
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2A Royal Authority and the Angevin Kings, 1154-1216
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of students had revised thoroughly for this exam and the level of contextual own knowledge was often very impressive indeed. Time was generally well managed and most students attempted three answers in some detail. A minority had poor written communication skills, including grammar and legibility, which does make assessing extended answers more difficult. A lot of 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 the value of three separate sources in relation to an issue – the relationship between Henry II and King Louis VII of France. They were not asked to compare the given sources and those who did wasted valuable time, although they were not penalised for so doing. The answer did not require an introduction or an overall conclusion, but some concluding judgement on each source in relation to the question posed was helpful to meet the criteria for the highest marks.

Many students demonstrated wide knowledge of this topic area and were able to assess the value of the sources with reference to a good variety of contextual information. The best answers kept a secure focus on the issue in the question, where some weaker ones allowed the focus to lapse (e.g. with source B becoming too focused on the Becket crisis rather than Henry's relations with Louis). It was pleasing to see that many students had clearly engaged in wider reading about some of the popular chroniclers of the period and they were able to deploy this knowledge very effectively in their assessment of value.

Most answers attempted to balance the assessments being made - with consideration of both the strengths and the limitations within the sources. However, there were some students who wasted time by paraphrasing the entire source and then simply saying 'I know this is true'. This 'fact checking' approach does not garner many marks. Most students made an effort to identify the provenance and the tone of the sources, but many failed to then make specific comments about how this might affect the value of the source in relation to the question. Some students needed to go beyond the generic, 'this source is biased and so is not valuable' or 'this was written at the time and so is accurate' and become more nuanced in their assessments. Equally, 'this is valuable because it shows the Church's view of events' is fairly low-level analysis. There were some answers which demonstrated a limited awareness of the purpose of certain types of sources, for example saying that 'chroniclers write to tell the truth and so do not lie', 'chronicles are written to inform and so do not have agendas' or 'monks cannot lie as they are religious figures'. This generic approach is not very effective. Tone does not have to be commented on, unless clearly important, to achieve full marks and the most effective answers linked comments on tone to an assessment of the actual content and argument at the same time.

It is worth noting that comments on provenance need to be securely developed in order to access the higher levels of the mark scheme - it is not simply an 'add on' to the rest of the answer. Those answers which achieved the best marks dealt thoroughly with the main arguments within the sources, alongside a developed assessment of provenance. It was disappointing to see a persistent minority making very few references to 'value' at all and conflating this with validity,

utility, reliability and accuracy, which are not the same thing. It is vital that regular links to the wording of the specific question are made.

Question 02

This essay question was the most popular of the three and allowed most students to demonstrate very good knowledge about the topic area. The best answers provided a good range of precise evidence about the issues facing Henry in the first 12 years of his reign, covering areas such as the problems posed by the barons and the issues in the financial and judicial systems. The key to achieving the best marks was in balancing the answer in some way- as this allowed for an effective evaluation of the extent to which Henry had failed or succeeded. Some candidates lapsed into a description of what Henry did which was detailed, but rather lacking in terms of evaluation. The best answers were able to reflect upon the issue of 1166 in particular and why this might have been significant to the question. Many answers considered Henry's relationship with Becket and the Church. This was not expected (due to the Advanced Information document) but was rewarded as being relevant. Where students strayed into considering Henry's issues in his French territories, this was less relevant, unless it could be linked back to Henry's royal authority in England. Many students referred to the views of historians in this essay, but this was often done in an uncritical way and did not add much to many answers. Indeed, in some cases, this rather detracted from the quality of the students' own opinions and ideas.

Question 03

This essay was the second most popular option, but was the least well answered of the three essays. The best answers had wide knowledge about the government and state of England across the full decade of Richard's reign and there was much good detail about (for example) the problems caused by William Longchamp or the administrative reforms of Hubert Walter. The very best candidates thought critically about what 'damage' might look like- often concluding that Richard's absences might have led to a little instability, but that real damage was difficult to discern. It was also pleasing to see that students had thought about different groups within England and reflected upon the impact upon nobles, ordinary peasants and minority communities like the Jews as not necessarily being a uniform experience. A disappointing number of students lapsed into a narrative account of the arrangements Richard made when he went on the Third Crusade- these answers were often quite detailed, but assessment of damage was implicit at best. Equally, candidates who finished their answers in 1193 were unlikely to achieve higher than a Level 3 mark.

Question 04

This was the least popular essay question, but there were some very good answers to it. Strong answers were very familiar with the causes of baronial discontent and were able to make precise links between, for example, key clauses in the Magna Carta and specific rebel barons. Given the focus of the question, it was expected that candidates would be able to write in some detail about John's financial policies and that they would be able to provide evidence to link these policies to the events of 1215/16. Many students chose to balance their answer by considering more longer term issues such as John's loss of Normandy, or even the style of rule of the Angevins more broadly. This was often very effective, but only when precise links to 1216/16 were established. For example, whilst it was the case that John was accused of murdering his nephew Arthur in 1203, a clear link to the actions of the rebels over a decade later needed to be drawn for this to become a

convincing line of argument. Students should work to familiarise themselves with the clauses of the charter (although they will not be penalised if they forget the specific wording or numbering of clauses) and also the events which happened in the wake of the annulment of Magna Carta- the appeal to Prince Louis of France was often not mentioned, which was surprising in the context of 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.