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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2B The Wars of the Roses, 1450 - 1499  
Report on the Examination

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## Question 01

Generally, the sources for question 01 were handled well; most students achieved at level three or above. This demonstrates that their answers had some validity and were generally focused on the question. Students understand that they need to consider the content, provenance and historical context of each source and the vast majority of responses demonstrated some ability to use these attributes to assess the value of the sources. The vast majority of responses made use of all three sources.

An area where some students would benefit from further support is in developing the skill of making inferences. A significant minority paraphrased the contents of the sources, rather than making an inference to demonstrate how they were of value. For example, when using Source A, less convincing responses might comment that the source was useful as it showed that key Lancastrian nobles were killed. This demonstrated the ability to lift evidence from the source. Better responses inferred that the source was useful for showing the change in the balance of power, supporting their inference with the evidence from the source that key Lancastrians were killed, and then explaining that this gave Yorkists the opportunity to take control.

Students sometime take a somewhat mechanical approach to their answers, systematically considering the different approaches used to assess value, without questioning whether all are relevant to the source they are considering. For example, on source A, students often argued that the source had limitations because the tone was biased. They cited the use of titles such as 'my lord' to conclude that the author was partisan to the Yorkists and over stating this as a biased tone rather than understanding that this was a common way to address the nobility at this time. These comments were, therefore, unconvincing. Students should have the confidence to comment on tone where there are clear issues relating to it, but to discard it as a criterion for assessment where there is no obvious bias apparent in a source.

Students are also keen to suggest the limitations of the sources. This can be a relevant way to assess the value of each source, but many students argued that a source is limited because of omission. For example, when handling source B they would argue that it was not useful because while the source talked of the consequences of the battle, there was little about the long-term causes such as the rivalry between York and Somerset. Students should be advised that this is an inappropriate criterion against which to judge sources, as no source can comprehensively cover every aspect of an event. It should also be noted that balance can be obtained by handling different aspects of the sources (such as content, provenance and historical context) rather than having to be derived from assessing what a source is useful for, compared to its limitations. Value and usefulness should not be seen as interchangeable.

Most students demonstrated that they were able to put a source, or sources, into historical context, however the extent to which they achieved success in this skill was varied. Some used very generalised knowledge; others used wider historical context; and some used events that occurred after the source was created, making it irrelevant as the author could not have been talking about events in the future, for example stating that source C was about Love Day in 1458. The best responses used clear, precise and detailed own knowledge to explain the historical context of all three sources, in order to demonstrate that they were or were not typical of what happened and therefore of use.

This year it was noticeable that a number of students, when using a source's provenance, would assert a feature without explaining how it made it valuable or not. For example, they might say that source C was written at a time when York controlled parliament and, therefore, what was

written in the parliamentary rolls, without explaining how this impacted the value of the source. There were also speculative comments made. For example, concluding that since source B was written by an Italian bishop, there may be issues relating to his understanding of the English language. Such comments were speculative and therefore unconvincing.

A significant majority of students would have benefited from further focus on their ability to make substantiated judgments about the sources. Many made no attempt to make a definitive argument; others wrote summative statements, without making a definitive judgment; and others tried to decide which source was the most valuable when there is no requirement to assess the relative value of the sources. The best responses featured a clearly substantiated argument that assessed the value of each source, which was well explained and supported.

### **Question 02**

This was the second most popular essay choice. Most students attempting this question achieved a level three or higher, which demonstrates that the majority of students had at least a reasonable understanding of the question and were able to draw on a range of evidence to consider at least one side of the argument. There was also a good number of students who were able to construct a balanced and analytical argument, with the most common approach considering whether it was Richard of York or Margaret of Anjou who were responsible for instability from 1456-1460.

This was also the essay where the highest proportion of students demonstrated the skills required to achieve a level 5. The most common approach to achieving a balanced, analytical argument in which an overall judgment was substantiated was to conclude that York and Anjou took advantage of the weaknesses of Henry VI and therefore the King himself should be considered most responsible for political instability in this era. Other successful responses considered developments such as the significance of the Act of Accord or Parliament of Devils; or examined the idea of trigger events, for example the attainders passed at the Parliament of Devils leaving York with nothing to lose and therefore leading to the Act of Accord, making Anjou more responsible as York's actions were a response, not a trigger.

Less convincing responses were based on limited understanding of events and their significance, or identified relevant evidence without clearly explaining it or linking it to the question.

### **Question 03**

Question 03 was the least popular essay option. However, there were some impressive responses that had a good understanding of the significance of the challenges that Edward IV faced in his second reign, such as the issues caused by his brother, the Duke of Clarence. Many responses did, however, conclude that these challenges were not significant as they were dealt with effectively by Edward, but the focus of the response was describing the issue rather than demonstrating how easily Edward dismissed it. Therefore, the analysis in these points was often partial or unconvincing. This approach also led to there being a significant number of responses that failed to show appropriate balance.

There were also a few responses that focused on whether Edward's second reign was a success, rather than whether he faced significant challenges to his authority. Such responses used evidence such as Edward's handling of royal finances by introducing the black book and

ordinances, without linking this to his popularity and therefore the lack of challenge to his authority. There were also a notable minority who confused Edward's first reign with his second, and wrote of factors such as Warwick's defection to the Lancastrian cause or Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville which made their responses largely irrelevant.

One noteworthy response cleverly used the historical concept of chronology as a framework against which to make a substantiated judgment; arguing that the main challenges Edward faced were at the start of the years in the question, when the Lancastrians were still at large; however, after the execution of Edward of Westminster, the death of Henry VI and the exile of Margaret of Anjou, challenges became less significant as there was no real figurehead left for opponents to rally around. The overall judgment in this response was that while there were significant challenges to Edward IV's authority at the start of his second reign, by 1478 he had effectively eliminated any real threats. The use of historical concepts, such as this, can be an affective criterion against which to make substantiated overall judgments.

#### **Question 04**

This was the most popular essay choice, and the vast majority of students had a good understanding of a range of the issues that Richard faced by the end of 1484, such as: Richard's reputation as a usurper; the rumours surrounding the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower; the Buckingham Rebellion; the rise of Henry Tudor; the untimely death of Richard's heir; and the upset caused by plantation of northern nobility in the south.

However, while the evidence that proved that Richard was in a weak position by 1484 was generally well deployed, students were less confident when considering evidence that Richard's position was not extremely weak. The better responses examined evidence such as: Richard's use of Titus Regulus to establish himself as the rightful king; his ability to effectively and decisively quash the Buckingham rebellion; or the fact that Tudor was still based in Brittany, having been unable to invade at this point.

The vast majority concluded that Richard was in an extremely weak position by the end of 1484, as can perhaps be expected, but it was disappointing that few students were able to show balance effectively.

As with all questions, there were students who lost focus on the question as they considered events that happened after 1484, such as the death of Anne Neville or the Battle of Bosworth without any attempt to make them relevant to 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.