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Introduction

There were 11403 candidates taking the examination option, an increase of nearly 700, compared with June 2005. A record number had taken it in January 2006 and clearly some of these chose to re-sit six months later in the hope of an improved grade. The numbers entering for the different options varied considerably with option 12B (Mussolini) once again attracting the most takers, the only one substantially over 2000, and option 2B, (Calvin) the least, with 53. It is significant that as usual only four options attracted more than 1000 candidates and all were twentieth century alternatives. 17B just reached 2000 entrants for the first time, an indication of the growing interest in American History

There was one letter of complaint relating to option 16b, claiming that the wording of question 1 was ambiguous. There was nothing in the answers to indicate that this was the case. As always, questions were set on at least two of the four bullet points provided in the specification. In most options one of the pair tended to be considerably more popular than the other.

Most candidates were able to use the generous time allowed, one hour and fifteen minutes, to write approximately four sides of focused analysis. It is recommended that they should use some of the time writing a brief plan, although this is not of course marked. It is notable that those candidates not producing a plan frequently lost direction in their essays. Many candidates were able to write considerably more than four sides, notably on option 4b and it is a joy to encounter well supported yet focused argument. However, there is no virtue in length for length's sake. Many responses would have been better for being shorter. A tightly argued essay with selected, apposite detail tends to be more impressive than the response which desperately tries to include everything at the expense of a clear structure. On the other hand, this is not an invitation to assertion. Candidates who lacked the information to write little more than two sides cannot expect more than a low level 3 even if the material is relevant and focused. Finally it is worth reminding centres yet again that a substantial conclusion is expected. Despite this advice appearing in several reports, inadequate conclusions were common. Several very good candidates gained high Level 4 rather than Level 5 as a result of mistiming their efforts and offering only a perfunctory conclusion, or failed to gain Level 4, by omitting a conclusion altogether.

1A: Settlement and Security: Elizabethan England, 1558-88

942 candidates entered for this option, an increase of nearly a hundred on last year. Both questions attracted takers in almost equal numbers. Question 1 caused a problem to some candidates who interpreted the time-frame to be only 1559-66. These were of course only the dates attached to the Church Settlement, not the Puritan attempts to amend it. The challenges were poorly known with limited detailed support. This was particularly true of the parliamentary initiatives to amend the Church Settlement. Although the answers to the second question were on the whole better, in terms of detail known, too many saw the reference to 'plots' as an invitation to embark on narratives of the various conspiracies around Mary Queen of Scots. The best answers were able to focus on the loyalty or at least passivity of the large number of Roman Catholic sympathisers. The potential threat posed by Catholic missionaries was often ignored and few challenged 'desperation' by consideration of the long term prospects provided by a barren Queen, an overwhelmingly Catholic Europe and a revitalised Catholic Church, wedded to large areas of the country who had not embraced the Reformation with any enthusiasm.

2B: Calvin and Calvinism to 1572

The majority of the 53 candidates for this paper answered the first question. Most displayed a sound knowledge of Calvin's life and work in Geneva, and of course, the better answers showed awareness of the meaning of "increased social discipline." Many candidates were able to debate the proposition, setting the advantages of a sober, hard-working body of citizens to the artisan and mercantile elite against the irritations of many at Calvin's desire to reform and improve. Many passed hastily over this 'stated factor' and moved on to other factors such as the central role of preaching in his growing hold on the city. Some recounted the main terms of the ecclesiastical ordinances without explaining their relevance to the question. However, there were few instances of major errors or indeed of thin and insubstantial essays, although there were a number of cases of obvious padding, and answers longer than they needed to be.

Only a minority of candidates answered question 2 and they tended to lack precise and detailed knowledge of the origins of the famous Massacre. A few impressive answers were able to explain the background of the Guise/Coligny feud and illustrate 'arrogance and aggression' by reference to both Huguenot behaviour in the Third War and Coligny's growing hold on Charles and the plans for a Protestant crusade, which terrified Catherine. It was of course, perfectly legitimate to argue that despite some provocation on the part of French Calvinists, the aggression was largely displayed by the Catholic citizens of Paris.

3B: Rebellion and Nationhood: the Revolt of the Netherlands

177 candidates attempted this paper with many more answers offered to question 1 than question 2. Some of the answers to question 1 were anxious to utilise knowledge of the long-term causes of the Dutch revolt up to 1572. They identified the grievances of the grandees in the 1560s, including the anger created by the Bishoprics scheme, and jealousy of Granvelle, rather than specifically answering the question set on the reasons why the revolt of 1572 broke out. The best responses did focus on 1572 and did address the issue of taxation and religious fervour. Too many, however, assumed that desire for religious toleration was a form of religious fervour. Some answers did show a pleasing awareness of anti-Alva propaganda and discussed the role of William in terms of religious belief. It was surprising that not a single candidate pinpointed the crucial role of the Calvinist Churches in exile in preparing the grounds for Revolt. Some recognized the Calvinism of the Sea Beggars but many never gave even them a mention.

Most of the answers in response to question 2 were either very good or very bad, whereas the mediocre had predominated with question 1. The best answers focused on the divisions, particularly religious ones and showed Parma's skill in exploiting them. Many failed to realise that there were three clear divisions ie the Walloon Provinces loyal to Parma, the Orangist Provinces and the Flemish Provinces of the States General. The general impression given is that the period of 1578-85 tends to be rather neglected by centres.

4B: Reason and Authority: Enlightened Despotism in Austria and Prussia

There were 152 candidates and they achieved a very high standard over all.

Question 1 was by far the most popular. The majority of candidates produced relevant commentary on a range of reforms in terms of their connection to the principles of enlightenment but it was the capacity to handle 'opposition' as an issue that distinguished level 3 from level 4 answers. Many candidates were able to home in on the issue of serfdom and the appeasement of the nobility and draw attention to the non controversial realities of Frederick's policies on religion. The best candidates also drew attention to the political traditions of the Prussian state and Frederick's prestige as a brilliant and successful soldier. Very few candidates really explored the only serious opposition face by Frederick - the rejection by the nobility of Pomerania of his proposal to abolish serfdom in that province.

A third of the candidates did question 2. Weaker candidates concentrated on the enlightenment and wrote quite detailed descriptions of reforms but treated the two rulers separately with no comparison till the conclusion. The best were able to produce balanced comparative judgements on the two rulers throughout the answer. The best answers contained informed discussion of the constraints placed on Maria Theresa by the nature of her possessions - in particular the semi-autonomy of Hungary - and by the drive to combat Prussia and recover Silesia and also appreciated that Joseph really did achieve some remarkable changes in the areas of welfare and education. It is important to stress that there was no 'right' answer candidates and the best answers were equally divided between those favouring Maria Theresa and those siding with her son.

5A: Restoration England, 1660-85

186 candidates took this paper option and both questions proved popular.

As expected, most candidates realised that, in order to reach the higher levels assessment, they had to focus on the various reasons for the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, not just the given factor. Unfortunately it was often the "given factor" - in this case 'the disintegration of the army as political force' - which was often done least convincingly. Some wrote at great length on the developments between the death of Oliver Cromwell, and the restoration of Charles II, and made some valid points along the way, usually describing the intervention of General Monck, but without really evaluating his specific contribution to re-establishing a Parliament which was prepared to accept and vote for a restoration of the monarchy. The Declaration of Breda was usually mentioned, but not always fully explained. Lambert's role was only superficially dealt with, if at all, and other generals such as Fleetwood, rarely figured. Some of the most impressive answers challenged the assumption in the question by pointing out that it was the non-disintegration of Monck's army as a political force that made the restoration possible.

Candidates choosing question two probably scored slightly better. Many went too far back into Charles' reign in discussing the monarchy's powers, rather than focusing on what powers had been left to the crown and how these were deployed effectively in 1679-83. Other factors, Tory propaganda, Whig mistakes or weaknesses were well covered but too few were able to explain effectively how developments in royal finances gave the King a huge advantage over the Whigs. There was less narrative and more analysis in this question overall.

6A: Tory Men and Tory Measures: the Age of Lord Liverpool, 1815-27

105 candidates attempted this option, making it the third smallest. Question 1 was very much the more popular and on the whole the better done, although some of those answering question 1 launched into copious narratives, particularly of the Treaty of Vienna and/or the Congress System, and failed to control their knowledge in the service of an analytical approach. The best did try to identify British interests in order to address 'impressive achievements' effectively and extended their coverage throughout the whole time-frame. Few candidates showed a real command of the details of both the terms of the Vienna Settlement and Congress diplomacy and there was often confusion over the issues at stake in both the Eastern Question and South America. Question 2 was far less popular and most candidates were insufficiently familiar with the various reforms associated with the three and some had clearly never heard of Robinson or confused him with Huskisson. It was essential to attempt some definition of 'liberal ideas' but in general changed circumstances was more effectively handled than 'liberal'. It was the grasp of this concept together with the range, covering all three ministers, that often proved the discriminator between levels 3 and 4.

7B: The Bourbons Restored: France, 1815-30

192 candidates entered for this paper option and both questions were popular. Most candidates attempting question 1 were able to identify the significance of 1820 and the assassination of the Duc de Berry as leading to a period of reaction and the fall of Decazes and his more liberal approach to the press. The gathering pace of the religious revival was often alluded to as adding to the changed political climate. Louis XVIII's health also figured in many answers. The best were able to debate the issue by pointing to elements of continuity before and after 1820.

Those candidates answering question 2 were able to give some view of the personality and beliefs of Charles X, though these were often not sufficiently focused on how they influenced events in 1830 and manifested themselves as 'singular stupidity'. Candidates often found it difficult to adduce counter arguments, though a number did attempt this with some fair, if limited success. The economic situation was rightly presented as outside his control and others challenged the question by pointing out that stupidity was not confined to 1830. As usual the best answers offered an analysis of the deeper problems posed for the Bourbon monarchy of the revolutionary and Napoleonic legacies, legacies which any monarch let alone one as blinkered as Charles X, would have found it very difficult to adapt to.

8A: The Age of Peel, 1832-46

505 candidates attempted this paper and question 1 was markedly the more popular. Most of the answers to question 1 showed a competent grasp of the salient developments within the Tory Party between 1832 and 1841. The commonest mistake was to twist the question into one on the revival of the fortunes of the party. This was clearly a significant change but there was much more to be debated. The best addressed the Tamworth Manifesto and the significance of Peel's attempt to re-brand the party and the work of Bonham in enhancing the electoral performance through organizational improvements. It was of course necessary to consider the 1841 election, as many did, not just to reveal success but the remarkable continuity that it revealed in the nature of the party and its policies. It could be argued that in some respects the Conservative Party (but not the leadership) of 1841 was more reactionary and connected to the landed interest than the party of Liverpool in the 1820s. Very few attempted question 2, which offered a real invitation to debate both the strengths and weaknesses of the Anti Corn Law League and its motives. The belief of many radicals that the landed interest was more susceptible to a focused and narrowly based attack rather than a broad assault was put to the test. Peel of course recognized the danger and conceded to keep the broader power structure intact.

9B: Securing the State: Bismarck and Germany, 1871-90

245 candidates elected to write answers in response to this paper with both questions popular. Most candidates were able to enter into a discursive mode, weighing up the hostility to France throughout the two decades. The best focused on the War in Sight Crisis of 1875 as the most pronounced example of hostility and contrasted it with the more indirect hostility of the diplomatic initiatives designed to isolate France and the complete contrast with the 'detente' of 1884-85. Some impressively pointed out that Bismarck had sought to avoid the trap by being more moderate in the terms offered to France at Frankfurt but had been over-ruled by the Kaiser and army. The weakest answers simply offered a narrative of Bismarck's diplomacy with a minimal nod at the wording of the question.

Question 2 was seen by a small number of candidates as providing an opportunity to narrate the Kulturkampf with little analysis of the issue of whether it constituted a political blunder. Most offered some assessment usually in terms of the growth of the Centre Party, concluding that it was therefore a blunder. This was often reinforced by reference to its growing unpopularity with the Kaiser and the court, thereby threatening Bismarck's own power. Its international ramifications were sometimes introduced on the negative side of the debate. Far too few appreciated the political gains for Bismarck, in strengthening his working links with the Liberals in the Reichstag or that the Kulturkampf could be seen as 'progressive' in the context of the 1870s.

10A: Conservative Supremacy: Policies and Parties in Britain, 1886-1906

Only 77 candidates entered for this option and the vast majority preferred question 1, which was generally competently answered with a wealth of detail and coverage of a range of factors. Of those answering the question there was a tendency for candidates to dwell excessively on Gladstone's personality and Ireland to the exclusion of other leaders. Rosebery, Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman hardly figured, yet Gladstone resigned in 1894. Other factors were well covered, such as the long term drift of the middle classes to the Tories and the consequent loss of the south-east, with its concentration of parliamentary seats since the Redistribution Act of 1885. The superiority of Conservative Party organisation was frequently advanced as an alternative explanation, showing that candidates had studied past papers. This is of course as it should be but candidates must address the question asked and this means fully exploring the stated factor. The majority who attempted question 2, showed a reasonable knowledge of trade union developments with references to the New Unionism and the employers' counter-attack culminating in the Taff Vale Case. The 'spread of Socialist ideas' was less securely handled with many clearly unsure what they were.

11A: The Road to War: British Foreign Policy, 1890-1914

181 candidates entered for this paper Question 2 was the more popular choice but a fair number attempted question 1. Those attempting question 1 tended to deploy very generalised knowledge and their arguments tended to lack satisfactory supporting detail, often being simply too short and becoming a series of assertions. The best responses did actually discuss the points of conflict with reference to the Straits and the Turkish Empire, Afghanistan, Tibet and most important northern China which led to the decision to ally with Japan in 1902. Having surveyed the conflict with Russia, other countries were considered, namely France and Germany. The clash with France over Fashoda was usually covered and German assistance to the Boers. Candidates rightly referred to the new German Navy Law but tended to exaggerate the immediate threat it posed to Britain. The best responses to question 2 really did attempt to define British interests. Weaker candidates tended to offer a narrative of the events of 1905-14 or exclusively of the July Crisis. The defence of the balance of power, the need to retain her Entente partners, the defence of Belgium and naval supremacy were all considered in the better answers. There were some very strange assertions that Britain went to war to test new weapon systems or more commonly to divert attention from domestic problems. Few seemed to appreciate how important Germany was as a trading partner to Britain and that the war can hardly be explained as a pursuit of economic interests. Almost all imperial conflicts with Germany had been resolved by 1914.

12B: The Quest For Greatness: Fascist Italy, 1924-39

This as usual had the largest entry by some margin. There were 2587 candidates and there was a fairly even split in popularity between question 1 and question 2. Question 1 proved the more challenging with many candidates perfectly happy with the issue of Mussolini's popularity but completely stumped by the popularity of the PNF. The question springs directly from bullet point 1 of the specification. It was quite possible to reach high level 3 if there was a real appreciation of the changing pattern of Mussolini's popularity and some brief reference to the PNF. The better answers did attempt to discuss the popularity of the PNF even if it was to equate Fascism with the Fascist Party. Other Fascist dignitaries such as Farinacci were sometimes introduced to good effect and their marginalization emphasised. Mussolini's use of traditional non-Fascist politicians and institutions was pointed to, although few seemed to appreciate that a good example of this was OVRA, which was largely staffed by professional policemen. Part of its role was to keep an eye on leading Fascist figures such as Farinacci. Question 2 was surprisingly well done by large numbers of candidates. The Lateran Treaties appear to be well known and the format of the question induced a real debate which gave candidates a structure giving them access to level 4. Most were able to produce evidence to support both key words, appreciating the changing relationship of the Church and the Regime throughout the 1930s. As always, there was no 'correct' answer and candidates who came down on either of the two sides were able to gain high Level 4s or level 5. The sine qua non was simply an informed and structured debate followed by a robust and substantial conclusion on one side or the other.

13A: From Peace to Appeasement: British Foreign Policy between the Wars

There were 1159 candidates for this paper. The paper had the lowest mean mark of all options. This was not the result of harsh marking but of the poor performance of many candidates in response to these questions, which were securely based on two of the bullet points in the specification. Question 1 on opposition to appeasement attracted many takers, who were clearly under-prepared to answer on this topic. There was nothing wrong with demonstrating the widespread support for appeasement and in fact this was probably a necessary prerequisite of an effective assessment of the increase in opposition, but candidates should be aware of the early opposition of such political figures as Churchill and Austin Chamberlain and media personalities such as Low. The best answers turned on an analysis of the growing disquiet from September 1938 onwards, with the resignation of Duff- Cooper after Munich, the public distaste for the anti-Jewish outrages of November and the widespread rejection of the policy following the occupation of Prague in March 1939. The responses to question 2 were on the whole better but it did require a precision of knowledge that many candidates lacked. Clearly it invited consideration of the Polish Guarantee, which was totally ignored by some candidates, who contented themselves with a generalised causal explanation of the declaration of war. The best answers really did consider how far the defence of Poland was simply the last straw or trip-wire evolving out of a long series of provocations by Nazi Germany. Few appreciated the strain of rearmament on the United Kingdom and pointed up the treasury case that given the escalating cost of an arms race with Germany, it was better to have a war in 1939 and get it over with.

14B: Expansion and Aggression: German Foreign Policy, 1933-39

This was the third most popular with 1627 candidates. Most attempted question 1. It was pleasing that most candidates remained within the timeframe of 1933-36 but some did show real chronological confusion which inevitably limited the explanatory connections. 1935 appears to be the most problematic year for most candidates with the Naval Pact frequently placed before the declaration of conscription. It must be stressed yet again that this option does demand detailed and accurate chronology of these six years. Most engaged with the salient developments in some sort of order but the best were able to structure an analysis around the key phrase of 'cunningly concealed his aggression'. They offered a debate with examples of concealment such as the Polish Pact of January 1934 set against obvious counter examples such as the rapid growth of the German air power and the Four Year Plan of 1936, and offered alternative explanations of success. Only a third of candidates attempted question 2, yet it was on the whole the better done. The best showed an awareness of the advantages of ending Germany's pariah status and breaking the Stresa Front and the consequent restraints placed on Anglo-French diplomacy. Munich and the Anschluss figured prominently in level 4 answers but so did an awareness of the changing relationship and the less tangible advantages by 1939 of being allied to such a second rate power, which would clearly require extensive support.

15B: Europe at War, 1939-45

This option had a respectable 784 entries. There was a roughly even split with marginally more answering question 1. Most of those answering question 1 had a sound knowledge of the Battle of Britain but often used this to produce a narrative rather than an analysis. Sound paragraphs were often offered on the Polish campaign but surprisingly France was less well addressed, with very vague supporting details and some serious misconceptions, such as France had no air-force. The best appreciated the very different roles assigned to German air power in the campaigns against Poland and France and that against Britain. In the case of Britain, the RAF was fighting a battle it had been prepared for, and the Luftwaffe was improvising. The best also appreciated the remarkable growth in aircraft production in Britain, exceeding that of Germany. Question 2 produced lots of level 3 answers, with many giving insufficient attention to the stated factor, which was often confined to a brief reference to the evacuation of Dunkirk to beyond the Urals. The extraordinary rise of Soviet armaments production was only appreciated by a minority as was the recreation of vast armies in 1942. Too many wasted time describing in detail the campaign of 1941 and although Stalingrad was often referred to, far fewer appreciated the importance of Kursk in 1943 and hardly any appeared to have heard of Bagration in 1944. A pleasing number appreciated the importance of US lend-lease, without which, it was finally admitted after Stalin's death, Russia would probably have been overwhelmed.

16B: Stalin and Destalinisation, 1945-64

380 candidates attempted this paper, a significant increase on last year (280) with the majority preferring to answer question 2, although there was a substantial minority (30%) who attempted question 1. This first question was on the whole less well done with most candidates failing to see that the essential thrust of the question required an analysis of the scale of the cult of personality rather than of the Stalinist terror of 1945-53. The few good answers certainly surveyed the terror and repression of the post war years and assessed it as a cause but did give priority to the stated factor and its truly extreme nature. There was also a consideration of the very real achievements of Stalin, as perceived in this period, as an explanation of his hold on both the public imagination and his colleagues. Question 2 was often well done by large numbers of candidates who attempted to assess Khrushchev's mistakes over a wide range of areas. The weaker responses focused on the virgin lands and maize mania but the better ones did appreciate the real the importance of the two key words which they tried to illustrate through both domestic and foreign policy issues. The best did appreciate the very difficult problems he faced and his fundamentally weaker position than that enjoyed by Stalin. There was often a careless ignoring of chronology with the Hungarian rising of 1956 being offered as a prime cause of the fall of Khrushchev in 1964. The issues involved in the Berlin Crisis were often misunderstood and the climb-down involved in the erection of the Berlin Wall was not fully appreciated.

17B: Containing Communism? The USA in Asia, 1950-73

2041 candidates attempted this option, 500 more than last year, making it comfortably the second most popular. Both questions appear to have attracted takers but question 1 was the more popular and done better than question 2. This is probably explained by the fact that it appears to be a classic unit 4 question involving the explanation of a "stated factor" followed by the analysis of a range of other factors. Clearly centres have prepared candidates well for questions on the causes of American participation in the Korean War, and many candidates who attempted question 1 were able to provide a good range of contributory factors. An encouraging number of scripts were also able to include a comment on the significance of NSC-68, although few referred to its role in re-shaping the USA's outlook on the cold war, instead preferring to focus on the Korean War's convenience in helping Truman persuade Congress of the need to implement its main recommendations. However a significant number of responses really failed to deal with the "stated factor" preferring to dwell on a prepared set of explanations for the war. These struggled to gain more than a mid-level 3. The twin elements of "misguided" and "well-intentioned" were the main causes of problems with question 2. Several top class answers were able to debate the validity of the quotation relating them to causes, conduct and results and finally arriving at a robust conclusion. Answers which only debated one of the elements and offered an explanation of the other element were able to gain level 4 quite easily. Responses which only dealt implicitly with the quotation tended to be placed in level 3. A common error on question 2 was a failure to appreciate the chronological parameters, either ignoring Truman's contribution at the beginning or including material that was irrelevant being drawn from the period after 1965.

Individual Assignment

It is good to see that again this exam stimulated a wide range of topics and some impressively researched and presented work. Those at the top were little short of excellent, benefiting from well chosen topics that lent themselves to a genuine question of historical debate that was supported by clear-sighted research and cogent planning. There were virtually no candidates performing at Level 1, a few performing at Level 2, and some really excellent high-level work displaying high levels of skill in research, selection, deployment, argument and communication.

Key for good performance

The key to a successful study is obviously the format of the question, which should set up a proposition to be tackled in the response. The extent/significance of which can be analysed in detail. Proposals are no longer submitted to Regional Consultants so Centres must ensure that questions are well focused and invite analytical responses.

For example; 'Mussolini was not a good man but nor was he half as bad a man as he has been portrayed. And he certainly was not an evil man.' To what extent do you agree with this view of Mussolini.

This question is very difficult to decode, what is the focus and how are we expecting a candidate to respond? Far better to ask a straight forward question along the lines of: To what extent was Mussolini able to successfully impose his authority on the Italian people in the period 1922-1939?

In this way candidates can discuss his personality as a factor, as well as his policies and then begin to weigh up which was the most important factor in accounting for 'Mussolini's ability to successfully impose his authority'. The more able candidate will go onto question whether he was successful or not. What candidates must be made aware of in their tutorials is the importance of setting a question that invites debate and secondly, the accessibility of a range of sources to support their investigation.

Other titles that failed to work included:

To what extent were Mao's successes due to his personality?

How great was Sulieman of Turkey?

How far did the weaknesses of the Provisional Government cause the Russian Revolution?

How far did the media generate the hysteria surrounding the Jack the Ripper case?

These titles along with others did not enable candidates to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. This was because the chosen topic was not one that generated any sort of historical controversy, but it was also because the way they were phrased did not invite candidates to evaluate a range of factors.

Many Centres are clearly teaching their candidates how to structure their assignments:

- Introduce the topic and outline the issues/controversies
- Consider the issue/factor identified in the title
- Consider a range of other factors
- Reach a conclusion.

Centres that encourage their candidates to adopt too rigid a formulaic approach can actually disadvantage the more able candidates. Those candidates who accessed Levels 4 and 5 did so because they thoroughly explored all the issues relevant to their chosen area of research and provided a sustained, focused argument.

Introductions

The second element leading to success is the way in which the candidates introduce their studies. For example the following introduction lays out clearly the areas of study and the debates associated with the chosen topic:

Title: To what extent was slavery the cause of the American Civil War?

The greatest war in American history, taking the lives of around 560,000 and resulting in more than 970,000 casualties The American Civil War 1861-65 was a war that split the nation. No other issue in American history has had so much written about it. It is only inevitable that people attempt to find the cause. What created unrelenting sectional conflict between the North and the South? Why did this conflict lead to war? However it is important to examine the events following the secession of the lower Southern States in order to understand why this sectional tension could not be resolved by any means other than force. Historians remain divided on the question of the cause of the Civil War. On the one hand it has been suggested that the conflict was a result of economic differences between the North and the South. These progressive historians, including Charles Beard and Frank Owsley, maintain that the war was a conflict between an agrarian South and an urban industrialising North. On the other hand revisionist historians such as Jefferson Davis assert that irresponsible agitators and a 'blundering generation' of politicians were central to the conflict. Other historians argue that states rights were central to the conflict, especially the right to own slaves, a critical factor in the Southern economy.

This introduction whilst not perfect clearly outlines the areas of controversy and debate surrounding the Civil War, and indicates to the examiner the areas that will become the focus of the investigation.

Whereas, the following introduction does not identify the key areas.

Question: To what extent was William's victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 mainly caused by English mistakes?

William's victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 was caused partly by English mistakes, (lacks precision) and partly by other factors. (Not defined) The English suffered misfortune (how) but they also committed grave errors. William received a lot of good fortune but his judgement in areas of key decision making (examples needed here) played a crucial role in the outcome of the Battle of Hastings. (After the introduction the response goes into a narrative style explaining why William engaged in the battle for the English crown.)

This introduction does not identify any of the key issues that are to be addressed in the response, nor does it show the examiner the candidates awareness of the debates surrounding this topic. Ultimately this response led to an analytical narrative retelling the story of the Battle of Hastings, a typical mid Level 3 response.

Conclusions

A further element within the body of the response is the need to weigh the different factors/evidence and then draw substantiated conclusions. Too many candidates simply list the points covered in the response without considering this.

For example: The study on the Battle of Hastings concluded by saying:

In conclusion William the Conqueror's victory at the Battle of Hastings was a combination of English mistakes and bad fortune, (nothing explicit, no weighing) coinciding with William's good judgement and good fortune. (Still lacks specifics). The Battle of Hastings was not just won and lost on the battlefield. There were many other factors that occurred before the battle that helped to decide the outcome. The Battle of Stamford Bridge weakened Harold's army and it was not ready to fight at Hastings, this was bad fortune for Harold. (Surely a tactical weakness) William was very lucky with his crossing and the fact that when he landed in England it was undefended. Harold made the mistake of going into battle with William too quickly. William showed good judgement in staying in the south of England and not marching on to London, enticing Harold to come and find him.

This conclusion lists the factors but fails to weigh them and use them in making substantiated judgements.

On the other hand the conclusion for the response to the American Civil War does weigh the evidence and draws clear conclusions.

Although few Northerners fought the civil war in order to abolish slavery, it was slavery that was the underlying problem. The problems that arose from slavery and slavery expansion such as the Missouri Compromise, the problems arising from the acquisition of Mexican territory or the problems arising from the Kansas-Nebraska Act all led to sectional hostility which in turn led to secession and war. Without claiming that slavery alone caused the civil war, it is clearly the most significant cause. The main economic differences between North and South was that the North used free labour whereas the South were advocates of slave labour, the very issue which was exploited by both agitators and politicians. . .

This conclusion engages with the stated factor and weighs the evidence to see if slavery was the cause of the Civil War.

Planning

On a positive note examiners commented that students put a great deal of thought and care into planning and organising their preparatory notes. Candidates whose notes were well ordered, concise and supported by revision fared better than those whose notes were a collection of historical quotations and/or a collection of unfocussed historical facts.

Evidence

When writing their studies candidates do need to consider more carefully the status of the evidence used. Far too many candidates are accepting without comment evidence found on web-sites. There was within some centres an alarming reliance of candidates on web-sites. Indeed, some candidate's bibliographies indicated that they had used more web-sites than books and there was a small minority of candidates who used web-sites exclusively. Candidates such as these seemed to have little or no idea that web-sites can be partial, biased or idiosyncratic as well as sound and reliable and need

evaluating in the same way as other sources of evidence. Many candidates seemed to display little or no understanding that web-sites might not be equal in status to serious academic work, and their use seemed to discourage attempts to weigh or consider the status of the evidence. Candidates bibliographies need to include at least three texts that offer differing views on the topic chosen for study in order to familiarise themselves with areas of debate and interpretation amongst historians. The study constitutes a third of the A2 course and does require time and effort to research. Examiners noted that far too many bibliographies either include a wide range of texts that have been consulted but not used in the finished product or texts that are not suitable for A level study. It cannot be overemphasised that a successful study is based on a wide range of reading, careful selection of evidence and its application to an argument.

Other issues:

- (a) **Notes and plans** - Most centres encourage their candidates to produce genuine plans but on a small number of occasions plans were no more than developed notes, a crib of the essay. Centres are reminded that plans are an outline of key sections or key questions to be covered in the essay.
- (b) Many centres go to great care with presentation, however the study is marked as an examination and not a project. Most folders, files etc are destroyed by the Board along with the work. It must also be costly to post such bulky work. **The most 'examiner friendly' method is to secure the individual work with a treasury tag.**
- (c) A small minority of centres are encouraging candidates to write up their appendices as a diary rather than as information of sources to be consulted. The 'and I had tea with Granny' approach still has to be discouraged.

In conclusion once again an impressive range of topics which included some new areas of interest including Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Vietnam and the 1945 Revolution, John Wilkes and eighteenth century politics, the Crusades to name a few. The examination format seems well embedded and is working well. Centres are to be congratulated on maintaining standards and incorporating the changes over the past two years. 2007 sees a further change, the reduction of time from **4 hours to 3 hours**, but candidates can still take into the exam their plan and notes which **must not exceed 1,500 words**. It would be in candidates best interest if centres could ensure that the candidates do not attempt broad questions, they need to think very carefully about the number of factors that can be effectively included in the 3 hour response time.

Statistics

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Paper	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation
1a	60	31.8	11.7
2b	60	36.3	10.7
3b	60	33.9	9.9
4b	60	41.1	8.9
5a	60	36.6	9.2
6a	60	33.9	11.6
7b	60	37.0	10.1
8a	60	35.0	13.2
9b	60	35.3	9.7
10a	60	41.9	8.8
11a	60	40.5	8.7
12b	60	39.3	9.6
13a	60	30.6	12.6
14b	60	36.2	11.6
15b	60	38.6	9.7
16b	60	34.9	9.6
17b	60	37.6	11.7
02A	60	39.8	9.9
02B	60	38.8	9.6
02C	60	37.9	10.3

Paper 1a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	38	33	28	24	20
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		32.2	50.7	63.8	75.6	86.8

Paper 2b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	44	39	34	30	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		26.4	49.1	60.4	66.0	81.1

Paper 3b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	37	33	30	27	24
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		34.9	55.4	72.0	83.4	88.6

Paper 4b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	45	40	36	32	28
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		42.8	55.9	73.0	86.2	93.4

Paper 5a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	40	36	33	30	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		39.7	58.2	72.8	79.3	86.4

Paper 6a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	39	34	29	24	20
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		33.7	48.5	65.3	85.1	88.1

Paper 7b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	41	37	34	31	28
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		30.6	59.1	72.6	76.3	86.6

Paper 8a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	40	34	28	22
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		35.7	49.0	65.1	72.7	81.5

Paper 9b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	41	37	33	29	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		27.8	42.9	59.6	75.1	86.5

Paper 10a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	49	41	34	27	20
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		20.0	46.7	81.3	90.7	94.7

Paper 11a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	41	36	31	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		31.8	50.8	69.3	78.2	86.6

Paper 12b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	42	38	34	30
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		28.2	41.0	59.9	79.4	88.4

Paper 13a

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	42	36	31	26	21
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		17.4	33.4	42.2	61.6	81.3

Paper 14b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	40	35	30	25
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		26.3	46.2	63.2	75.4	85.6

Paper 15b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	47	42	37	33	29
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		20.7	35.7	57.6	70.2	83.1

Paper 16b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	40	36	33	30	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		26.7	48.0	66.1	77.3	84.0

Paper 17b

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	47	42	37	32	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		22.4	39.1	54.8	70.4	81.6

Paper 02A

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	41	36	31	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		31.6	45.8	64.5	82.6	89.7

Paper 02B

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	41	36	31	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		28.3	44.9	64.2	78.5	87.5

Paper 02C

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	41	36	31	27
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36
% Candidates		26.4	39.9	60.2	76.6	85.8

Advanced award

Provisional statistics for the award

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	23.3	47.8	71.6	88.9	97.3

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced UMS grade boundaries

	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Advanced Subsidiary	300	240	210	180	150	120
Advanced	600	480	420	360	300	240

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