



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2A (A-level)
Question 02 Student 2
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2A (A-level): Specimen question paper

02 To what extent was it Henry II's baronial policy from 1154 that led to the Great Rebellion of 1173 to 1174?

[25 marks]

Student response

Henry II's baronial policy from 1154 was, to a great extent, responsible for the great rebellion of 1173-74. This is mainly due to the effort to which Henry went to reassert Royal dominance and the fact that his control over the Barons was so strict compared to the relative laxness of Stephens reign during the anarchy. Other factors were involved in the rebellion however these did not affect the events to the extent of the baronial policies.

Upon gaining power in 1154 Henry II set about restoring the loss of Royal authority that the monarchs of England had suffered under the poor leadership of Stephen. This involved the seizure of royal demesne, destruction of adulterine castles and punishment of any rebellious nobles. The effect of Henry's strict control of the Barons is clear in the rebellion through some of the Barons involved having been previously malcontent with Henry. A prime example of this is Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk. He had lost all of his Suffolk castles to Henry and been made to pay £666 for the return of Framingham and Bungay. Furthermore Henry had set about building a royal castle at Orford in Suffolk. This meant that Hugh Bigod had once controlled the East Anglian region but due to Henry's curbing of Baronial power he was being threatened for authority in the region by the king himself. Hugh Bigod went on to be one of the key rebellious barons so this is a clear example of how Henry's policy of controlling the baronial power caused division and rebellion. This is because the Barons were seemingly displeased at how Henry would take their land and castles in order to assert the royal dominance. He would often keep some of their previous land as well as in the case of Hugh Mortimer who lost Brighthelmston castle completely to Henry in 1154. As castles were symbols of power and wealth this was seen as a direct attack on the power of the Barons directly stemming from the policies Henry adopted with immediate effect in 1154. Therefore in this aspect of the rebellion Henry's policy from 1154 clearly had a great extent of influence in causing the Rebellion of 1173 as his removal of Barons land and castles caused such great discontent.

Henry adopted other policies in 1154 in order to create greater royal authority which also had a great extent of influence on the rebellion of 1173. Foremost of these he removed many Earls by letting their earldom lapse. This is a key motive for the rebellion of Robert, Earl of Leicester, whose family had controlled the earldoms of Worcester, Bedford and Hertfordshire until Henry removed them causing the family to lose a great deal of power in the midlands. This is the same of Hugh of Chester who was not given the hereditary rights to land awarded to his father in 1153. Therefore Henry's policy from 1154 to diminish the power of individual earls or families in order to restore Royal authority was greatly unpopular and also juxtaposed to the reign of Stephen who had given out a great deal of Earldoms to receive support. Henry also removed a great deal of power and income from the barons when he reformed the financial system in 1154 with the number of mints shrinking from 30 to 10. This took power from the hands of the barons

who resented the fact that they would lose a huge amount of income that had been allowed of them under Stephen. This great juxtaposition to the relative laxness of the reign of Stephen meant that a large number of barons lost power they had receive only a few years before. This angered them with many such as Robert of Leicester believing this power was owed to them rather than Henrys to take away. Therefore once again the extent that Henrys 1154 policies caused the rebellion can be seen as the decisions Henry made in 1154 directly alienated barons who, already suspicious of the Angevin king, became staunchly unhappy with his reign. This eventually led to the rebellion of 1173 so it is clear that the policy of persuading the Barons in 1154 and removing their power was a great extent of the motives for rebelling in 1173.

There were, however, other motives for the Rebellion. Firstly Henry dealt poorly with the inheritance of land when concerning his sons. This is clear in 1173 when Henry agreed to give his youngest son John control of three important castles in Anjou in a meeting to agree his betrothal with Count Humbert. This issue with this is that Henry had previously told his sons Young Henry, Richard and Geoffrey which parts of the Angevin dominion they would inherit with young Henry in line to receive strategically important areas such as Normandy and Anjou. However they only received this upon Henrys death and seeing their younger sibling receive power of lands before them frustrated them with all three being involved in the rebellion. Henry also had a great deal of active enemies on his borders who held grudges and the aim to conquer various parts of his dominions including William the lion of Scotland who wanted a return of areas such as Northumberland, The count of Blois who was promised continental holdings and Louis VII who wanted to reduce the power of Henry, even Henry's wife Eleanor became an instigator. This created a cauldron of rebellious sentiment within which the enemies of Henry used the dissatisfaction of Young Henry and the other sons to persuade them to rebel against Henry. Therefore another reason behind the rebellion in 1173 was both the discontent of Henry's snubbed sons and the numerous enemies Henry had accumulated. Both of these reasons fed and grew upon the actions of the other and were interlinked in causing the rebellion, proof for this coming from Young Henry joining forces with Louis to attack Normandy and seeking refuge in France. However they did not play as great an extent in the rebellions as Henrys policies in 1154 did. This is because the required a great deal of support from within England itself in order to fester and cause the great rupture it did. Furthermore we can see that some of the most active members of the rebellion including Hugh who torched Norwich were directly influenced by, ironically, the loss of influence they had suffered at the hands of Henry with the English rebels bringing armies of mercenaries to Suffolk to combat Henry. As well as this it is considered that many of the rebel barons were advisors to Young Henry as may have caused his decision to rebel therefore the rebellious barons were both motivated themselves and caused the motivation of arguably the most important member of the rebellion Young Henry. Therefore the policies of 1154 were also responsible for the rebellion of Young Henry

So overall the policies adopted by Henry in 1154 caused the great rebellion of 1173 to a greater extent than any other factors involved in the motivations of the rebels. This can be seen as the rebel barons such as Robert of Leicester and Hugh Bigod were all rebelling over direct effects of the Henry's 1154 policies of baronial suppression. Furthermore these same barons were directly responsible for Young Henry and his brother's decision to rebel against Henry. Finally the external enemies of Henry such as William of Scotland also had a small extent of the blame for the rebellion however it is clear they were just using the existing malcontent for their own gains and without the 1154 policies the rebellion in 1173 would never have taken place.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer has range, in that it considers various reasons for the Rebellion and supports the analysis with appropriate and relevant detail. It is generally well controlled and analytical. The major weakness of the answer is in the balance of treatment of the various reasons and the emphasis placed on each. There needed to be development of the other reasons and, arguably, more focus on the issue of the extent to which baronial policy was so important compared, for example, with Henry's dysfunctional family. It is a Level 4 response.