretation question on a named in-depth topic and through two essays.

The paper is divided into two sections. In Section A candidates are required to use contextual knowledge to test the views of two historians about one of the three named in-depth topics or an aspect of one. The question does not require them to comment on the style of writing or the provenance of the interpretation.

In Section B candidates are required to answer two essay questions from a choice of three.

| Candidates who did well on this paper generally:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question</li> <li>were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words</li> <li>were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both interpretations using contextual knowledge</li> <li>covered the whole period in a balanced way</li> <li>adopted a thematic approach</li> <li>made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic</li> <li>explained the links and comparisons</li> <li>supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples</li> <li>reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>showed a limited understanding of one or both of the interpretations</li> <li>did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the interpretation</li> <li>did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the interpretation</li> <li>adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach</li> <li>did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph</li> <li>did not cover the whole period</li> <li>did not focus on the precise wording of the question</li> <li>made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.</li> </ul> |

### OCR support



You can find information on exam review webinars and other support events in **Training** on the horizontal menu within AS and A Level History A on [Teach Cambridge](#).



## Section A overview

There is one compulsory question in this section. This question requires candidates to explain the view of each interpretation in relation to the question and then evaluate the interpretation by the application of contextual knowledge. Responses should show an understanding of the wider debate connected to the issue.

Section A in Paper Y302 is focused on the origins and growth of Viking Dublin, with Passage A suggesting that Dublin grew predominantly through trade, and Passage B arguing that Dublin was originally a military settlement.

### Question 1

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages.

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the origins and growth of Viking Dublin. **[30]**

Most candidates were able to identify the main difference between the interpretations, with Passage A arguing that Dublin originated as a trading settlement that grew into a town, and Passage B arguing that Dublin was predominantly a military and raiding base. The major differentiator between the quality of candidates' responses was their ability to provide specific contextual knowledge to evaluate the claims made in the passages.

Stronger responses provided additional examples or evidence to support or challenge the passages. Some candidates were able to use a variety of evidence in order to do this, for example, using knowledge of artefacts relating to trading activity being found in Dublin, or coinage and the establishment of a mint, all of which would support the interpretation of Passage A. Passage B was supported by comparisons to other raiding bases, as well as knowledge of conflict with Irish clans. Although the focus of the answer should remain on Dublin, candidates were able to successfully use examples of similar activity in other towns and settlements in support of their argument, explaining that this is 'typical' activity in settlements geographically similar to Dublin. As long as contextual knowledge was clearly linked to the interpretation and question, it could be credited as valid evaluation.

Many candidates struggled to provide relevant contextual knowledge to support their evaluation, relying heavily on information that was provided by the passages. Many responses simply paraphrased the passages. Weaker responses were sometimes also critical of the passages for their lack of detail, or concluded that one passage was more convincing due to its mention of archaeological evidence. Lack of evidence/examples within the passage itself is not a valid weakness of the passage, as candidates should be using their knowledge to support or challenge the argument presented.

## Exemplar 1

|   |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 |  | <p>Passage A argues that despite the impermanence of leadership in Dublin origin years which may characterise it as unstable, the growth and thus strength of Viking Dublin is evident in the local and international trade, mainly slaves. Passage B on the otherhand undermines Passage A argument of trade as an explanation for origin and growth through focusing on the idea that Dublin was serious military operation, piracy, battles and infighting, hence <del>arguing</del> relating the growth of the town to violence. Therefore, due to the narrow scope Passage B covers, focusing mainly on fighting forces, Passage A becomes a more convincing explanation for Viking origin and growth of Dublin over time.</p> <p>Passage A argues that, especially regarding the earlier days of Viking occupation in Dublin, the reason for growth was the wealth from slave trade; 'the wealth of Viking Dublin was based on one major commodity - slaves'. This argument can be strengthened by the fact that multiple Viking leaders used slavery to acquire wealth which directly aided in the growth of Dublin. For example, firstly Torgeis in 840 sacked the monastery of Armagh on</p> |
|---|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

three occasions, burning it on the forth and capturing slaves in a fashion rather typical for Vikings of this time, seen through the actions of Ragnarud in Frankia 840 or Danes in East Anglia. ~~As~~ As he then went on to set up the Dublin longphort in 841, it can be seen as a direct correlation thus strengthening the argument of Passage A. More so, other Dublin leaders followed in suit such as Olaf and Ivar who in 860s returned from the Strathclyde with "a great prey of picts, Britons, Angles" or Guthfrith who ruled Dublin while Sithric was in York, leading campaigns in the south, taking many slaves and sparing only monks. Therefore, the argument that the Dublin town ~~or~~ origin and growth can be explained through wealth gained from slavery is strengthened, showing why it was the largest slave hub in western Europe by the 12th century. Passage A also argues that the growth of Dublin can be seen through the 'beginnings of a money economy' which show the extent of local and international trade. Passage A argument here can be supported by the fact that in Dublin alone 170 lead weights were found showing the existence of at least a bullion economy in Dublin's origin days. Later though, in 941

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | <p> Ireland's first mint was established at Dublin hence supporting the argument as it is showing economic growth. The fact that this mint made English coins to facilitate trade with England further proves passage A is convincing for it implies international trade. More so, iron rivulets were found in Dublin implying shipbuilding. As Dublin can thus be seen as a centre where the knarrs, karvi, or sackkja's for example, were made passage A argument is once again strengthened as it further proves the extent of trade and international relation in Dublin, hence evidencing trade as an explanation for its growth. Furthermore, passage A also argues that at its origin, Dublin had a 'distinct air of impermanence' perhaps due to many short reign kings or infighting. This can be seen as convincing when the instability that followed the death of Olaf and Ivar in the 870's is noted. For example after Halfdan's murder of Ivar's second successor Oystein, <del>Laurens</del> <del>reigning</del> <del>followed</del> Aed was put forward as king. Yet after his death to short reign kings followed, stability not arriving until Sitricus years later. </p> |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Furthermore, growth from this instability or impermanence can be seen through the permanence of Viking settlements in Dublin seen on Fishamble Street, 10th century Hiberno-Norse contiguous plots of tenement housing for example. Therefore, through the contrast of Viking impermanence in the late 8th century to the growth and permanence of the 10th, the Passage is once again seen as convincing, showing Viking to have become more secure and prosperous in Dublin as their international trade grew, mainly through slaves.

Passage B argues in contrast to A, instead noting the origin of Vikings in Dublin to be in piracy; 'Dublin was clearly a hard town, an appropriate base for a piratical fleet'. This argument, that the Viking presence in Dublin was based in piracy at its origin, can be strengthened when the Strathgairn raids of the 8th and early 9th century are noted, including looting in 793 of Uster which was plundered for 2 consecutive years in 834 of Ath Cliath which Turgeis sailed up from Rosgar bay for who's loot and portable wealth made it an attractive site for piracy.

More so, it is the idea that this growing  
 pirate fleet needed a base like Dublin  
 due to its size can be seen in the  
 reaction to it. For example, not only in  
 Dublin but across Ireland architecture  
 like high towers and ringforts were used  
 by Monks to ward off pirate attacks as  
 well as how crannogs were replaced by  
 souterrains - 3500 of which can be  
 found today. Henceforth, Passage B  
 argument is clearly strengthened as it  
 shows why the origin of Dublin was  
 as a base for a piratical fleet  
 due to the prosperity Vikings gained  
 from the pirating - seemingly their most  
 lucrative job. Furthermore, Passage  
 B also argues that the growth  
 of Viking Dublin was rooted in the  
 'serious military operation' using  
 evidence of trauma in Dublin skeletons -  
 more than a third of the adult males  
 exhibit signs of injury from blade  
 weapons and blunt force. Passage B  
 can be supported here by the fact  
 that over 80% of Viking burials  
 were found within 5km of Dublin hence  
 proving that, if so many seemingly died  
 in battle, then evidently fighting was a  
 leading occupation for the Norse in



Dublin which strengthens Passage B<sup>3</sup> explanation. More so, such violent fighting can be seen in the attacks Dublin faced such as the attack from Maer Sechnaill, Munster king in 843 or the 1000 Norsemen that died in the 845 following the Irish winning 4 consecutive battles. More so though, the extent of this violence the Norse faced in Dublin can be seen as an explanation for its growth as the retaliation of future Dublin king Olaf in 853 where he set up campaigns in Meath Munster to kill Maer Sechnaill, show the far impact Maer had on Dublin. This evidently aided its growth also as it lead to Dublin king alliances with Irish such as Carber mac 858, Lorcán, and Fiannlaith, or the Southern Uí Néill high king. Henceforth Passage B argument is strengthened due to the evident far extent of violence in Dublin and the longer term impact it had on growth. Lastly, Passage B also argues that the origin and growth of Viking Dublin can be seen through 'fighting not only with the Irish but also with other Vikings'. This can be supported by the evidence of the 881 battle of Lulingford Lough where the Danes managed to expel the Norsemen Vikings, many of which fled to Frisia.

More so, it can be seen by the end of the period where Brian Boru, high king of Ireland ~~possess~~ had many viking allies with him such as the Danes from Munster, who fought silkbeard who, with Maer Morda was attempting to reclaim Dublin. Henceforth, even though they ~~were~~ ~~unopposed~~ both had viking on their side, they fought against each other over areas like Dublin hence showing infighting as a major contributor to the growth of Dublin across the viking age.

In conclusion, Passage A argument that local and international trade, and the wealth gradually accumulated from that was the most convincing explanation for viking Dublin's origin and growth, evidenced through the slave trade mainly which Dublin leaders across the Age contributed to showing how much of a priority it was for the Norsemen. Passage B argument in comparison does hold some weight regarding the impact (growth) that battles and infighting had on Dublin, seen in changing kings and military campaigns, however this had both a much narrower



|  |  |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
|  |  | Scope has Passage A and was a shorter |
|  |  | term impact. However, Passage A is    |
|  |  | the more convincing explanation       |
|  |  | for Vikings origin and growth.        |

This response shows consistently detailed evaluation of each interpretation, and the candidate comes to a supported conclusion about which passage they find the most convincing, showing good focus on the question. This is an excellent example of a Level 6 standard response.

## Section B overview

Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three. To do well on Section B, candidates need to make connections and links across the whole period of their study. They should explain similarities and differences between the events they are discussing to show an awareness of continuity and change across the whole period, unless instructed otherwise. The comparisons may be made across the period within the topic or between regions, depending on the topic. It is also important that the comparisons are explained - what is similar or different between the periods or regions.

The strongest answers will test a hypothesis and reach a supported judgement.

### Question 2\*

2\* 'Throughout the period from c.790 to 1066, the payment of Danegeld was the most effective response to Viking raids on England.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This question required candidates to consider the effectiveness of Danegeld relative to other responses to Viking raids, such as diplomacy, assimilation, or military action. The most popular themes were battles, building defences, and treaties.

Weaker responses to this question struggled in various ways – occasionally, candidates confused Danegeld with the Danelaw. Some candidates also lost focus on the question as they explained the effectiveness of Danegeld in Europe, rather than remaining focused on raids on England. The most common area that candidates struggled with, however, was providing a range of evidence from across the period. Many answers were focused mostly on the reign of Alfred, explaining his various battles and treaties with the Vikings as well as his building of defensive burghs. This lack of range meant that some candidates were only partially focused on the question or did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge to create synthesis and reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Stronger answers were able to take each chosen theme in turn and compare examples from across the time period to demonstrate effectiveness (or lack of). When discussing military responses, for examples, candidates could use the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066 in addition to earlier battles such as Edington in order to show a range of evidence.

### Assessment for learning



Remind candidates that they must cover as much of the time frame of the topic as possible in their response, drawing on examples and evidence from across the period. Without a range of evidence, they cannot demonstrate and understanding change and continuity over time, or 'developed synthesis'.

## Exemplar 2

|  |  |                                                                                                                     |
|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | Unlike Danegeld, warfare or other military means                                                                    |
|  |  | was often a much more effective way to respond to                                                                   |
|  |  | Viking incursions. This <del>was the</del> <sup>an</sup> strategy was                                               |
|  |  | employed from the beginning of the period, with the                                                                 |
|  |  | Mercian king Offa organising a coastal defence in                                                                   |
|  |  | 798 and <del>in the</del> <sup>similarly in Cornwall in the</sup> 830s King Egbert was some                         |
|  |  | victories against the Viking marauders as well. As                                                                  |
|  |  | the scale of the Viking threat increased, <del>however</del> <sup>the</sup>                                         |
|  |  | <del>effectiveness</del> of this aid became less effective. For example,                                            |
|  |  | the Great Heathen Army <sup>of 865</sup> is thought to have numbered                                                |
|  |  | 200-250 ships (and was later joined by a Great                                                                      |
|  |  | Summer Army in 871). <del>and in the face of this threat,</del>                                                     |
|  |  | <del>Alfred the Great's army was militarily</del> <sup>dishearted and he was forced to flee into the Somerset</sup> |
|  |  | <del>marshes. However,</del> <sup>marshes. However,</sup> so they were easily able to                               |
|  |  | defeat the Mercian and Wessex forces at first, with                                                                 |
|  |  | Alfred the Great being forced to flee to the Somerset                                                               |
|  |  | Marshes. However, <del>one</del> <sup>brooding</sup> the effectiveness of                                           |
|  |  | this strategy was continuous as in 878, Alfred                                                                      |
|  |  | managed to defeat the <del>Vikings</del> <sup>Great Heathen</sup>                                                   |
|  |  | Army in battle at Edington and again in 883 when                                                                    |
|  |  | its leader Guthrum tried to take London. Indeed, in                                                                 |
|  |  | the 880s the effectiveness of this strategy increased                                                               |
|  |  | dramatically due to the many measures that Alfred                                                                   |

implemented, which included setting up a series of burhs across his territory that were ~~also~~ maintained by garrisons (fyrdas). He also split up his army into two in a relay system that meant that half of it was always ready for battle. This meant that the effectiveness of the warfare as a response increased in this period as Alfred made so many important changes (he also created a navy, using boats taken from the Vikings) which meant that when Hastein and his army landed in England in 892-4, they were more easily defeated. Alfred's descendants continued in his legacy by with ~~winning~~ <sup>winning</sup> important victories in battle at ~~8~~ <sup>8</sup> Tettenhall in 910 and Tempsford in 917 and Aethelstan winning the <sup>(in response to Viking raids from the Danelaw)</sup> Battle of Brunanburh in 937 - they also continued to set up burhs in these conquered territories. However, in the later part of the period, his strategy was less effective with ~~Aethelred~~ <sup>Aethelred</sup> the Unready losing at Maldon in 991 and giving up the throne of England in response to ~~Cnut's invasion~~ <sup>Cnut's invasion</sup> in Sweyn Forkbeard's invasion in 1014. Similarly, in 1016, Edmund Ironside lost the battle of Assandun to Cnut the Great and in 1066, though Harold Godwinson managed to defeat Harald Hardrada at Stamford Bridge, he lost his life and was defeated at Hastings by William the Conqueror (arguably a Viking considering he was a descendant of Rollo). Therefore, though warfare was the most effective response, beating the Vikings on many occasions, it was not always effective,



|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | especially towards the end of the period.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|  |  | Diplomacy could often be an effective tool in responding to Viking raids. While it was more difficult to organise treaties with those <sup>small</sup> bands of Vikings <sup>of 2-3 ships</sup> who made hit-and-run raids and then immediately returned to Scandinavia (as in the raids on Portland in 789, Limerick in 793 and Downpatrick in 795), this came to have more importance later in the period when the Viking armies became much larger and stayed in England after the attacks. For example, Alfred the Great's Treaty of Weatmon in 879 was effective in reducing the threat of Viking raids. In giving Guthrum and his followers land (and even if they were baptised, he turned their attention from <del>set</del> raiding to settlement. Though this was not completely effective as Guthrum ended up attacking London in 885, Alfred continued with the strategy by making another treaty - the Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum in 886 - which was even more effective and diminished the threat he posed for raiding. <del>Alfred</del> The rulers of England continued to use this effectively into the 10th century, with Aethelstan marrying his daughter to Olaf Sihtricson in 926, which further reduced the threat that he posed. Aethelred the Unready continued this practice of marriage and diplomacy by marrying Emma of Normandy, which allowed him to flee to Normandy in 1014 <sup>as a response to</sup> <del>then</del> Sweyn Forkbeard's attack. However, his strategy did decrease over time. |

effectiveness under the rule of Æthelred. He too had to make agreements with the Vikings and even employed those who <sup>had once</sup> raided his country as mercenaries to fight against other raiders (for example, Thorkell the Tall). This however was ultimately ineffective as the Viking leaders were rarely loyal and would often switch sides if they saw some economic or military advantage. This was the case with Thorkell who, though he fought against Sweyn, <sup>in 1014</sup> assisted in Cnut's attack in 1016. Therefore, though diplomacy was often effective, this was not always the case and it declined in the later part of the period.

In conclusion, Danegeld <sup>was</sup> not the most effective way to respond to Viking raids, with it rarely working, especially under Æthelred. Instead, warfare was the most effective and diplomacy could often be successful, though it was <sup>often</sup> dependent on prior military achievement (as after Edington with the Treaty of Wednes). It was also often dependent on other factors, like the strength of the Viking force or the capability of the leader, perhaps explaining why the effectiveness of all these strategies were reduced under Æthelred.

This response demonstrates aspects of the 'developed synthesis' we are looking for at Level 5. This candidate, in their paragraphs on both military and diplomatic responses, provides a range of examples from across the period to support their argument. Rather than just listing examples, they also show an awareness of change and continuity over time, recognising how some methods increased or decreased in importance over time. The synthesis was not consistent throughout the answer, and the paragraph on Danegeld was a little weaker, as some examples were not focused on England. This is why the response is not placed at the top of the level, or indeed in Level 6. Nevertheless, the skills and knowledge shown in the military and diplomatic paragraphs and the final judgement demonstrate that this response is Level 5 standard.

### Question 3\*

- 3\* 'Throughout the period from c.790 to 1066, farming made the most important contribution to Viking livelihood in Scandinavia.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

This question required candidates to compare the importance of farming to Viking livelihood with alternative ways of making a living, for example shipbuilding and seafaring, arts and crafts, raiding, or trading. Although various themes and approaches are valid, the question is focused on livelihood/ways of making a living, and some candidates struggled to remain focused on this. More generalised explanations of Viking life (e.g., culture, social structure, religion) were not valid when answering this question and could not be credited.

Knowledge of the role of farming in Scandinavia was also generally weak among many candidates. Some candidates were able to successfully explain why farming was not important, explaining the difficulties of farming due to geographical challenges – this was a valid approach. However, very few candidates were able to explore the positive contributions of farming, or make links between farming and trading (such as raising livestock for wool or leather, or farming honey and fruit for feasts).

Candidates more confidently explained the contributions of raiding and trading to Viking livelihood. Weaker answers tended to be more generic and vaguer, with limited specific examples or evidence to support a more general explanation of raiding/trading culture. Stronger answers were able to provide examples from across the period, or compared different regions. Although the question is primarily focused on Scandinavia, candidates could bring in examples of trading towns in Britain and Europe, explaining how these contributed to the livelihoods of those back in Scandinavia.



## Exemplar 3

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | <p>Throughout the period from c.790 to c.1066 the most important contribution to Viking livelihood shifted from farming and agriculture to livelihoods that aided raiding and international relations. This was as, perhaps due to the poor land and climate of Scandinavia, farming was not a fulfilling livelihood for many Scandinavians particularly in overpopulated areas. Hence forth, due to the quick portable wealth that could be gained and brought back to Scandinavia, trading, shipbuilding and manual labour regarding fortresses for army became larger contributors. Alongside this, for many the livelihood of craftsmen grew in importance due to growing medieval towns where craftsmen became necessary to trade.</p> |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Firstly, farming can be seen as a less important contribution to Scandinavian livelihood. In comparison to the growing significance of raiding. For example, this was perhaps true due to the poor land and climate of Scandinavia such as the ~~Swedish~~ 2560m peaks of Sweden with heights on average sitting at 600m making only 3% of <sup>Norway</sup> ~~the~~ fertile which was unsuitable for the growing population. More so, in ~~the~~ Sweden while it had heights of 2160 also it was "extremely fertile" but as Adam of Bremen noted "exceedingly shut in by mountains" henceforth proving the difficulty of farming as the sole livelihood for Vikings in Scandinavia. Henceforth raiding during the winter months and returning to help with harvest became a significant livelihood early on seen in the Norse body found in Estonia 790 with ages ranging decades seemingly on a raiding trip. Further seen in the Stenkhøj's hit and run raiding Lindisfarne (795), Lure (800), Aquitaine (799), Dorset (814), and especially seen in the portable wealth gained from the particular monasteries of Armagh (840) and Jarrow (798). More so, the significance of this livelihood for Scandinavians can be seen

when raiding seasons extended, mainly when bands were led by kings, returning to Scandinavia with even larger amounts of wealth. Examples of this include the tribute paid by Frankish kingdoms to people like King Godfred of Denmark in 810 (2001b) or to Ragnarod when his raiding party demanded silver every year for 2000lb tribute. Henceforth, due to the obvious impact this had on Scandinavian livelihood, growing in importance in comparison to farming, seasonal raiding can be seen as a more important contribution to Viking livelihood in Scandinavia as it took the pressure of farming in a poor climate and having necessary portable wealth for kings, due to the growing significance of things like Hall culture.

Another livelihood which proved more important than farming during this time period was arguably trading and craftsman in trading towns. This was as, not only did these towns grow in significance due to the ~~was~~ increasing amount of foreign visitors and traders as international recognition grew, but also they became symbols and seats of power for kings raising the significance of livelihoods like mines for example. Firstly, in the early years of the Viking age such seasonal emporia like Hedeby grew

by ~~to~~ Godfred, Danish king by destroying  
 the nearby town of Keric), Birka, Ribe,  
 Sigtona had craftsmen who traded  
 locally. Mainly such as in soapstone (Norway),  
 walrus tusk, furs, pennanular brooches. However,  
 as international trade grew, seen in the larger  
 use of trade routes like the Dnieper and  
 Volga (lead into furs) or more western  
 trade into France or Iberia, the seasonal  
 emporia and livelihood of craftsmen grew.  
 For example this can be seen in  
 the early medieval towns of Oslo in  
 Norway used as a royal seat by  
 Haraldra who destroyed the now  
 less useful emporia of Hedeby in 1050,  
 or Trondheim, the royal seat for  
 Trygvasson where a mint was established  
 in the late 990's, or Roskilde in  
 Denmark where he had his royal  
 seat, leading administration. Furthermore,  
 the <sup>importance</sup> ~~craftsmen~~ in these trading towns  
 can further be seen in the growing  
 number of international visitors they  
 had when they christianised, seen  
 in the bishoprics established at Hedeby,  
 Ribe, Aarhus in 927 through missionaries  
 sent by Aethelstan or bishoprics set  
 up by kings themselves such as King  
 Skotkuning in 1020. Henceforth at this

|   |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | continue | <p>further proves the growing importance of trading towns and subsequently the craftsmen in them, it once again shows why, as the 'viking' period continued, trading towns and craftsmen became much more significant contributors to Scandinavian livelihood.</p> <p>Furthermore, the consolidation of power of kings was also a significant factor in the livelihood of Vikings in Scandinavia. This was as it led to such jobs as shipbuilding, the building of fortresses and growing amount of Scandinavians who worked in standing armies, earning wealth through aiding the king over agriculture or farms.</p> |
|---|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

For example, while for 9th century Vikings such as those in Norway, farming can be seen as a significant livelihood contribution to livelihood as the many that migrated under the tyrannical reign of Harald Finehair (heavy taxes he would award jars with honey) stated by Ari in the *Íslendingabók* that the migration was also heavily to do with looking for good pasturage which was limited in Scandinavia. However, more aptly, many of the Scandinavians did not leave in search for farming livelihoods but took on jobs such as craftsmen in shipbuilding. Due to the increasingly large use of ships because of raiding and trading (as mentioned) manes labour for ships like *Karui's*, knots and *Snekks* were necessary. Regarding Norway Trygvasson alone for example, one raiding trip to England took 63 ships even if 3300kg of silver was gained after the Battle of Rearden. The significance of this can be seen through the fact that a single *Karui* could take 150<sup>+</sup>3 wood, 400kg raw iron, 600 horsehairs and 40,000 man hours in total for example.

Furthermore, another way kings consolidated power was through fortresses which are most evident in Denmark



Such as Trelleborg, Aggeborg, <sup>(240m)</sup> Nannabaken, Fyrkat. In these fortresses longhouses were made, craftsmen worked and, due to the fact that they were built by Bluetooth and Svein following 970, it is likely they were used as camps for training soldiers for ~~an~~ military expedition. Henceforth showing that, not only were the craftsmen that could build such elaborate fortresses necessary, but also the livelihood of vikings who would contribute to standing armies, used for expeditions such as Svein's to England in the 1010's or even to England following Svein's death. Henceforth, due to the fact that, in comparison to the decreasing significance of farming, craftsmen had aided the consolidation of power for kings' growth, showing it to be the larger contributor.

In conclusion, farming was evidently not the most significant contributor to viking livelihood in Scandinavia perhaps due mainly to the poor land and climate for agriculture in many areas as well as the overpopulation showing farming to not be sustainable as the largest contributor. This is arguable as strengthened when the growing importance of craftsmen in trading towns

|  |  |                                            |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------|
|  |  | as they became larger medieval towns       |
|  |  | and royal seats is regarded. As            |
|  |  | well as the necessary factor of            |
|  |  | ship and fortress builders as a livelihood |
|  |  | when the consolidation of king             |
|  |  | power is noted. Therefore showing farming  |
|  |  | to not be the largest contributor but      |
|  |  | instead craftsmen.                         |

This response is a good example of a Level 5 answer. Although farming is dismissed early in the answer in terms of its importance, specific knowledge is used to explain why farming was difficult across different regions in Scandinavia. This is followed by more extensive discussion of trading and then craftsmanship, supported with specific examples from across the period. More importantly, in these paragraphs, there is some recognition and explanation of change over time, showing why some skills, such as farming, became less important, whereas craftsmanship grew in importance. This is the 'developed synthesis', supported explanations of change and continuity over time, that we are looking for in Level 5.

#### Question 4\*

4\* 'Religion, more than anything else, defined Viking culture throughout the period from c.790 to 1066.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Candidates approached this question in a variety of ways. To remain focused on the question, candidates were required to compare the impact of religion on Viking culture to alternative influences – examples could include literature, art, craft, social structure, raiding, and more. All approaches were valid as long as candidates could explain the impact of the theme on Viking culture.

Weaker responses only discussed or described religion, explaining all the ways in which religion affected Viking culture, but offering no counter argument. These responses were only partially focused. Some candidates just described Viking religion.

Regarding the conversion to Christianity, some candidates argued that the conversion proved religion was not that important, as old rituals and beliefs were given up while other non-religious aspects of cultures remained. Others argued that the change proved how religion did ultimately define culture, as Viking culture changed in line with new beliefs. Either argument was valid, provided it was supported with evidence.

The main weakness displayed in responses to this question was lack of specific knowledge and evidence to support their arguments. Explanations were often vague and generalised, sometimes just describing changes in religion over time. These answers were mostly focused, but did not show enough knowledge to make a supported judgement.

Stronger answers were able to explain how different factors influenced Viking culture, referencing specific events, rulers, settlements, or other evidence in support of their arguments. The very best answers also compared factors, often explaining how religion impacts other factors such as kingship, or identified changes over time, noting for example that raiding was more representative of Viking culture in the early part of the period, but less so in the later decades. These responses demonstrated elements of the 'developed synthesis' required at the higher end of the mark scheme.

### Assessment for learning



Although candidates can consistently argue in favour of their hypothesis, they must acknowledge and explain counter arguments, if only to dismiss them. For example, in this question, candidates needed to consider alternative factors to religion in order to fully answer the question.

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