



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1B: Spain in the Age of Discovery, 1469 - 1598
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

This was first cohort of students to sit a paper on the A-level specification on Spain in the Age of Discovery 1469-1598 since 2019.. There were many students who were demonstrably well prepared with considerable knowledge and were able to express themselves with enthusiasm possibly as a result of the Advanced Information.

The breadth nature of the component allowed students to show contextual and conceptual understanding within the assessment objectives in both a positive and determined way. Section A, Question 01, addressing AO3 was an exploration of the opposition faced by Philip II. Many students offered extensive contextual own knowledge in support of their understanding and evaluation of the arguments presented within the three extracts by: Mckinnon-Bell, Hunt and Elliott.

There remained an element of avoiding the specific interpretations within the extracts whilst concentrating, in some cases, on wider context, leading to a lack of a more balanced approach. Section B, Questions 02, 03 and 04 reflected a range of key questions where students could access appropriate choices. There was consequently a pleasing spread and range of answers. Question 02 allowed students to address a range of economic issues in order to show their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of Spain's economy under Ferdinand and Isabella . Question 02 was very popular as expected and many students demonstrated precise and specific knowledge, though this was not always applied consistently to the question.

Question 03 considered the extent of religious unity within Spain in the period, 1517-1556. Again, there was some excellent recall of knowledge, although given impact of the Advance Information, there had clearly been some rote learning of facts that weren't always applicable to the question, and many of the responses were somewhat descriptive.

Question 04 offered students the opportunity to analyse and evaluate the extent to which Philip had achieved his aims in foreign policy in the years 1571-1598. Most showed an ability to think across a broad period of history, selecting relevant examples. Whilst well addressed by many students, some clearly had little knowledge and understanding, preferring narrative and chronology of different successes and failures of Philip's reign, rather than analysing the extent to which he had achieved his aims in foreign policy. Overall, whilst the quality of knowledge and ability to recall facts was very good, this was not always applied to the questions being asked and many responses were descriptive and lacked focus.

Question 01

Students were required to evaluate the arguments in the three extracts in relation to opposition faced by Philip II. They had to assess the extent to which the interpretations were convincing by drawing on contextual knowledge to corroborate and challenge the arguments presented by: McKinnon-Bell, Hunt and Elliott. They were not asked to make comparisons between the extracts, nor were they required to offer comment on provenance, tone or bias, whilst some did. Students were not rewarded, but equally not penalised for having done so. The answer did not require an introduction nor an overall conclusion, however some concluding evaluation in relation to the question was helpful in meeting the criteria for the higher levels

Many students identified the different types of opposition faced by Philip and were largely aware of the rebellions but did not proceed to use, or reference, the evidence presented in the extract beyond a simplistic acknowledgement and instead wrote everything they knew. Many students

failed to address the overall argument presented within the extract, focusing instead on a narrow point or piece of evidence that wasn't necessarily relevant. Students should be aware that they should only comment on the arguments and evidence presented in the extracts, rather than making comments on how convincing an extract is on the basis of what it does not say. In Extract A, many students made reference to opposition faced by Philip as part of his foreign policy, which was not relevant to the extract. The evidence within the extracts must be addressed as part of the answer, the inability to do so can place an answer in a maximum level 3. It is also important for students to address the topic, which follows the "in relation to" in the question and then assimilate the whole extract before starting to write. Students should be mindful that the key argument of an extract is not necessarily in the first line.

In Extract A, McKinnon-Bell referred to the opposition faced by Philip as "serious". He goes on to state that the opposition took a variety of forms, from complaints about taxation by the Cortes, to the most serious rebellion he faced; the Dutch revolt. He argues that both the Morisco and Aragonese revolts shook the King's authority to its core, and the opposition in general had a significant impact on his ability to rule. The best responses here were able to evaluate the extent to which opposition was indeed a serious threat, with the best answers showing an awareness of the differing threats posed due to causes, extent and consequences of the rebellions. Many students, however, focused exclusively or at least predominantly on the Dutch revolt and often fell into narrative descriptions of the events, rather than analysing the extent to which it was the most serious threat. The phrase "most serious" also led many students to compare these threats to other unrelated events, such as the Spanish Armada or the Battle of Lepanto.

Extract B took the opposite view to A, with Hunt arguing that both the Aragonese and Morisco revolts were dealt with easily and left Philip's authority intact, and indeed that his absolutism was preserved. Most students were able to make some comment about the more positive appraisal of Philip's royal authority in handling the rebellions, with some specific knowledge on both the events and consequences. However, there was a common tendency to focus on a very narrow aspect of the extract, with many students including lengthy descriptions of Philip's absolutism. As this was a specification point on the Advanced Information, it could be that students had revised this topic very thoroughly, leading them to focus on this particular word. Sadly, this was often at the detriment of the main arguments put forward in the extract.

Extract C had a different argument, focussing on Philip's reaction to the Aragonese revolt, the impact on royal authority, and also drawing comparisons with both the Dutch revolt and Philip's acquisition of Portugal. Stronger responses to this extract were able to draw meaningful comparisons, and showing a good understanding of the changing nature of Philip's royal authority and style of ruling. However, again possibly as a result of the Advanced Information, students were generally too keen to relay their knowledge of the Dutch revolt and the acquisition of Portugal, both of which had clearly been revised very thoroughly on the whole. This led to a proliferation of descriptive responses that did not adequately analyse or evaluate the extract.

Question 02

There was a mixed range of responses to this question, which required the students to analyse the extent to which the economy of Spain had been significantly strengthened in the years 1492 to 1516. There was some excellent subject knowledge, and students who had answered this question well were able to give a range of examples, and provide good analysis and judgement on the relative strengths of the Spanish economy by 1516. However, there was a lack of understanding of the meaning of economy, with many students writing extensively about taxation, and royal finances. Unless this could be linked in a meaningful way to the economy (eg royal finances

improved but this was not used to improve infrastructure so did not strengthen the economy). Students who had written predominantly about royal finances were largely placed in level 2. For those students who did focus on the economy, there was a tendency to place too much emphasis on the impact of the New World, with many making references to developments that did not take place until the 1530s or 1540s.

Again, possibly as a result of the Advanced Information, many students had included references to a wide range of events and developments in the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, particularly in terms of social and religious policy. There was generally a desire to write about the nobles, and the expulsions of the Jews and Muslims. Whilst there was some attempt to link this to the question, and to the ways in which these aspects of policy might have strengthened or weakened the economy, there were also many responses that were descriptive and not sufficiently analytical, and therefore placed at level 2 or 3.

Question 03

The question focused on the extent to which religious unity was achieved in Spain by 1556. It was primarily focused on the impact of the Reformation within Spain, the impact of social and religious policies and the state of the Catholic Church in Spain. The key factors were: Lutheranism, Erasmianism, Alumbrados and the Illuminists. References could also include the continued existence of both Conversos and Moriscos. There was no expectation of reference beyond Spain unless as a context for religious unity in Spain. Students who wrote at length about the HRE or the Ottomans were not sufficiently focused or relevant, with students giving descriptive answers and therefore placed in level 2.

As religious policy was the only specification point for Charles given on the Advance Information, the calibre and extent of students knowledge was extremely good. The best responses gave an analytical response, judging the extent to which religious unity had been achieved, using a range of different examples including Lutheranism, Humanism, Conversos and Moriscos, as well as making reference to issues within the Catholic Church itself, which prevented any real religious unity. Some students referred to the Inquisition and how this was used as a tool to impose conformity.

Whilst there were some very good answers to this question, many students, though displaying an impressive level of subject knowledge, had not sufficiently addressed the issue of religious unity. There were many references to religious dissent, or the threat posed by different groups, generally with an extremely heavy focus on the Lutherans and Humanists not sufficiently linked to the issue of 'unity'. This was possibly in reference to a question on religious dissent that appeared on the June 2018 paper, and some students had clearly learnt an answer to this question, rather than the one set in 2022. This led to a larger number of responses being placed at level 2, as they were descriptive with some irrelevant detail and insufficient understanding of the question. It is crucial that students understand the importance of answering the question they are being set, rather than simply regurgitating knowledge on a given topic.

Question 04

This question focused on the extent to which Philip had achieved his aims in foreign policy, with a focus on the latter decades of his reign, beginning in 1571. The question required an analysis and understanding of Philip's aims in foreign policy, which is a separate specification point, rather than

a description of the various successes and failures of the events of foreign policy between 1571 and 1598.

The best responses to this question were able to analyse Philip's aims and use their knowledge of foreign policy to evaluate the extent to which he had achieved those aims. There was often reference to religious aims and the protection of Catholicism, as well as the aim of protecting and defending his empire and inheritance and maintaining Spain's prestige and "Great Power" status. Some students were able to address each of these aims separately, and to analyse the extent to which Philip's aims changed between 1571 and 1598.

Many of the students had clearly revised the specification points relating to foreign policy very thoroughly, but had a tendency to lead to descriptive responses. There was a general lack of understanding of the question, with many students failing to address the concept of "aims" at all, and instead writing lengthy descriptions of the key events of Philip's foreign policy, with most suggesting that the Battle of Lepanto and the acquisition of Portugal were successes, and the Spanish Armada, Dutch Revolt and conflict with the French were failures. Where there was no reference to the question at all, even where the quality of knowledge was good, responses were placed at level 1 or 2. If some attempt had been made to make some reference to aims, responses were placed at level 3. Unless there was specific analysis of Philip's aims in foreign policy, responses were not placed in level 4 or 5. There a number of references made to Parker's "messianic imperialism", with few showing any real understanding of what this means or linking it meaningfully to the question.

As with question 3, it is crucial that students are aware of the importance of reading the question carefully, and that knowledge itself is only rewarded if it is being used to answer the exact question that has been set.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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