
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1A The Age of the Crusades, c1071-1204
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

Many of the students sitting this paper had clearly revised and prepared very thoroughly. Time management was very good and there was some impressive subject knowledge displayed, with a generally high level of conceptual understanding shown. There was much enthusiasm and confidence shown in many of the answers, and it was good to see that many students were willing to embrace the breadth element of the questions. A minority had poor written communication skills, including grammar and legibility, which does make assessing extended answers more difficult. Many students had clearly engaged in wider reading of historians and this was reflected in references to scholarship in their answers. It is not a requirement for students to refer to the views of historians, but it will be credited if relevant. However, students should be encouraged to think about how they can use quotations judiciously to back up an argument, or to provide a point of view that they can then challenge- simply writing out lengthy quotations in lieu of factual support is not an effective technique.

Question 01

With this question, students were required to evaluate three separate extracts in relation to an issue – the condition of Outremer in the 1120s and 1130s. They were not asked to compare the given extracts, nor evaluate their provenance and bias. Those that did this wasted valuable time, although they were not penalised for so doing. The answer did not require an introduction –nor an overall conclusion, but some concluding judgement on each extract in relation to the question posed was helpful to meet the criteria for the highest marks. The most obvious differentiator between students' answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each extract. Some students adopted a line by line approach, which neither showed any overall understanding, nor kept the answer focused on the question's demands. For the benefit of those preparing students for a future examination, it might be worth reiterating the importance of first considering the topic to be addressed (which follows the 'in relation to...' in the question) and then assimilating the whole extract before starting to write. Students should be reminded that the key argument of an extract does not necessarily appear in the first line.

The best answers considered the holistic argument across the whole extract and evaluated ways in which they found the arguments put forward by the historians as convincing or not. Extract A essentially argued that Outremer was surviving, but precarious; Extract B argued that Outremer's problems were mainly internal and political due to ongoing weaknesses in the Muslim World; Extract C focused on the long term issue of manpower and argued that the Franks struggled to advance inland, especially as the Muslim world was becoming more united. Students needed to provide evidence about the 1120s and 1130s from their own knowledge to back up or to challenge the historians' opinions. This was often done well, though some students focused almost exclusively on one or two lines from the whole extract and then wrote an entire answer about this, rather than thinking about the extract as a whole. For example, in Extract A castles are mentioned as being key to Outremer's survival. Some students wrote extensively about castles, giving numerous examples and lots of factual detail- whilst this was not irrelevant, it did leave candidates with little time to comment upon Riley-Smith's interpretation more broadly.

Most students were aware of the need to try and challenge elements of the interpretations, which was good, but often this was completed in a formulaic way. For example, lots of answers took issue with Tibble's argument in Extract C, giving examples of battles won by Baldwin II as evidence that he was wrong. However, this did not actually tackle what the extract was saying, which was not about battles, it was suggesting that the Franks struggled to capture territories away from the

coast. Thus, any challenge needs to be a direct critique of what the historian is saying. Most students did attempt to do this, however, and there was far fewer ‘arguments from omission’ than there has been in the past, which was pleasing.

Question 02

This was the most popular essay question, with the vast majority of students attempting it. Students had clearly revised this topic and there were some really excellent answers, filled with lots of interesting examples and analysis. To advance beyond Level 2 students needed to address the breadth element of the question in some meaningful way, and there were some disappointing answers which knew much about First Crusade motivation, but provided no evidence beyond the 1090s. Many answers just wrote about the First and Second Crusades, which was often very effective, but the very best were aware of the plethora of unofficial and smaller expeditions which happened in the years between the two official crusades. Students wrote with confidence about a range of examples such as the expeditions of King Sigurd of Norway, Bohemond’s adventures against the Byzantines, the role of Venice in the capture of Tyre and Fulk’s initial visit to the Holy Land in the 1120s. Any relevant examples were credited, though students needed to focus on the issues of economic gain or spiritual reward- diversions into other possible motives (e.g. feudal obligation) were not relevant in this instance. Some students became distracted with the reasons why Popes called crusades, or the aims of the Byzantine emperors which were also not relevant here.

Question 03

Students attempting this question were often very knowledgeable about the events of Saladin’s rise to power and could give many specific examples to support their points. The very best addressed the full date range in the question, but some answers were more restricted to the 1170s. To get into Level 4 and Level 5, students needed to tackle the issue of jihad in some detail- outlining what they thought commitment to jihad might look like in a tangible sense. Weaker answers could outline what Saladin did, but were then less adept in explaining what they thought this showed about his motives. There were quite a few answers which suggested that Saladin united the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, which was clearly not the case and enormously oversimplified the situation.

Question 04

Students seemed to enjoy writing about the reasons for the diversion to Constantinople in 1204 and there was some impressive knowledge about factors such as the Treaty of Venice, the role of the Venetians and the internal problems within the Byzantine Empire. Again, it was the breadth element of the question which was ignored by some students, thus limiting the marks available to them- as this is a breadth paper students should be encouraged to treat all questions in a broad manner as this will lead to higher marks than a very focused answer with only a narrow date range considered. Any longer term references to the relations between the Byzantines and Latin Christians since the 1140s were credited. Some students considered how relations were damaged on the Second Crusade, but the most perceptive students were able to point to fairly cordial relations between Manuel Comnenus and the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the 1150s-70s. Links between the longer term and 1204 needed to be explicitly developed, some candidates just described the divisions on the Second Crusade but were unable to link them in any meaningful way to the events on the Fourth Crusade.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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