



---

# A-LEVEL HISTORY

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

---

7042  
June 2019

---

Version: 1.0

---

---

Further copies of this Report are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2019 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

## General

Generally, students continue to use their time efficiently, with the vast majority producing substantial responses to the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02, Q03 or Q04). There was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers.

With regard to the essay questions, Q04 proved the more popular, but there was a range of strong and weaker responses to all three.

Students' ability to communicate their ideas effectively remains a defining factor in how well individuals are able to demonstrate their skills and achieve within the criteria of the mark scheme. While the structure of response to the source question (Q01) generally allowed students to demonstrate their understanding, a number of students failed to plan and write essays in a coherent manner, leading to some confusion of understanding.

A further area that many centres would benefit from considering with their students is the importance of dates within questions. Further clarification regarding the roles and significance of key members of the nobility would also be beneficial for students, who often have good understanding of the royal families, but less specific detail about other key figures. In the responses to all four questions there were a significant number of students considering poorly selected or irrelevant contextual knowledge which meant that ideas were often under-developed.

## Question 01

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and an overall judgment about the value of each source. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, something of each was expected in answers. There was no expectation that provenance/tone and content should be discrete sections. On the contrary, answers that blended these tended to do better by avoiding comments on provenance without own knowledge relevant to the question.

Whilst the majority of students were aware that their response should involve evaluation of the aforementioned areas, many were unable to demonstrate these skills in a meaningful manner. Students often commented upon components as if they were separate entities, leading to contradictory points about the source in question. Students also considered the areas requiring evaluation, but often without sufficient focus on the aims of the Yorks, especially when handling source A which often became a consideration of Yorkist grievances. A number of students seemed to have been trained in exam technique, which they attempt to apply without fully understanding the specific sources or the question in its entirety. This leads to formulaic answers, that consider the three elements required to answer this question, but without focus on the specifics of the question.

Students were generally able to understand the content of sources and made valid comments regarding the content and argument. Very few students relied solely on this aspect of evaluation; the vast majority were able to develop their answer by relating content and argument to either wider or, in more effective responses, contextual knowledge specific to 1460.

Some evaluation of provenance was 'stock' in nature, relying on judgements that could be made of any source of a similar background (for example: 'it was written at the time so it must be accurate').

A similar issue was making comments about a source being biased without developing this into a comment regarding the value of a source. Centres would be well advised to address this with students.

When considering contextual knowledge the majority of students were able to apply sources within the wider historical context of the era. A significant minority were able to root their evaluation firmly within the specific historical context of 1460, but too many failed to consistently make connections to key events. There was very little understanding of the significance of 1460.

On occasion, students also attempted to argue that sources lacked value because they omitted details regarding events that occurred after the source in question was created. This was not a fair or valid comment and therefore students did not gain marks. The use of relevant contextual knowledge is an area that centres should focus on when preparing future cohorts for the examination.

Very few students demonstrated skills from within the criteria of the highest level of the mark scheme; whilst some students did attempt to reach judgements they were not convincing enough to exceed level four.

## **Question 02**

This was the second most popular of the three essay questions and students achieved a wide range of marks. The majority of students achieved a level three or higher on their responses to question 02. Many students were able to achieve half marks or more on this response, which demonstrates that they were generally aware that they needed to show balance and were able to select, consider and deploy a reasonable range of contextual knowledge in order to respond to the question.

Students who answered in a more effective manner were able to grasp the nuances of the question, were able to consider the significance of events that Margaret of Anjou orchestrated or was involved in, in order to consider how influential she was. Students often had good knowledge of events such as the Parliament of Devils, but their ability to deploy contextual knowledge from the earlier years of the decade was less successful.

A significant number of students produced a limited, narrative account, failing to analyse their ideas. Others attempted to produce a balanced response, however only considered Margaret of Anjou as one factor and tried to argue that other key individuals (such as York or Somerset) were more influential. Responses in this category were insufficiently focused on the question to achieve beyond level three.

Another typical issue in responses that failed to reach the higher levels, was the tendency to gloss over evidence; students referred to events such as Margaret moving the council to the Midlands, but without specific details or consideration of how these events made her influential (or not).

There was little evidence of students planning their answers prior to attempting them and this was evident in responses that often meandered through an answer rather than offering a precise, coherent and considered essay. Where students had planned, answers tended to be more articulate and better demonstrated the skills required to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme, such as providing a convincing line of reasoning to reach a judgement. Their ability to substantiate points with crisp and useful contextual knowledge was more evident.

**Question 03**

Whilst this was the least popular of the essay options, a higher proportion of students who attempted question 03 demonstrated good subject knowledge and skills of analysis. However, it is also true that a number of students, while well versed on the financial successes of Edward IV's second reign, struggled to construct a counter argument.

There were some students whose responses relied on evidence regarding events beyond the chronology of the question or whose contextual knowledge was flawed or inaccurate. For example, a number of students proclaimed that Edward's successes were limited because the economy collapsed when he died or focusing on his lack of financial success during his first reign. While it can be expected that students will make simple mistakes in their use of evidence during the pressures of an examination, some inaccuracies lead to flawed lines of reasoning which had serious impacts on their final mark.

Again, students would benefit from the advice to plan their responses before writing them. There were a number of answers that became narrative or poorly organised, because students failed to give their response due consideration prior to committing pen to paper, resulting in them losing focus on the question at hand.

**Question 04**

This was the most popular of the essay options, with the vast majority of students attempting it and there were a good range in the quality of responses. The most common issue for those who handled it poorly, was insufficient focus on the dates and/or partial readings of the question. Students often focused on Richard's weaknesses, failing to connect their chosen evidence to Richard's actual loss of the throne. The vast majority of students gave too much credence to the succession crisis of 1483 and/or deaths of the princes in the tower. These events could have been made relevant to the events of 1484-5, but all too often were not, meaning that many students fell into the trap of writing an essay about how popular Richard was rather than why he ultimately lost the crown. Students also often failed to grasp the significance of the Battle of Bosworth itself, claiming that Richard being unpopular meant that he failed to muster the numbers required to win the battle and missing the fact that Richard's army was in fact the larger at the outset of the Battle. Students who argued that Richard lacked the support of key nobles, such as Oxford or William Stanley, tended to develop a more convincing line of argument.

There were also a number of common misconceptions regarding contextual knowledge; for example, a number of students confused Thomas and William Stanley and while this sometimes did not affect the analysis, in less effective responses it did. Whilst it is understandable that students might confuse the key individuals, especially when so closely related, it is key to understanding much of this period and centres would be well advised to spend time clarifying who was who when teaching this component.

Generally, students' counter arguments were the stronger of the two in this essay. Students were able to link the actions of Henry Tudor, his (and Oxford's) military strategy and the role of other key individuals such as Margaret Beaufort, dowager Queen Elizabeth and Jasper Tudor, clearly to the question in order to analyse how and why Richard lost the throne in 1485.

More effective responses also demonstrated a pleasing range of overall judgments, being able to explain why they felt that factor was more significant and/or linked to others. However, failure to

link supporting arguments clearly to the dates in the question often meant that even with convincing clinching arguments, students failed to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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