

AS Level

History

Stuart Britain and the Crisis of Monarchy, 1603–1702

7041/1D Absolutism challenged: Britain, 1603–1649

Report on the Examination

7041

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General

Students mostly deployed their time effectively, not writing over-long answers to the extracts in question 01, but using the time given to undertake careful reading of the extracts to get a clearer understanding of the arguments outlined in both before beginning to write. In responding to the essay questions in Section B, the best answers were clearly balanced and focused on the specific wording of the question.

01

The vast majority of students took each extract in turn and assessed it by considering the overall argument and then focusing on sub-sections of the argument. The strongest evaluations backed their commentaries with well-selected contextual information. Strong responses were also marked by a consistent focus linking to the question. Most of the better able students understood that Extract A argued that there had been a partial royal tyranny and that the problem was Charles' misuse of his powers, such as levying emergency taxation. With respect to Extract B, most were able to comment how the limits of the state actually hindered the extent to which Charles could be a tyrant. Weaker students took the extracts too literally and adopted a line-by-line approach with little recognition of argument or the question.

02

Most students were able to outline religious events that could be seen as a threat to the authority of James I, particularly at the start of his reign. These usually included the Millenary Petition, the Hampton Court Conference and the Gunpowder Plot. Stronger responses developed these to include Puritanism and considered how James managed the religious situation in the years 1603 to 1605, bringing about a balance to limit the potential threat from Puritanism. This included his use of the Hampton Court Conference to defend episcopacy and the subsequent Bancroft Canons to isolate radicals when he needed to. Similarly, understanding that James used the 1611 Bible to limit the Puritans' use of the Geneva Bible, allowed some students to show how James' actions were key in limiting challenges to his authority. Such students understood how he appreciated that there was a range of opinion in the broad group of those labelled Puritans, and, indeed, Catholics. Considering James' own actions to show how he managed religion some were able to refer to the broad nature of James' appointments to the church, with examples like Bancroft, Abbott or Andrewes. Some provided balance by commenting on James' success, or considering the limits of the threats to his authority, by reference to the relative calm of the years 1611 to 1618.

The vast majority of students made reference to the development of Arminianism after 1618 but stronger responses set this in the context of the Thirty Years War and the Puritan reaction to James' 'Rex Pacificus' approach and apparent growing favour to Arminians. Reference was often made to the 1621 Protestation. Few cited James' 1622 Direction to Preachers, but there was some good reference to James' recognition of the potential divisiveness of William Laud in comparison to his support for Lancelot Andrewes.

Most well-informed students concluded that the seriousness of the challenges to the authority of James from Protestants was limited with those most opposed being dealt with by Bancroft's Canons and leaving for self-imposed exile in the Netherlands or New England. Apart from these separatists, most Puritans remained passive. Alternatively, some able students argued that a minority of Catholic who were prepared to take action were always more of a potential threat to James, but that apart from the Gunpowder Plot, which the state had forewarning of, most Catholics were crypto-Catholics who did not directly attack James' authority.

03

Students generally understood the period 1646 to 1649. The able made reference to Charles' part in the failure of the Newcastle Propositions, his lack of serious consideration of the Heads of the Proposals and, in particular to his triggering of the Second Civil War through his Engagement with the Scots. The best responses then developed the breakdown in the relationship between the New Model Army and Parliament, considering factors such as the repeal of the vote of no addresses, the Newport Treaty and Ireton's Remonstrance in the failure of a settlement. Pride's Purge and the trial itself were used to show the influence of the New Model in bringing Charles to execution and therefore the failure of one kind of settlement. Other good responses developed themes such as religion in terms of biblical republicanism and the drive behind millenarians such as Harrison who had supported the notion of Charles as 'that man of blood' at the Windsor Prayer meeting of April 1648. Such selected examples used in support of argument were always rewarded, although 'in-depth' knowledge was less important than effective analysis and supported judgement. The period 1642 to 1646 was less well covered but some good responses outlined Charles' approach to possible negotiations and also other mistakes he made in terms of strengthening the more radical of his opponents. The period 1640 to 1642 had better coverage than the war years with particular examples made of the Incident, the Irish Rebellion and/or the Five Members' coup, as illustrative of Charles' mistakes or policies causing the failure of settlement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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