

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report History

Summer Series 2018



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in History for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE HISTORY

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Historical Investigations and Historical Interpretations

AS Unit 1 attracted an entry of 2,540 candidates, the majority of whom sat Option 5 (Germany 1919-1945). Even though the standard inevitably varied widely, there were some very fine scripts in each of the five options. The majority of candidates answered Question 1 well, while the quality of the responses to Question 2 (a) was, as a rule, also good. However, a significant minority of candidates included in their answers contextual knowledge which was not relevant to the question. There were many excellent responses to Question 2 (b) and the overall standard of the answers to this question was significantly higher than in the 2017 series. However, some responses digressed by including material which was not directly related to the arguments contained in the interpretations.

Option 1 England 1509–1558

This option had an entry of 65 candidates. Although the quality of the responses varied widely, there were nevertheless some excellent answers to all of the questions. Question 1 (b) proved to be far more popular than Question 1 (a).

There were several good answers to Question 1 (a) on the role played by Thomas Cranmer in achieving the Royal Divorce. Weaker responses did not focus sufficiently on the wording of the question and were apt to offer a narrative account of the events leading up to the Royal Divorce. Question 1 (b) on the causes of the Many Headed Monster Rebellions of 1549 produced many good or very good answers. Most dealt well with the economic grievances of the participants in the rebellions but some overlooked the social and political factors.

In general, the quality of the responses to Question 2 (a), which required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the economic effects of the dissolution of the monasteries in England, was quite good. Most answers displayed a sound awareness of the significance of the date, author, mode, motive, audience and tone of the source. The best responses also evaluated the content of the source effectively, as well as identifying valid limitations and providing relevant contextual knowledge. The most common shortcoming of weaker responses was a failure to provide any valid limitations. In addition, some responses did not relate the content of the source to the question.

Question 2 (b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the economic and social effects of the dissolution of the monasteries in England they found more convincing. This question elicited answers of varying quality. The best responses provided a clear and concise summary of the contrasting interpretations and analysed in greater depth the evidence in the extracts underpinning the historians' arguments. They also employed relevant contextual knowledge and evidence from the extracts to support and challenge the interpretations and reach a judgement about which they found more convincing. Weaker responses exhibited several common flaws. Some paraphrased the interpretations, failing to include relevant contextual knowledge, while others digressed by including material which was not linked to points made in the interpretations.

Option 2 England 1603–1649

A total of 105 candidates were entered for this option. Although there was some variation in the quality of the responses, the majority of candidates coped well with the questions. Candidates appeared to manage their time more effectively than last year and it was pleasing that almost all candidates completed the paper.

Question 1 (a) on the impact of royal favourites in the reign of James I produced some excellent responses which gave precise examples of how the Earl of Somerset and the Duke of Buckingham influenced political decisions, foreign policy, life at court and the reputation of the monarch. Some candidates, however, appeared to be unclear as to what constituted a ‘royal favourite’. Responses which focused on ministers of the crown, such as Cecil or Cranfield, were not credited, as such individuals, while influential, never rose to the status of ‘royal favourite’. Although there were some excellent answers to Question 1 (b) on the beliefs of the radical political groups which emerged between 1646 and 1649, there were also a large number of poor responses. The best responses analysed the beliefs of the Levellers, Ranters, Diggers and Fifth Monarchists, all of whom can be considered radical in the context of the time. However, candidates who analysed the beliefs of the Political Presbyterians and Political Independents did not receive credit since these groups had become mainstream by 1646 and could not therefore be classified as ‘radical political groups’.

The quality of responses to Question 2 (a), which required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying attitudes towards the religious policies introduced during the Personal Rule of Charles I, was, as a rule, very impressive. The best answers provided a balanced evaluation of the source, giving appropriate attention to its author, date, audience, motive, tone and mode. Most candidates appreciated the value of the content of the source, which provided a contemporary critique of Archbishop William Laud, and most responses also contained detailed and relevant contextual knowledge. The majority of answers included valid limitations. However, some candidates included in their answer contextual knowledge which was unrelated to the question.

Question 2 (b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the opposition to the policies of Charles I during the Personal Rule of 1629-1640 they found more convincing. Most candidates responded well to this question. Answers were equally divided in their preference for Interpretation A or B. Most were able to find strengths and weaknesses in both interpretations and also employed appropriate contextual knowledge to support and challenge the extracts, reaching a substantiated judgement about which interpretation they found more convincing. However, some candidates struggled to explain their preference for one interpretation over another, while others digressed by including in their answer material which was not directly related to the arguments contained in the interpretations.

Option 3 Britain in the Age of Reform 1830–1880

A total of 79 candidates were entered for this option. The standard of the responses was generally high. Answers to Questions 1 (a) and Questions 1 (b) were consistently good. The responses to Question 2 (a) exhibited quite a wide range of standard, while many of the answers to Question 2 (b) were excellent.

Question 1 (a) on the reasons for the success of the Anti-Corn Law League produced some outstanding answers. A good range of relevant knowledge was displayed, including the ACLL’s organisational structure and its parliamentary strategy. Some responses were particularly insightful on the role of the leaders – Richard Cobden and John Bright – and the influence of the ‘Manchester School’ on the socio-economic debate in the 1840s. Question 1 (b) about the impact of the economic and social reforms of Peel’s Second Ministry between 1841 and 1846 elicited many impressive answers. Most candidates deployed

a good range of knowledge of the government's legislative programme in the areas in question, particularly relating to the so-called 'free trade' budgets of 1842 and 1845 and the Acts designed to tackle the worst iniquities of the mining industry and factory system. The most common shortcoming was a tendency in some answers to focus on economic reforms at the expense of social legislation.

Although there were some excellent responses to Question 2 (a), which required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the Second Reform Act of 1867, it was, in general, the least well answered question on the paper. Most responses evaluated the source well in terms of its content, date, mode, motive, audience and tone. However, a significant number of candidates were less secure regarding the authorship of the source and did not recognise Viscount Cranborne as one of those who had resigned from the Conservative Government in opposition to the Reform Bill. In addition, a few answers misunderstood the source, believing that Cranborne was arguing in favour of the Reform Bill, when in fact he was doing the exact opposite.

Question 2 (b), which required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the introduction and impact of the Second Reform Act of 1867 they found more convincing, elicited the best answers on this paper. Many responses displayed an impressive grasp of the arguments contained in the interpretations, selecting key points of evidence from the extracts. They also revealed an excellent understanding of the historical context, employing relevant contextual knowledge to support their arguments. Many responses displayed a detailed knowledge of the essential elements of the Reform Act episode, from the personal and political rivalry of Disraeli and Gladstone and the popular agitation for electoral reform through to the details of the Reform Act itself. Most responses also reached a substantiated judgement about which interpretation they found more convincing.

Option 4 Italy and Germany 1815–1871

This option attracted an entry of 73 candidates. Although most coped well with the paper, there were nevertheless considerable variations in the quality of the answers. A feature of the responses was that some did not answer Question 2 (b) in sufficient depth and, in most instances, this appeared to have been caused by allocating too much time to Question 1 and Question 2 (a).

Question 1 (a) on the aims of those who took part in the revolutions which broke out in the Italian states in 1848 produced some very good responses. While the best answers analysed the economic, political and nationalist aims of the participants in the revolutions, weaker responses tended to be too narrow in focus, sometimes concentrating exclusively on nationalist aims. Question 1 (b) elicited a number of very good answers on the role of Garibaldi in achieving the unification of Italy. The best responses analysed Garibaldi's contribution to the cause of Italian unification over his entire career, while weaker responses often focused exclusively on the events of 1860.

Question 2 (a) required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the causes of the Franco-Prussian War. In general, the source was evaluated well in terms of its content, date, mode, motive, audience and tone. However, a surprising number of answers maintained that, since Napoleon III was the author of the source, it had to be accepted as an entirely true account of the reasons for the outbreak of the war. Most responses explained Napoleon's conciliatory attitude since the Austro-Prussian War but might have explored in greater depth the immediate cause of the Franco-Prussian War, the Hohenzollern Candidature Crisis. In addition, only a minority of answers elaborated on Napoleon III's distinction between German aspirations and Prussian empire-building. Most responses produced some relevant contextual knowledge but few observed that the date of Napoleon III's proclamation to the French nation was less than a week after France's declaration of war on Prussia.

Question 2 (b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the causes of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 they found more convincing. The overall standard was good and there were several excellent responses. The best answers seized on AJP Taylor's claim that 'Bismarck neither planned nor expected the Franco-Prussian War', contrasting it with Crankshaw's assertion that the Prussian Minister-President 'was perfectly ready not only to go to war but also to engineer a war if what he regarded as the vital interests of Prussia were at stake'. The most common flaw in weaker responses was a failure to include sufficient relevant contextual knowledge, while several digressed by including material which was not directly related to the arguments contained in the interpretations.

Option 5 Germany 1919–1945

This option attracted an entry of 2,218 candidates. With such a large entry, the standard of the answers to all questions inevitably varied widely, ranging from outstanding to very poor. Question 1 (b) proved to be much more popular than Question 1 (a).

Question 1 (a) on why the Weimar Republic experienced political instability between 1919 and 1923 produced some excellent responses which analysed key issues, such as the impact of the Versailles Treaty, flaws in the Weimar Constitution and economic difficulties, such as hyperinflation. However, many responses failed to focus on the question, producing instead a narrative account of the left- and right-wing putsches which took place in Germany in the period 1919-1923, thus illustrating how rather than why there was political instability. Question 1 (b) asked candidates to analyse the different groups in Germany who opposed and resisted the Nazi regime in the period 1939-1945. There were many outstanding responses which were wide-ranging and precise. Weaker responses were apt to be too narrow in focus, often dealing only with the opposition and resistance of various youth groups.

Question 2 (a) required candidates to assess how useful Source 1 was as evidence for an historian studying the consequences of the Reichstag Fire. This question produced some outstanding responses which systematically assessed the utility of the source by analysing its content, date, author, mode, motive, audience, tone and limitations, as well as selecting appropriate contextual knowledge to support the evaluation. Weaker responses displayed several common flaws. Some did not develop the significance of the content of the source. Others included contextual knowledge which was not relevant to the question. Some candidates found the nature of memoirs problematic, believing that they were a private document.

Question 2 (b) required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the means by which the Nazis created a dictatorship in the period 1933-1934 they found more convincing. Generally speaking, the standard of responses was better than last year with fewer very poor answers. The best responses recognised the points of similarity in the extracts, while also clearly understanding the differences. They also employed appropriate contextual knowledge to support and challenge the interpretations and reached a substantiated judgement about which interpretation they found more convincing. Weaker responses exhibited a range of flaws. Some failed to include relevant contextual knowledge in their responses, while others digressed by including material which was not directly related to the arguments contained in the interpretations. A minority of responses only discussed one interpretation, while a small proportion of candidates did not select either of the extracts as the more convincing. In addition, several candidates evaluated the utility of each extract. This is not a requirement in this question.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Historical Conflict and Change

AS Unit 2 attracted an entry of 2,551 candidates, the majority of whom sat Option 5 (Russia 1914-1941). Even though the standard inevitably varied widely, there were some very fine scripts in each of the six options. A feature of this series was that a significant minority of candidates wrote very long and detailed answers to the 8 mark questions to the detriment of their responses to the 22 mark questions.

Option 1 Spain and Europe 1556–1598

A total of 42 candidates sat this option. All three questions were attempted, Question 2 being the most, and Question 1 the least, popular. There was quite a wide variation in the quality of the responses.

Question 1 (i) on the causes of the revolt of the Moriscos produced some very good responses, which identified a wide range of economic, religious and cultural reasons for the outbreak of the revolt. There were several well informed answers to Part (ii), which required candidates to debate the extent to which Philip II created an absolute monarchy in Spain between 1556 and 1598. However, in general, this question was not answered well and a significant minority of candidates failed to identify what was meant by the term ‘absolute monarchy’.

There were some good responses to Question 2 (i) on the weaknesses of Spanish agriculture in the period 1556-1598. Weaker responses often displayed a sound knowledge of Spanish agriculture but failed to focus on its weaknesses. Part (ii) required candidates to debate whether Philip II’s mismanagement of Spain’s finances was the main reason for its poor economic performance between 1556 and 1598. There were some very good responses to this question, while weaker responses were apt to pay insufficient attention to the proposition.

In general, Question 3 (i) on the aims of Philip II’s policy towards France in the period 1556-1598 was not answered well. Many responses enumerated Philip II’s actions against France but neglected to focus on the aims of his policy. Part (ii), which asked candidates to debate the proposition that the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in 1566 had a greater impact on Philip II’s foreign policy in the period 1556-1598 than any other event, produced some thoughtful and comprehensive answers. Weaker responses tended to offer a narrative account of Philip II’s foreign policy and failed to address the proposition fully.

Option 2 The Ascendancy of France in Europe 1660–1714

This option had an entry of 65 candidates. The overall standard of the responses was good.

Question 1 (i) on the main successes of France in the Nine Years’ War produced some excellent responses which dealt well with French victories at sea, such as Bantry Bay and Beachy Head, and on land, where Louis XIV sought to strengthen his frontiers in the north-east and south in particular. Part (ii), which required candidates to debate how far the terms of the Peace of Ryswick represented a victory for France and a defeat for the Grand Alliance, was generally answered well. The best responses provided a good balance between the gains attained by France and the member states of the Grand Alliance. Good answers often referred to Louis XIV’s plan to make concessions at Ryswick in order to prepare for a bid for the greater prize of the Spanish Empire in the near future.

Many candidates found Question 2 quite challenging. There was a wide variation in the standard of the responses to Part (i) on the aims and ambitions of the Grand Alliance at the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. Most answers dealt quite well with the

individual aims of the key states of the Grand Alliance but frequently overlooked the general aim of preventing the French and Spanish thrones from becoming united. Part (ii), which required candidates to assess to what extent economic factors were responsible for the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession, produced answers of mixed quality. While most responses dealt well with the 'other' factors responsible for the outbreak of the war, a significant minority failed to discuss the proposition in sufficient depth.

Generally speaking, Question 3 was answered well. Most responses to Part (i) were well informed about the position of France after the Peace Treaties at the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession, observing that, while France had to make significant concessions to many of its rivals, a Bourbon remained on the Spanish throne. Weaker responses tended to confuse the terms of the treaties of 1713 and 1714 with the terms of the Peace of Ryswick, which had concluded the Nine Years' War. Part (ii), which asked candidates to assess whether the weakness of France's military leadership was the most important reason for its poor performance in the War of the Spanish Succession, elicited many impressive responses. The best answers appreciated that Louis XIV mismanaged the war but also discussed a wide range of other factors which handicapped France, such as the state of its economy, public opinion and the impact of the defeat at Blenheim, as well as the impressive performance of the Grand Alliance, led on the battlefield by the Duke of Marlborough.

Option 3 Ireland 1823–1867

This option had an entry of 272 candidates, the majority of whom answered Question 1 and Question 3. The overall standard of the responses was good.

Question 1 (i) on the tactics Daniel O'Connell used in his campaign to achieve Catholic Emancipation was generally answered well. While the best responses identified a wide range of the tactics O'Connell employed, weaker responses were frequently too narrow in focus, sometimes displaying no clear grasp of the role of the Catholic Association. Part (ii), which required candidates to debate whether O'Connell's quarrel with the Young Irelanders was the most important reason for the failure of his campaign to repeal the Act of Union, produced answers of variable quality. While the best responses provided an assessment of the importance of O'Connell's quarrel with the Young Irelanders in relation to a wide range of other factors, weaker responses often failed to discuss the extent to which O'Connell contributed to his own demise. Another common lapse was a failure to acknowledge the impact of the departure of the Young Irelanders from the Repeal Association.

Question 2 (i) on how Peel's Conservative Government responded to the outbreak of the Famine in Ireland produced some good answers which revealed a clear awareness of Peel's Famine relief efforts. A significant minority of candidates digressed into an account of the Whigs' response to the Famine. Part (ii), which asked candidates to debate the proposition that the Whig Government under Russell did all it could to respond to the Famine in Ireland, produced some excellent answers. The best responses appreciated the valid criticisms of the Whigs' relief measures and also displayed an awareness of the mitigating circumstances which undermined them, such as Britain's economic problems, the severe winter of 1846-1847 and the scale of the crisis itself.

Question 3 was the most popular question. There were many excellent answers to Part (i) on how the Fenians wanted to change how Ireland was governed. The best responses revealed a particularly strong appreciation of the Fenians' political ambitions for Ireland. Weaker responses were too narrow in focus. Part (ii), which asked candidates to debate the extent to which the failure of the Fenian Rising of 1867 was due to the firm actions of the British Government, was, in general, answered well. The best responses assessed the role of the British Government in relation to a wide range of other factors, including the opposition of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the shortcomings of the Fenians themselves. Weaker responses were apt to neglect a key theme or provide vague, generalised statements.

Option 4 France 1815–1870

A total of 94 candidates were entered for this option. The standard of the responses ranged from excellent to poor. Question 1 proved to be the most popular question, though it did not produce the best answers.

The best responses to Question 1 (i) on the aims of Louis XVIII's foreign policy in the period 1815-1824 focused closely on the wording of the question; weaker responses were apt to narrate the events of Louis XVIII's foreign policy with little reference to its aims. Part (ii), which required candidates to debate whether the assassination of the Duc de Berry in 1820 was a clear turning point for the Bourbon monarchy, produced some nicely argued and well informed responses. Weaker responses often dealt mainly or even solely with events following the assassination of the Duc de Berry, ignoring the comparative moderation of Louis XVIII's reign before 1820. Another shortcoming of a number of responses to this question was that they paid little attention to the proposition, seeking instead to establish a number of alternative turning points.

There were several good responses to Question 2 (i) on the social and cultural developments which took place in France between 1830 and 1848. Weaker responses were apt to focus exclusively on either social or cultural developments, while some candidates confused social with economic developments. Part (ii), which required candidates to debate whether Louis Philippe's downfall in 1848 had more to do with bad luck than failed policies, elicited some excellent responses, while weaker responses paid insufficient attention to the proposition.

There were some very well informed responses to Question 3 (i) on how Louis Napoleon Bonaparte managed to undermine and overthrow the French Second Republic between 1848 and 1852. Weaker responses concentrated mainly on the future Emperor's organisation of coups in 1851 and 1852. Part (ii), which required candidates to assess whether Napoleon III's economic policies during the Second Empire were by far the most successful of his policies at home and abroad, provided some thoughtful responses which dealt effectively with both sides of the proposition. However, some responses failed to note the 'mixed' success of Napoleon III's economic policies, while, in relation to the counter-proposition, a number of responses omitted the transition to 'liberal Empire' after 1860. A less common flaw was to cite events from the Second Republic as belonging to the Second Empire.

Option 5 Russia 1914–1941

This option attracted an entry of 1,518 candidates. With such a large entry, there was inevitably a wide range of standard, from outstanding to very poor. Question 1 and Question 2 were by far the most popular questions; there were relatively few responses to Question 3, even though the rule of Stalin comprises almost half of the specification. A feature of this series was that a significant minority of candidates appeared to leave themselves with insufficient time to do justice to the 22 mark questions because they wrote excessively long and detailed responses to the 8 mark questions.

Question 1 (i) on how the mistakes made by the Provisional Government led to the Revolution of October 1917 was, as a rule, handled well. However, a small number of candidates lapsed into digression by explaining how the Bolsheviks defeated the Provisional Government. Part (ii), which required candidates to assess how far the role of the Tsarina and the influence of Rasputin brought about the Revolution of February 1917, elicited a large variation in the quality of the responses. Generally speaking, candidates dealt better with the counter-proposition than the proposition itself. A weakness of some responses was that they focused predominantly on the long-term problems facing Russia, paying little attention to the period 1914-1917.

A positive feature of the responses to Question 2 (i) on the aims of Bolshevik economic policies between 1917 and 1924 was that most covered all three policies. However, generally speaking this question was not answered well because, although the best responses focused closely on the wording of the question, the majority described Bolshevik economic policies with little reference to their economic or political aims. There were some excellent responses to Part (ii), which asked candidates to debate the extent to which the success of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War in Russia between 1918 and 1921 was due to the weaknesses of the Whites. Most answers provided a good balance between the weaknesses of the Whites, such as their ideological differences, geographical disadvantages and poor leadership, and the strengths of the Bolsheviks.

Question 3 (i) on the social impact of Stalin's economic policies on the Soviet Union in the period 1928-1941 proved to be quite challenging and the responses exhibited a wide range of standard. The best responses identified a number of different ways in which Stalin's economic policies had both a positive and negative social impact on workers and peasants. However, many responses were apt to describe the successes and failures of Stalin's economic policies, often with only implicit reference to their social impact. Part (ii) required candidates to debate the proposition that the mistakes of Stalin's rivals were the main reason why he was successful in the power struggle in the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1929. The overall standard of the responses was good and most dealt well with the counter-proposition. However, generally speaking the proposition was dealt with less well, with some concentrating exclusively on Trotsky, while others focused on the personality defects of Stalin's rivals rather than on the mistakes they made.

Option 6 Italy's Quest for Great Power Status 1871–1943

This option attracted an entry of 560 candidates. There was a wide range of standard. Question 2 and Question 3 proved to be the most popular questions, although a significant number of candidates attempted Question 1. Generally, the quality of the responses to Question 1 and Question 2 was higher than to Question 3.

Question 1 (i) on the achievements of Giolitti's domestic policies in the period 1903-1914 produced many very good responses which focused on his social policies, extension to the franchise and improvements in the South of Italy. A small minority of responses digressed on to the achievements of Giolitti's foreign policy. Responses to Part (ii), which required candidates to assess the extent to which Italy was successful in achieving its foreign policy aims in the period 1871-1914, exhibited a wide range of standard. While the best responses put forward well-constructed arguments, supported by a broad range of supporting evidence, weaker responses displayed a range of flaws. Some were unable to relate Italy's foreign policy successes or failures to its aims, while others lapsed into a narrative account of the main events in Italian foreign policy in the period 1871-1914. However, even otherwise good responses often struggled to discuss the elements of success and failure with regard to Italian involvement in the Triple Alliance.

Question 2 (i) on the economic and social effects of the First World War on Italy between 1915 and 1918 produced some very good, well informed responses. Weaker responses were often characterised by a lack of precision, while others digressed on to a discussion of the political or military effects of the war. A minority of responses lapsed into a study of the post-war years. Part (ii) required candidates to debate whether Italy, despite being victorious in the First World War, experienced a 'mutilated victory' following the Peace Treaties in 1919. This question produced some very good responses which dealt well with both the proposition and the counter-argument. However, a common shortcoming was a failure to assess in sufficient depth the justification behind the perception of the 'mutilated victory'. Weaker responses tended to lapse into a narrative account.

The standard of the responses to Question 3 (i) on the reasons for Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 was consistently high. The best responses focused closely on the wording of the question and were wide-ranging. Weaker responses were apt to be generalised, often focusing on the overall aims of Mussolini's foreign policy rather than being specifically focused on Abyssinia. Part (ii) required candidates to assess whether Mussolini's development of closer relations with Hitler after 1936 was the most important reason for the failure of his foreign policy by 1943. The question produced some excellent responses which debated the merits of the proposition in relation to a range of other factors, such as the Spanish Civil War, the failure to prepare properly for war, Italy's involvement in the Second World War and Mussolini's war-time leadership. Weaker responses displayed several common flaws. Some did not cover the full dates in the question, omitting the period 1940-1943, while others lapsed into a narrative account of the events of Mussolini's involvement in the Second World War.

Assessment Unit A2 1 Change Over Time

A2 Unit 1 attracted an entry of 1,626 candidates. Even though the scripts exhibited a wide range of standard, there were some excellent answers in each of the five options. While most responses displayed a good knowledge of the key issues, a significant minority of candidates were not always able to adapt their knowledge to the issue raised by the question. In addition, some candidates failed to provide adequate coverage of the entire period identified in the question, often focusing in detail on the early years of the period of study to the detriment of the later period.

Option 1 Crown and Parliament in England 1625–1714

This option had an entry of 68 candidates, the majority of whom chose to answer Question 1. The overall standard of the responses was high.

Question 1, which required students to assess whether the relationship between Crown and Parliament in England in the period 1625-1714 was characterised by co-operation rather than conflict, produced a number of outstanding responses which focused throughout on the issue raised by the question and presented a clear and coherent argument, supported by carefully selected evidence. Weaker responses tended to pay insufficient attention to the issues of 'co-operation' and 'conflict', producing instead a general explanation of the changing relationship between Crown and Parliament in the period 1625-1714. Some candidates mismanaged their time, spending too long on one particular monarch, usually Charles I, to the detriment of their analysis of the reigns of William III and Mary, and Anne.

Question 2, which invited candidates to debate the proposition that clashes over foreign policy had the greatest impact on the relationship between Crown and Parliament in England in the period 1625-1714, was much less popular than Question 1. Although there were a few outstanding responses, they tended to be less strong than those to Question 1 and many candidates appeared to struggle to complete their answer in the time provided. In terms of the individual monarchs, most responses provided an impressive analysis of the reign of Charles I but paid little, or no, attention to the reign of Anne. Most candidates addressed the importance of foreign policy, but some failed to compare this factor with other key themes, such as finance and religion.

Option 2 Ireland under the Union 1800–1900

This option attracted an entry of 400 candidates, the vast majority of whom attempted Question 1. While the overall quality of the responses was variable, the standard of the answers to Question 1 was significantly higher than to Question 2.

Responses to Question 1, which required candidates to discuss the proposition that in the period 1800-1900 unionists and constitutional nationalists in Ireland only experienced success when they enjoyed popular support, ranged from excellent to very poor. While most candidates dealt well with the proposition, many did not handle the other relevant factors effectively. The best responses focused closely on the wording of the question, discussing the issue of popular support in relation to the success of both unionists and constitutional nationalists, as well as assessing the importance of other factors which influenced the fortunes of both political movements. The best responses discussed how mass support was crucial for Ulster unionists, while Southern unionists had to find alternative methods in their quest for success. Weaker responses exhibited a range of flaws. The most important shortcoming was that a very significant number of responses did not provide an adequate treatment of unionism. Weaker responses were often characterised by digression and a significant minority of candidates discussed revolutionary nationalism even though it did not form part of the question. Weaker responses were apt to lose sight of the question and lapse into a narrative account of various aspects of constitutional nationalism.

Question 2 required candidates to debate the proposition that the Act of Union determined political events in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century, while the Famine determined political developments between 1850 and 1900. There were a number of very strong responses to this question, including some which argued persuasively that, although the Famine was an important event in shaping the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was nonetheless the Act of Union which continued to dominate and shape events throughout the whole century. In general, however, this question was not answered well. In fact, a significant minority of responses produced a narrative account of political developments in Ireland in the nineteenth century with little reference to either the Act of Union or the Famine. Responses tended to focus predominantly on constitutional nationalism but failed to engage sufficiently with revolutionary nationalism. Another common flaw was a failure to provide an adequate treatment of unionism.

Option 3 The Causes and Consequences of Great Power Conflict 1848–1945

This option had an entry of 63 candidates, the overwhelming majority of whom answered Question 1. Although the responses exhibited a wide range of standard, there were a number of excellent responses.

Question 1 required candidates to assess whether German ambition was the cause of nearly all the wars fought in Europe between 1848 and 1945. While the best responses focused closely on the proposition and supported their arguments with detailed and wide-ranging evidence, it was gratifying to observe that weaker responses tried to cover the entire time period outlined in the question. Most responses dealt well with the German and Italian Wars of Unification, as well as the various wars in the Balkans. The majority also presented a detailed discussion of the long-term causes of the First World War but some failed to analyse in sufficient depth the short-term causes of the war, often glossing over, or even omitting, the crucial backing Germany offered to its Austrian ally. Similarly, many responses paid insufficient attention to the promises and aggression from Germany after 1933, while very few responses referred to Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. A common flaw of weaker responses was to devote insufficient attention to the proposition. As result, some responses lapsed at times into a narrative of events. A number of responses included digression, discussing, for example, the course of the 1848 revolutions.

Question 2 asked candidates to debate whether fear of rivals was a more important cause of war among the great powers in Europe in the period 1848-1945 than aggression. Only two candidates attempted this question but one produced an outstanding response.

Option 4 The American Presidency 1901–2000

A total of 432 candidates sat this option. Question 1 was the more popular question and, generally speaking, produced better quality answers than Question 2. However, the overall standard of the responses was good and there were some outstanding answers to both questions.

Question 1 invited candidates to discuss the proposition that American presidential power in the period 1901-2000 increased during wartime but decreased during peacetime. While most candidates chose to answer the question chronologically, some adopted a thematic approach. There were good arguments both for and against the proposition. Most of the responses which supported the proposition cited Wilson and FDR in the world wars and the imperial presidents and Reagan in the Cold War as examples of power being enhanced in wartime; on the other hand, answers which disagreed with the proposition pointed to Teddy Roosevelt, FDR in the 1930s and Reagan (in the domestic sphere) as presidents who increased presidential power in peacetime. The Republican presidents of the 1920s also served to support the proposition, with presidential power receding during the 'Roaring '20s', but more nuanced counter-arguments quoted LBJ and Nixon as examples of presidents whose power began to wane in the context of the Vietnam War. A weakness of many responses was that there was insufficient discussion of the leadership of Wilson and FDR in the world wars and Truman in Korea.

Question 2 required candidates to debate the proposition that the most significant American presidents of the twentieth century were also those who most abused the office. Although this question produced many very good, and some outstanding responses, the overall standard was lower than for Question 1. Most candidates chose to answer the question chronologically, although a few opted for a thematic approach. Many responses appreciated that the Johnson presidency marked a watershed moment in relation to the question in terms of LBJ's handling of Vietnam and the emergence of the 'credibility gap'. Many also noted FDR's overreach when attempting to 'pack' the Supreme Court. Some responses included thought-provoking analysis, highlighting, for example, Eisenhower's use of the CIA or Kennedy's willingness to use the Mafia against Castro. Some candidates presented a strong counter-argument - that there were significant presidents who did not abuse their office – based predominantly on Teddy Roosevelt, Wilson and Truman. A feature of the responses was that the conclusion they reached often depended on how they chose to define the term 'abuse'. A weakness in some responses was a lack of real understanding of arguably the most serious abuses of presidential power in the twentieth century, namely Watergate and the Iran–Contra scandal, during the presidencies of Nixon and Reagan respectively. In fact, some answers ignored the Iran–Contra scandal altogether.

Option 5 Clash of Ideologies in Europe 1900–2000

This option attracted an entry of 663 candidates, the majority of whom answered Question 1. With such a large entry, there was inevitably a wide range of standard but, as a rule, the quality of the responses was good. In fact, there were many responses which demonstrated an excellent and balanced use of material with a strong and consistent analytical focus on the question. The most common shortcoming of weaker responses was a failure to provide an acceptable balance between the coverage of Soviet foreign policy and that of Western governments. It was also noticeable that some candidates continued to employ interpretations as a central feature of their responses. This is not required.

Question 1, which asked candidates to debate the proposition that relations between the Soviet Union and Western governments in the period 1917-1991 were primarily characterised by co-existence rather than conflict, elicited many good or very good responses. The best responses displayed a consistent focus on both aspects of the

proposition, co-existence and conflict, and a good balance in terms of their treatment of Soviet foreign policy and that of Western governments. Less good responses exhibited several flaws. The most common shortcoming was a failure to do justice to the policies and actions of Western governments, with some responses focusing predominantly on Soviet foreign policy. In addition, a significant minority of responses were apt to lose sight of the proposition, lapsing at times into a narrative account of relations between the Soviet Union and Western governments. Some responses did not focus on the entire time period specified in the question, frequently devoting too much time to the Stalinist period to the detriment of the latter part of the century.

Question 2 required candidates to assess, in relation to the foreign policies of the Soviet Union and Western governments in the period 1917-1991, the proposition that fascist and communist governments adopted aggressive foreign policies, while democratic governments pursued peaceful and conciliatory policies. There was a wide range of standard but, in general, the quality of the responses was lower than for Question 1. The best responses were thoughtful, well-argued and focused closely on the wording of the question. Weaker responses were frequently characterised by a major imbalance between their coverage of 'communist' governments as opposed to 'fascist' and 'democratic' regimes. Another common flaw was a failure to do justice to the period 1953-1991, while a significant minority of responses to this question lapsed into a narrative account at various points.

Assessment Unit A2 2 Historical Investigations and Interpretations

A2 Unit 2 attracted a total of 1,621 candidates, the majority of whom sat Option 4 (Partition of Ireland 1900-1925). The standard of the answers to the essay questions was generally good and, even though the quality of the responses to the other questions varied widely, there were some excellent answers to both the source and interpretation questions.

Option 1 England 1558–1603

This option had an entry of 69 candidates. Although the overall standard was mixed, there were some very good responses to Question 1 (a), Question 1 (b), Question 2 and Question 3 (a).

Question 1 (a), which required candidates to assess which of the two sources an historian would value most as evidence in a study of Elizabeth I's relations with her Parliaments in the period 1558-1603, was generally answered well. The best responses dealt well with the content of the sources, used a wide range of criteria to assess their value, introduced relevant contextual knowledge and made a substantiated judgement about which source was the most valuable. Weaker responses were apt to pay insufficient attention to the content of the sources or provide insufficient or no contextual knowledge. Question 1 (b), which required candidates to debate how far the sources supported the view that Elizabeth I had full control over her Parliaments between 1558 and 1603, produced some very good responses. While the best responses skilfully employed the content of both sources, as their own knowledge, to support and refute the proposition, weaker responses exhibited a range of flaws. Some displayed gaps in knowledge, while others made insufficient use of the sources and a few omitted one of the sources altogether.

Answers to Question 2, which required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of Elizabeth I's policy towards France they found more convincing, exhibited quite a wide range in standard. Most responses observed that the two interpretations attributed contrasting foreign policy aims to Elizabeth I, but relatively few noted that Doran and Hammer also put forward very different views on whether Elizabethan foreign policy was consistent and successful. Weaker responses were often characterised by insufficient

relevant contextual knowledge and, in a few instances, the omission of one of the interpretations. A small number of candidates included in their response a large number of historiographical references. This is not required.

Question 3 (a), which asked candidates to debate whether Catholicism represented a significant threat to Elizabeth I in England between 1558 and 1603, produced some very good responses which were well argued and well informed. Some of the weaker responses digressed on to the threat Puritanism posed to Elizabeth I or lapsed into a general discussion of her foreign policy.

Question 3 (b), which required candidates to assess whether economic developments in England in the period 1558-1603 were characterised by change rather than continuity, did not elicit any responses.

Option 2 Ireland 1685–1714

A total of 75 candidates were entered for this option. The overall standard was good and there were some outstanding responses to all questions.

Question 1 (a), which asked candidates to assess which of the two sources an historian would value most as evidence in a study of the causes of the Glorious Revolution, produced responses of variable quality. Most were good on content and context, but less convincing on authorship and date. Some responses operated on the false assumption that the ‘Immortal Seven’ were the seven bishops who had stood trial on the charge of seditious libel in June 1688. Question 1 (b) required candidates to debate how far the sources supported the view that the most important reason for the Glorious Revolution was that James II had lost the support of England’s political leaders. This question produced some excellent responses which used the sources effectively and displayed a wide range of appropriate contextual knowledge. Although there was some variation on the interpretation of who were ‘political leaders’, this did not preclude convincing analysis and argument.

Question 2, which required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the reasons for the failure of the Siege of Derry they found more convincing, was generally handled well. Most candidates demonstrated good technique and there was a fairly even balance in terms of the nominated interpretation. Interpretation A was assessed more convincingly than Interpretation B, with candidates deploying good contextual knowledge of the siege from the perspective of the defenders, particularly in relation to the offensive exploits that lowered the morale of the Jacobite forces. A weakness in some responses was the failure to develop references in Interpretation B to Louis XIV’s prioritisation of the continental theatre of the Nine Years’ War. Nonetheless, responses were generally well balanced and also presented thoughtful challenges to both interpretations.

Question 3 (a), which required candidates to debate the extent to which the Earl of Tyrconnell was responsible for the problems James II encountered in Ireland in the period 1685-1688, elicited some excellent responses. Most were well informed on the subject of Tyrconnell and provided a good account of his policies of Catholicisation in both the civil and military spheres. Many responses also discussed Tyrconnell’s more radical agenda to alter the land settlement in Ireland, in a sense going beyond the brief given to him by James II. Most answers concluded that the king was ultimately responsible for the problems that arose, as it was his decision to make Tyrconnell Lord Deputy. Better responses extended the range of analysis to explore the reaction of Ulster Protestants to Tyrconnell’s reform programme.

Question 3 (b), which invited candidates to debate whether the motivation for the introduction of the Penal Laws was primarily political rather than religious, produced some excellent responses which argued convincingly both for and against the proposition, supported by impressive and detailed evidence. However, more attention might have been paid to the Test Act of 1704.

Option 3 Ireland 1778–1803

This option attracted a total of 63 candidates. The overall standard was variable. Although there were some extremely good responses, they tended to be the exception rather than the rule. In general, Question 3 (a) and Question 3 (b) – the traditional essay questions – were the best answered parts of the paper.

The quality of the responses to Question 1 (a), which invited candidates to assess which of the two sources an historian would value most as evidence in a study of the Catholic Question in the period 1789-1798, was variable. Most responses dealt well with Source 1, particularly in terms of its authorship (tone) and motive, but were less convincing on Source 2, where many candidates assumed that the author was a member or supporter of the Ascendancy and was unsympathetic to Catholic Emancipation. Responses might have drawn more from the content of this source, and very few candidates identified Mr Stewart as the future Irish Chief Secretary, Lord Castlereagh.

Question 1 (b), which required candidates to debate how far the sources supported the view that the Catholic Question dominated Irish politics in the period 1789-1798, produced better responses than Question 1 (a). There were good responses both for and against the proposition, which drew on a sound knowledge of the various Catholic Relief Acts, as well as other key issues in this period, such as the rise of the United Irishmen and the emergence of sectarian unrest in Armagh. However, candidates might have developed their analysis of the Fitzwilliam episode referred to in Source 2.

Question 2, which asked candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of the motives for the introduction of the Act of Union they found more convincing, produced responses of variable quality. Many candidates included thoughtful challenges in their responses, especially to Interpretation B, but they were generally less convincing in arguing in support of their nominated interpretation. The candidates' deployment of relevant contextual knowledge was of uneven quality. It was often good on Interpretation B, where, for example, the best responses identified the mention of developments in 1785 as a reference to Pitt's commercial propositions, the episode that arguably made the Prime Minister first begin to consider a Union. However, the use of contextual knowledge was less impressive in relation to Interpretation A, where many responses failed to elaborate on the backdrop of Britain's war against Napoleonic France.

Question 3 (a), which required candidates to assess the proposition that the decline of the Volunteers after 1782 was mainly a result of the personal and political rivalry between Henry Flood and Henry Grattan, produced the best responses on this paper. Responses generally displayed a sound grasp of the Grattan–Flood dynamic and certainly appreciated that there were a range of factors involved, especially the end of the American War of Independence. The Renunciation dispute was competently assessed, but there was some confusion over the issues of the Catholic Question and parliamentary reform.

Question 3 (b), which invited candidates to debate the extent to which the failure of the 1798 Rebellion was due to the shortcomings of its leaders, elicited some good responses, though it was handled less well than Question 3(a). While most responses identified a range of factors for the failure of the rebellion, they were not always convincing on the proposition, many failing to identify any of the key individuals involved, such as Lord Edward Fitzgerald or even Wolfe Tone.

Option 4 Partition of Ireland 1900–1925

This option, with an entry of 1,414 candidates, saw a wide range in the standard of responses. However, in general, candidates performed well and there were some outstanding responses to all of the questions.

Question 1 (a), which invited candidates to assess which of the two sources an historian would value most as evidence in a study of the causes of the Easter Rising of 1916, was generally answered very well. There were many excellent responses which fully evaluated the content of the sources in relation to the proposition, employed a wide range of criteria to assess value, introduced relevant contextual knowledge and made a substantiated judgement about which source was the most valuable. Weaker responses were apt to pay insufficient attention to the content of the sources.

There was a wider variation in the quality of the responses to Question 1 (b), which asked candidates to debate how far the two sources supported the view that Ulster resistance to Home Rule was the main cause of the Easter Rising of 1916. The best responses fully utilised the content of both sources and skilfully integrated the source material and their own knowledge into a clear argument. Many responses demonstrated excellent knowledge of the causes of the Easter Rising, in particular the phenomenon of Carsonism. Some candidates provided excellent contextual knowledge relating to the content of the sources, while others introduced a range of other relevant factors. The most common flaw exhibited by weaker responses was to rely too heavily on the content of the sources, displaying little of their own knowledge in support of their argument.

Question 2, which required candidates to assess which of two different interpretations of Asquith's handling of the Home Rule Crisis of 1912-1914 they found more convincing, elicited a wide variety of responses. Most candidates made a good attempt at analysing the different interpretations, while the best responses identified which of the two interpretations they found more convincing and, in support of their judgement, provided very good contextual knowledge and evidence from the extracts to support and challenge the interpretations. Weaker responses struggled to identify the salient points of the interpretations or lacked relevant contextual knowledge. Some of the weaker responses were characterised by vagueness and a lack of focus on the content of the interpretations.

Question 3 (a), which asked candidates to assess whether the failure of British Government policies in Ireland in the period 1916-1918 was mainly responsible for the success of Sinn Féin in the General Election of 1918, was by far the more popular of the essay questions. There were many well-argued and well-informed responses to this question. Weaker responses exhibited a range of flaws. Some failed to engage with the proposition, while others lacked detailed evidence in support of their arguments.

Question 3 (b) required candidates to debate the proposition that the poor military tactics of the Anti-Treaty forces led to their defeat by the Free State Army in the Irish Civil War of 1922-1923. Responses to this question varied widely but the overall standard was lower than for Question 3 (a). Some responses provided a strong analysis of the reasons for the defeat of the Anti-Treaty forces, but many lacked detailed evidence in support of their argument or limited their response to agreeing with the proposition.

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