



GCSE HISTORY

8145/2B/C
Report on the Examination

8145
November 2020

Version: 1.0

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General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

The entry for this component was very small in comparison with previous years. From their study of the syllabus students had varying levels of relevant knowledge and understanding to use in their answers. In general, fewer overall reached the highest levels of response identified in the mark scheme than in previous years. Exam technique did not appear to be as highly developed as it might have been and students are encouraged to ensure that they fully address the precise demands of each question as set rather than include generalised information which tended to describe points rather than explain them.

Comments on Individual Questions

Paper 2 Section B/B: ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND, 1568-1603

Question 1

Students appeared to find the interpretation straightforward, although many, as in last year's paper on this question, did not address the key word 'convincing'. A few responses included speculative comments about the author and his trustworthiness or reliability, which could not be credited. The interpretation offered students a large number and variety of points from which they could choose to develop and demonstrate good knowledge of the Earl of Essex.

At Level 1, responses were often based on a paraphrase of the content of the interpretation and were generalised. Many answers also asserted rather than explained. Responses often included basic comments about Essex and/or his actions.

At Level 2, responses demonstrated a simple understanding of a number of aspects of Essex's character or behaviour.

At Levels 3 and 4, a small number of students demonstrated their understanding and knowledge by applying specific knowledge to the points made in the interpretation. However, at all levels, examiners noticed frequent confusion between Dudley and Devereux; William and Robert Cecil.

Question 2

There were many responses which either demonstrated very little knowledge about Puritanism or its importance in Elizabethan England, or where the question was not attempted.

At Levels 1 and 2, there was much confusion about Catholics, Protestants and Puritans and several accounts dwelt upon pre-Elizabethan religious changes or linked Puritanism to the Armada.

At Levels 3 and 4, a small number of responses addressed the 'important' aspect of the question and there was a much firmer grasp of the chronology involved. A clearer focus on the outcomes of the growing influence of Puritans and Puritanism in England was evidenced by more punitive legislation against them.

Question 3

Students appeared keen to show their knowledge of the theatre but all too often their answers concentrated on its layout and seating arrangements, rather than how it developed or was dealt with by the authorities.

At Levels 1 and 2, answers were mainly of a narrative nature with generalised views that theatres were the same and existed throughout England. At Level 2, responses most commonly identified different groups of theatre-goers but answers were weighed down with lengthy descriptions of their varying types and behaviours. At Levels 3 and 4, responses displayed a clear understanding of the development of theatres and their exclusive presence in London. Different types of opposition were shown as was the importance of patronage and the Queen's clear support. Shakespeare's importance was also stressed although, too often, this point ended up as a list of his plays. There were few references to the Renaissance or to the 'Golden Age'.

Question 4

Significantly, nearly two fifths of responses achieved Level 1 or zero (by not addressing the question per se). There were, however, some excellent answers at Level 4. These students answered this question well and impressed the examiners. It was clear that students had made good use of the Historic Environment resource pack.

At Level 2, answers tended to be a series of points, not linked and often of a narrative nature. A great deal of emphasis was placed upon bad weather.

At Level 3 there were more developed answers, often with one or two good points within a simpler overview.

However, at Level 4 there were many good answers which presented a relevant argument and demonstrated significant knowledge of events, prior, during and after the Spanish Armada. A judgement commonly formed was that the leadership of both sides was the key issue but linked closely with other factors.

Concluding Remarks

The paper proved broadly comparable to that set in previous years in terms of its demands and level of difficulty. Students had knowledge of the subject content but did not always apply their narratives to precisely meet the demands of the questions set. It is worth bearing in mind that the significant difference between responses achieving Level 2 and those achieving Level 3 is the ability of students to be explicit about the key point of the question; at Level 2 answers tend to be implicit and only partially substantiated whilst at Level 3, explicit links are made to the issue stated in the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.