
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1A: The Age of the Crusades, c1071–1204
Report on the Examination

7042
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General

Many of the students sitting this paper had clearly revised and prepared very thoroughly. Time management was very good and there was some impressive subject knowledge displayed, with a generally high level of conceptual understanding shown. Plenty of enthusiasm and confidence was displayed in many of the answers and it was good to see that, in many instances, students were ready to embrace the breadth element of the questions. It is worth remembering that the essay questions are always based upon the six key questions outlined in the specification and also seek to test one or more of a range of issues: change, continuity, cause, consequence, similarity, difference and significance. To this end, there are no set question stems at A-level and students need to be prepared for a range of different question types.

Question 01

In this question, students were required to evaluate three separate extracts in relation to an issue: the reasons for the survival of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the years 1099 to 1119. They were not asked to compare the given extracts, nor evaluate their provenance and possible bias. Those that did this wasted valuable time, although they were not penalised for so doing. The answer did not require an introduction nor an overall conclusion, but some concluding judgement on each extract in relation to the question posed was helpful to meet the criteria for the highest marks.

For this question, the most obvious differentiator between students lay in their ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each extract. Some students adopted a line-by-line approach which neither showed any overall understanding, nor kept the answer focused on the question demands. For the benefit of those preparing students for a future examination, it might be worth reiterating the importance of first considering the topic to be addressed (which follows the 'in relation to...' in the question) and then assimilating the whole extract before starting to write. Students should be reminded that the key argument of an extract does not necessarily appear in the first line. Most interpretations will have an overall opinion, but they will also express sub-arguments throughout the passage and the most effective answers also evaluated these. For example, Extract B considered that the skilful leadership of Baldwin I was vital, but it also pointed out that help from the West (most notably from the Italians) was important, as was the successful acquisition of ports. It should also be noted that this question was about the Kingdom of Jerusalem specifically and so lengthy descriptions of Tancred's activities in the north of Outremer, had limited relevance at best. Equally, the date range of 1099-1119 meant that contextual examples needed to be chosen from within this time period. A significant number of students wasted time on the 1098 siege of Antioch or lengthy discussions about the Military Orders.

Extract A argued that the kingdom survived, despite numerical inferiority, because of pragmatic assimilation with the indigenous population. The argument especially focused on the 'fair' treatment of Muslims living within the kingdom. This extract was often misunderstood as being a comment about rival Muslim leaders (eg the rulers of Damascus or Cairo). Therefore, much of the contextual knowledge that was offered lacked focus on how the internal aspects of the kingdom were organised. Extract B focused on Baldwin's skilled leadership and pragmatic use of Western aid, while Extract C argued that Muslim disunity was responsible for the success of the kingdom of Jerusalem. Given these different interpretations with their contradictory arguments, it was surprising how many students found all the extracts 'convincing'. Whilst there needed to be a balanced evaluation, those who took their full import on board provided much more nuanced judgement, demonstrating comprehension of, and sensible reflection on, the passages concerned. The most able students effectively tackled the sub-arguments within each extract alongside the overall interpretation. However, it was not necessary to comment on every statement, and those

who did so often finished up providing lots of scarcely relevant information on peripheral detail. This ‘fact checking’ approach had limited focus on the issue in the question. Students should consider ways in which the arguments are ‘convincing’ or ‘not-convincing’ but they should avoid an overly formulaic approach - sometimes seen in a constant style of giving 2 points in favour and 2 against. For example, one point supporting the extract’s argument and 3 criticising it might have led to a perfectly supported conclusion that the extract was not very convincing.

Some students were simply careless in their reading of the extracts and thus argued for or against suggestions that were not actually part of the passage concerned. Others underperformed because they adopted an ‘argument from omission’ approach, where they simply listed all of the detail which was not included within the passage. Students should focus on supporting or critiquing what the passage actually argued.

Question 02

This was the most popular essay question on the paper and some impressive answers were seen. The most effective answers were able to consider a range of motives held by the Pope in 1095 within the context of the wider Papal Reform Movement. There were many answers which compared the actions and desires of Urban with those of Pope Gregory VII and most students displayed secure knowledge of the Investiture Contest and initiatives such as the Libertas movement and the Peace of God movement. The most able students explained clearly how the calling of the crusade would help the Pope to become more powerful in Europe. Students could balance their answers by considering a range of other possible motives and many wrote about the appeal from Alexius or the desire to recapture Jerusalem. Less effective answers tended to ignore the breadth element of the question, focusing solely on the 1090s, or did not fully understand what was meant by ‘supremacy in Europe’. A significant minority confused this with the desire for supremacy over the Byzantines, which was a different possible motive. Some students turned the question into one about crusader motives, which was often largely irrelevant.

Question 03

This was the second most popular essay question and, again, some very effective answers were seen. It was pleasing to find students that could write with enthusiasm and confidence about this topic. There were two main ways of achieving a balanced answer and students were rewarded for either (or a combination of the two). The first was to consider the ways in which Nureddin weakened Outremer and the ways in which he didn’t. For example, many students wrote about his military successes at Inab and Artah and also considered the role played by jihad. Some students, however, struggled to deal conceptually with the idea of Nureddin as a mujahid and simply said that he waged jihad. The most capable were able to explore why this was so threatening for Outremer. In considering limitations to the threat posed by Nureddin, popular lines of argument included his troubles with Saladin and the fact that he posed little military threat to Jerusalem itself, despite his posturing. The second way in which some students balanced their answers was by considering other factors which weakened Outremer, such as a lack of Western aid or the unreliability of the Byzantines. This was often a very effective argument, but students did need to write about Nureddin in some detail in order to achieve the higher levels in the mark scheme. Some students changed the question into one debating ‘what weakened Outremer’ which wasn’t the aim of this question; Nureddin had to play a central role in any debate or evaluation. A few misconceptions crept into some answers, most notably the belief that Nureddin united the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, which was certainly not the case. However, the quality of supporting evidence was often very good.

Question 04

As with previous years, this question, which covered the end of the specification, was less popular and students who attempted it generally produced fewer high level responses. There were still some effective answers, displaying the depth of students' own knowledge in some cases. Most answers talked about the Third and Fourth crusades although there was quite a lot of description, especially regarding the Fourth Crusade. Analysis of the achievements of the Third Crusade tended to be better. However, to reach the higher levels, answers needed to consider a wider date range. For example, more able students talked about the actions of men like Philip of Flanders and the German crusade. As the question was about 'westerners', lengthy descriptions of the activities of the Syrian Franks during the reign of Baldwin IV or at Hattin were often not very relevant, unless specific Westerners were identified (eg Guy de Lusignan or Reynald de Chatillion). Some students argued that Western interventions achieved little as they didn't send much help - which wasn't a very convincing line of argument and ignored the vast amount of Westerners who did journey to the Near East in this period. The most effective answers dealt well with the issue of 'significance' and could expand upon their points with confidence.

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.