
AS

HISTORY

7041/2B: The Wars of the Roses 1450–1499
Report on the Examination

7041
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General comments

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

With regard to the essay questions, Q02 proved the more popular, but there was a range of responses to both.

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. In the responses to all three 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, all to be supported by appropriate contextual knowledge and a comparison. It was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion, 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 elements 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 causes of 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.

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 stronger responses, specific contextual knowledge.

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 1459, but too many failed to make connections to key events such as the Battles of Blore Heath and Ludford Bridge or the Parliament of Devils. 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 was not rewarded. The use of relevant contextual knowledge is an area that centres should focus on when preparing future cohorts for the exam.

Question 02

This was the more popular of the two 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. The majority of 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 – an important set of qualities for high level marks.

Students who answered in a more effective manner were able to grasp the nuances of the question, focusing on the outcomes of Towton rather than events within the decade generally. While some students were able to produce convincing arguments that examined more long-term consequences, most of the more successful answers focused on the more immediate impact of the battle. For example, there were a number of students whose use of contextual knowledge lacked precision, focusing on the Readeption of Henry VI in a manner that was irrelevant to the question.

There were also a significant number of students who focused upon the military tactics of Edward at the Battle of Towton. Again, these responses lacked sufficient focus on the question and therefore achieved marks within the lower levels of the mark scheme. Students would benefit from support in reading and understanding a question in its entirety, rather than focusing on one aspect of it.

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 more effectively 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 less popular of the two essay options, a higher proportion of students who attempted question 03 were able to achieve high level marks. However, it was also the case that a greater proportion of students achieved lower levels in comparison to those who attempted question 02, showing that there were a significant number of students whose responses were limited and use of contextual knowledge was sparse, under-developed or poorly selected.

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 Warwick survived the Battle of Barnet or that Margaret of Anjou was killed in battle at Tewkesbury. Others argued that the main cause of Edward's victory was the mental inability of Henry; while this undoubtedly has some accuracy, such observations lacked real relevance to the question. Others focused on the developing conflict between the King and Warwick as a result of Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. While it

can be expected that students will make simple mistakes in their use of evidence during the pressures of an examination, some inaccuracies led 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 stream of consciousness, 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.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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