

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y303/01 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.

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Paper Y303 series overview

Y303 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:
- showed a clear understanding of the views of the two interpretations in relation to the question - were able to use contextual knowledge to test the interpretations, linking that knowledge directly to the interpretation through evaluative words - were able to consider both the strengths and limitations of both Interpretations using contextual knowledge - covered the whole period in a balanced way - adopted a thematic approach - made links and comparisons between aspects of the topic - explained the links and comparisons - supported their arguments with precise and relevant examples - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question.	- showed a limited understanding of one or both of the Interpretations - did not go beyond a basic explanation of part of the Interpretation - did not link any contextual knowledge directly to the Interpretation and therefore did not evaluate the Interpretation - adopted a chronological rather than thematic approach - did not make links or comparisons even if events from different parts of the period were discussed in the same paragraph - did not cover the whole period - did not focus on the precise wording of the question - made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

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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 Y303 is focused on Henry I's seizure of Normandy from his brother Duke Robert Curthose.

Question 1

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

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of Henry I's success in seizing Normandy.

[30]

Candidates in general recognised the difference between the interpretations, Hollister, in Passage A, emphasised the success of Henry I's diplomacy, while Poole, in Passage B, focused on the internal disorder within Normandy which the king aimed to exploit. Evaluation of Passage A was supported by knowledge of Henry's diplomatic ability, from his coronation charter (the 'Charter of Liberties'), which sought to build stronger relations with his magnates, to the marriage of his daughter, Matilda, to Henry V, who would go on to become the Holy Roman Emperor. Hollister's claim that Henry prepared 'meticulously' for the invasion was usually supported by broader knowledge of his use of mercenaries. Some candidates tried to link this aspect of the interpretation to the king's financial reforms, but since Hollister is referring to events at the very beginning of the king's reign, this was not always done effectively. In evaluating Hollister's claim that Tinchebray represented the 'supreme victory' of the king's career, some candidates disagreed, preferring to talk about the Battle of Bourgthéroulde. However, the battle itself was more of a skirmish, at which the king himself was absent. A more appropriate battle to cite would have been Brémule, where an invasion led by Louis VI was defeated.

In relation to Passage B, many candidates possessed good knowledge of Robert Curthose's 1101 invasion, with some playing down its significance, in contrast to Poole, since it apparently ran out of steam so quickly. The benefits received by Curthose as a result of the Treaty of Alton, which concluded the revolt, were cited by candidates as evidence to undermine Poole's claim that the duke was 'tricked' or misled. Knowledge of the social disorder referenced by Poole was mixed, but some candidates took issue with his use of the word 'anarchy' to describe it. Some candidates tried to disagree with Poole's claim that Curthose 'never really had a chance' at Tinchebray. Given that accounts of the battle present it as an overwhelming victory in the king's favour, this is a difficult stance to sustain. Other candidates pointed to Curthose's subsequent imprisonment, for the rest of his life, as evidence in support of Poole's view. Many candidates preferred Hollister's interpretation over Poole's.

Exemplar 1

1	SA	Passage A suggests Henry I prepared well before seizing Normandy which compares to Passage B which suggests success was more to do with Curthoes's weakness. Passage A also suggests Henry I Henry was more ruthless compared to A which suggests he values ^{diplomacy} ✓ Passage A argues that Henry I had 'meticulously' prepared for the campaign. This can be supported by the creation of the Exchequer which was introduced to raise money for his campaigns, and This can be seen by the fact that Henry I raised 30,000 pounds per year compared to William I who raised 10,000 pounds a year. This money was vital to construct an army and to fund his fighting in Normandy. This view that Henry prepared well is highly convincing view of Henry I's success in seizing Normandy as it suggested he thought through his preparation which gave him
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an upper hand ~~in~~ against Cuthose.

Passage A also argues that it was Henry I's 'superior diplomacy' that results in him 'reuniting the kingdom'. This can be supported by Henry I's usage of marriage alliances, one of which involved ~~him~~ him marrying his daughter Matilda to the Holy Roman Empire. This support ~~ext~~ ~~exto~~ externally would increase Henry's chances of gaining Normandy. Also his own marriage to Alice seized connections within France which may have been useful for support too. This suggests Henry's diplomacy usage was vital to his success in Normandy. This is convincing as it means that Henry I had support bases in the continent not just in England, increasing the people he could rely on against Cuthose.

Finally Passage A suggests Henry I worked hard to gain the support of Norman nobles and was successful in doing so. This can be supported by the evidence that in 1105 Henry brought of Castellans ~~exrens~~ in order to aid

		through the Josb abbacine and shows his widespread support Network
1	SA	his campaigns in Normandy. This is important. ^{as it shows Henry gaining support} This is convincing as it again demonstrates Henry I building up his support now in Normandy in order to decrease the support of Robert rather than using brutality.
		Passage B however argues that Henry I had trouble at the start of his reign. This can be supported by the fact that Henry I experience issues at succession with Curthrose. This resulted in the most powerful noble in England at the time, Robert Belleme switching sides and supporting Curthrose. This is significant

as it shows Henry I a immediately experience issues with support. However this view of his lack of support is only partially convincing as ~~later~~ into his campaigns Henry I had valued successful support thus this is only true at the beginning of his reign and therefore the passage is only partially convincing.

~~Passage B also suggests that Henry I was causing anarchy in Normandy. Henry I did conduct 2 campaigns in Normandy in 1105-1106 and 1112-1124. However Henry I valued Politics of war and thus this view isn't convincing. This can be shown by the Treaty of Alton where Henry I gave Cuthbert £2000, this is clear representation that Henry I was not violent and just wanted to peacefully agree about Normandy. This failure of the direct Politics with Cuthbert led to Henry seeking support elsewhere to conduct a decisive battle, this thus this suggestion.~~

Passage B suggests that Henry I was decisive in battle. This can be supported by his success at Tinchebrai but also his decisiveness can be seen later in the period in 1124 at Bourgetheulocde where he decisively crushed a rebellion. This suggests that Henry I had effective military skills and he built his army based on both the skills and loyalty to him. Thus this supports the view that Robert never really had a chance as Henry I was experienced and strong compared to Curthose. This view is therefore a convincing view of Henry's military capabilities.

Passage B also indicates that Robert wanted peace. This view is not convincing as and that Henry I jumped into war. This view was not convincing as Henry valued politics over war and so Henry had already attempted to support settle the dispute between them amicably. e.g. at the Treaty of Alton where Henry I gave Curthose £2000. This clearly demonstrates Henry's calm attempts of peace before resorting to battle. Thus Robert's failure to negotiate with Henry led to him to be able to gain support against him. Thus this is not a convincing view of Henry I's success in seizing Normandy, as

although it shows Henry as ~~as~~ ^{as} winning ~~it~~ ^{to} & crushing Robert there's less focus on Henry I's previous attempts to reconcile.

Overall Passage A is more convincing about Henry I's seizure of Normandy than passage B. This is because Passage A highlights the support Henry managed to gain ^{support} and his preparation and how he valued diplomacy over war. Where as B suggests Robert wanted peace and that the civil rebellion was justified, it suggests Henry I was panicked and so went straight to fighting, which is not ~~as~~ ^{as} convincing representation of the period. Thus A is more convincing as it clearly highlights the reason for his success being focussed on his prior preparations and not just his military skills as suggested by A-B. Passage B.

His value of diplomacy can also be seen in England where instead of attacking he gives the garrisons at Shrewsbury £100 to surrender. This demonstrates his preference and thus supports his actions in Normandy.

This is an example of a Level 5 response in which there is good focus on the question with evaluation of the interpretations based on relevant knowledge of the historical context. Knowledge is less developed overall, with some broader knowledge of the topic used in places; it is largely accurate. Evaluative comments are therefore less developed.

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.

Questions 2 and 3 tended to be more popular than Question 4, with Question 2 the most popular of all.

Question 2*

2* 'The reasons for rebellion in Stephen's reign were typical of the reasons for rebellion in England throughout the period from 1066 to 1216.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Candidates demonstrated good understanding of the themes relevant to this question: alternative candidates to the throne, the self-interest of the magnates, magnates' responses to strong royal government, and the issue of the continental possessions and the failure of certain rulers to maintain connections between England and these lands. Some candidates also highlighted the issue of the kings' personalities as a contributory factor to the outbreak of rebellion. Across all of these themes, Stephen's reign was seen as both typical and atypical in terms of the reasons for rebellion. The 'Anarchy' itself, for example, was fuelled by the competing claim of the Empress Matilda. Continental possessions, on the other hand, were less obviously an issue for Stephen, since he lost Normandy and had greater problems in relation to his efforts to keep hold of England. Unlike his uncle, Henry I, grandfather, William the Conqueror, and eventual successor, Henry II, Stephen had a weak personality, which undoubtedly contributed to the difficulties he faced throughout his reign. Other notable rebellions used to discuss these themes included the 1075 rebellion against the Conqueror, the 1088 rebellion against Rufus, Curthose's invasion in 1101, the revolt of Young Henry against Henry II, and John's revolt against Richard I/William de Longchamp. Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of these revolts but were less able to develop synthesis in their answers. Exemplar 2, a response to Question 3, includes examples of where a candidate has demonstrated an awareness of change or continuity.

Misconception



Synthesis requires an explanation as to why change has occurred during the period or why there is continuity; it is not simply about noting that something has changed or stayed the same.

Question 3*

- 3* 'The reasons for changes in the organisation and administration of local government remained the same throughout the period from 1066 to 1216.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Candidates highlighted several themes in relation to this question, including: the need to increase revenue, the centralisation of administration (often linked to the point about revenue), the need for a more efficient judicial system (often linked to the centralisation of governance), and the demands placed on governance because of royal absenteeism and the need to maintain control over continental possessions. Candidates noted the evolution of local government across the period, with changes dependent on the context of each king's reign. Those candidates who were more aware of change and continuity across the period, and who attempted to develop synthesis in their answers, presented Stephen's reign as providing a rupture in this process where central government broke down almost completely. The number of earls created by Stephen was often cited as evidence of this point. Candidates demonstrated good understanding of the role of sheriffs in local government; where this knowledge was particularly developed, candidates noted how William the Conqueror relied on these men to carry out local governance, but as the twelfth century progressed, and as government practice in general became more sophisticated, their powers diminished somewhat. Local justice was also known quite well, with the emergence of itinerant justices and the role of circuits in extending royal justice into local communities often cited as evidence of the growing centralisation of government. Some candidates also referred to different feudal incidents, particularly during the period of the Angevin kings, while others noted the relationship between the need for increased revenue and war. Richard I's reign provided the clearest example of this as he sought to fund his overseas military exploits. As with Question 2, some candidates could explain several of these themes, supported by relatively developed knowledge and understanding, but there was less evidence of synthesis in their answers. Exemplar 2 provides an example of an answer where there is an attempt to develop synthesis, reflected in an awareness of change and continuity across the period.

Exemplar 2

3		The reasons for changes in the administration and organisation of local government between 1066 and 1216 were largely the king's need for increased power as absenteeism of the king , the movement towards a common law and the financial needs of the king. Each of these were relevant at different times, and contributed to different changes in local government, such as the changing roles of earldoms and sheriffs, and the emergence of a knightly class.
		One key reason for changes in the organisation and

administration of local government was the King's need to control the Kingdom. This requirement was twofold: the King had to preserve the peace of the Kingdom, thus relying on officials, but also ensure that he remained the supreme authority in the Kingdom. As a result, much of the first half of the King's period between 1066 and ~~1216~~ 1216 saw the power of Ealds being decreased in order to reduce increase the difference between the authority of central and local government. In William I's reign, the great ealdons such as West Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia were replaced with smaller, strategically placed ealdons with a largely military purpose. For instance, Kent, and shires on the Welsh border like Shropshire, became ealdons. From 1070 ~~on~~ until 1135, there were never more than seven ealdons, reflecting their declining importance. By the reign of Henry I, even the military aspect of the role had disappeared, leaving the title of Eal to be essentially honorific. The only change to this in the rest of the period was in the reign of Stephen, where ealdons became more relevant, perhaps due to Stephen's inability to retain control of the Kingdom centrally. * Nevertheless, it is evident that changes in the role of ealds were largely centred around ensuring the King had control over the Kingdom. Henry I reduced the power of sheriffs as well, by producing the writ of 1103 to ensure that crown pleas remained the exclusive jurisdiction of the King, and through the exchequer, but these changes also occurred for financial and judicial reasons. Towards

* Stephen created 14 ealdons in his reign, and the 16 that remained ⁱⁿ 1200 are largely a legacy of his reign.

The end of the period, sheriffs were kept under control by selecting members of the justiciar's household. For instance, 13 counties were held by members of William Longchamp's household by the end of 1191. Therefore, it is clear that changes in the roles of earls and sheriffs ^{between 1066 and 1216} largely occurred so that the king could maintain control over the kingdom.

An arguably more important reason for changes in the organisation and administration of local government throughout the period was the proliferation of local justice from the reign of Henry I. This is most evident in the emergence of a knightly class around the halfway point in the period. Knights were hard to define, as they could be a person of a social status just below a tenant-in-chief, a person who had been knighted, or a descendant of either. Nevertheless, Jocelin de Furness's complaints about 'monks born of knightly stock' is evidence of this new class becoming increasingly important. In particular, knights were vital parts of justice in the reign of Henry II and beyond. They took part in juries of presentment and grand assize juries, as a trusted group. After Magna Carta in 1215, they also played a role in possessory assizes. However, there were other changes in the administration and organisation of local government as a consequence of increasing emphasis on justice. For instance, changes in forest laws were a prominent part of many coronation charters. Furthermore, Henry I's use of itinerant justices reduced the importance of local courts, and this was furthered by Henry II's use of general eyres. The writ of 1108 also changed administration of local government by clarifying the role of honorial courts as a site for land

disputes between two vassals, to be held arbitrated. As a result, it is clear that the administration and organisation of justice, including the use of knights in particular, which was a vital element of local government, changed due to an increasing emphasis on justice towards the end of the period.

A somewhat less important, but nonetheless relevant, reason for changes in the administration and organisation of local government between 1066 and 1216 was increasing financial needs of the King. While the impacts of this were most significant in causing changes in central government, this certainly spilled over into local government as well. For instance, the creation of the exchequer in around 1110 to increase royal revenues vastly decreased the power of sheriffs, as their debts were kept under a close watch. This is evident from the detail of the 1130 Pipe Roll, which shows that 40% of the King's income (worth a

total of £23,000) was collected from 'farm of the shire'. The fact that the King was in fact due £69,000 in 1130 meant that he had the ability to ~~keep~~ ^{extract} favours out of sheriffs, diminishing their authority in local government, which had been ~~to~~ ^{excessive} early in the period between 1066 and 1216 as sheriffs filled the power vacuum left by earls. Later in the period, where financial needs of Kings grew rapidly, the organisation of local government drastically changed, albeit briefly, through the use of custodian sheriffs. Instead of paying a fixed 'farm of the shire', custodian sheriffs were paid a fixed wage and any profits went directly into the exchequer. Changes to the administration of local government in the reign of Richard were also important, with the use of assizes such as the Assize of Weights and Measures and the Forest Assize, both of which were designed to increase revenue from fines by tightening regulations. Therefore, the financial needs of the King caused some changes in the administration and organisation of local government between 1066 and 1216, particularly at the tail-end of the period.

Overall, the main reasons for changes in the organisation and administration of local government between 1066 and 1216 changed ~~the~~ a lot. At the start of the period, the majority of changes were to organisation of local justice, by changing the roles of earls and sheriffs. This was largely caused by a need for increased royal control. However, changes in Henry II's reign to administration and organisation of local government were largely the result of an increase in provision of justice. Under Richard I and John, changes were largely due to increased financial needs of the Kings.

Exemplar 2 is an example of a Level 5 response which has a good focus on the question, has generally accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding, and attempts at developing synthesis, as reflected in the comments about the extent of change across the period in each of the themes discussed.

Question 4*

- 4* 'Archbishops of Canterbury did more to strengthen the English church in the period from 1066 to 1154 than in the period from 1154 to 1216.'

How far do you agree?

[25]

Question 4 was the least popular of the three questions in Section B. Yet candidates, in general, demonstrated good knowledge of the achievements of individual archbishops, notably Lanfranc, Anselm, Thomas Becket and Hubert Walter. In some answers, knowledge of other, perhaps less celebrated archbishops from the period was also demonstrated, such as Ralph d'Escures, William de Corbeil and Theobald of Bec. Some candidates also referred to Stephen Langton. In addition to Church reform and relations with the papacy, and the primacy dispute, themes tended to centre on the relationship between the archbishops and their kings: ecclesiastical independence from secular power (the issue of lay investiture), the issue of exile, and the nature of these relationships more broadly. Candidates usually, and often convincingly, argued that the archbishops of the Norman period did more to strengthen the Church. Evidence in support of this contention included Lanfranc's strong relationship with the king, his efforts in the 1070s in particular to encourage reform along the lines set out by Rome, the 'settlement' of the investiture issue in England in 1107, and the leadership provided by Theobald of Bec during Stephen's reign. Those candidates who did note change and continuity pointed to the growing influence of the papacy over the English Church from the middle of the twelfth century. This can be seen in the appointment of legates as the century progressed, some of whom were archbishops (e.g. Theobald of Bec and Thomas Becket). As with the other two questions, some candidates demonstrated good knowledge of both periods, with the careers of Lanfranc, Anselm and Theobald of Bec, in particular, known quite well. However, attempts at synthesis were not always apparent. Exemplar 2, a response to Question 3, provides an example of an answer where there is awareness of change and continuity across the period.

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