



A-Level History

7042/2A Royal Authority and the Angevin Kings, 1154 -1216

Report on the examination

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General

The students sitting this examination were generally very well prepared. The vast majority had clearly engaged with the course being studied, and there was some excellent knowledge about the Angevin Kings displayed. Time management was good, and most students were able to produce full answers to three questions. What discriminated between successful answers and less successful ones, was the ability of the student to tailor their knowledge to the specific question being asked. Many of the students sitting this examination know a lot of detail, but there is sometimes a tendency to lapse into narration or very detailed, yet unfocused, commentary. An ability to control this own knowledge and deploy it in an analytical and selective manner is the key to success.

The examiners were very impressed to see that a great number of the students had clearly engaged in wider reading and research, and many were able to reference historical opinions in their answers. It is important to note, however, that knowledge of historiography itself is not part of the requirement for this component. There were a number of instances where candidates had used extensive quotations from historians in lieu of factual support or historical detail, and this did limit the marks that they could be awarded. Some students followed quite laborious, and often over-complicated, structures in their essays, and this made their analysis much more difficult to follow. Whilst a good history essay will contain balance, it is certainly not expected that every single point will be 'balanced'. Examiners are looking for logically structured answers which have a clear thread, and, in very good answers, the analysis tends to lead the essay- as opposed to an approach which might be described as 'descriptive with analytical links'.

Question 01

For this question, students were being asked to assess the value of the three sources in relation to 'the relationship between King John and his barons'. It is important that students remember to read the question carefully and to not confuse this task with the corresponding 01 question in Component 1 which assesses how convincing extracts are. 'Value' is not the same thing as validity, utility, reliability or accuracy and it might be worth exploring what 'invaluable' means. The vast majority of students used their time productively and did not waste valuable minutes on an overall introduction or a conclusion deciding which of the three sources was most valuable- there is no requirement to do this, and students would be advised not to spend time on it.

Students who scored the highest marks on this question were able to think about the sources holistically. This meant that they read through the whole source (attribution and content) before writing their answer, and they were able to consider the interplay between the provenance and tone and the content of the source. For example, a good response to Source A might have noted that John claimed that his relationship with de Briouze had broken down due to the baron's failure to pay a debt. They might deploy own knowledge to show that many of John's barons were in debt to the King, and so this has a ring of truth about it. However, more nuanced answers were then able to consider that this document was dictated by John,

and he was unlikely to have blamed himself. Indeed, the tone of the source is such that John was trying to appear like the reasonable party, but that he hugely understated certain events. For example, he briefly mentions Matilda being 'curt' and completely negates to mention that he arrests her and has her starved to death.

Less successful responses tended to take a very formulaic approach- dealing with provenance and content as two entirely separate entities. This is often not very successful and tends to lead to lots of vague and unsupported speculation. For example, a number of candidates decided that Source B would be very negative about John, due to the monastery's connection to William Longchamp. However, the content of the source does not really support this assertion, as there is a great deal of sympathy for John's situation shown. Indeed, the chronicler seems to be aiming to be quite balanced in his reporting of what happened. Examiners were a little disappointed that some students were not more knowledgeable about the authorship of the Magna Carta. Many just asserted that this was a document written by the barons and so was biased and could not be trusted. In reality, the authorship of the document is much more nuanced than this. Indeed, the vast majority of written sources could be described as 'biased' in some form, but this does not automatically reduce the value of a source.

Question 02

This was the most popular of the essay questions, asking students to think about the control that Henry II was able to exert over the English Church. Examiners were not looking for students to be able to write about every decade of Henry's reign, but they were looking for students to go beyond the dispute with Becket in some way. The Church is clearly an area which students know a lot about and there were some very impressive answers looking at a range of issues such as Henry's relationship with Theobald at the start of his reign and his reliance on the Church to implement his reforms in government, finance and the law. There was obviously discussion of Becket's Archbishopric and the aftermath of his murder, but many students were also able to talk with confidence about other important clerics such as Richard of Dover or Gilbert Foliot. Stronger answers were able to grasp that, even in the 1160s, Henry's control of the English Church was actually quite good, despite Becket's intransigence. Although Becket was the Archbishop, he was in exile from 1164-70, and Henry was able to impose his will over the other prelates quite effectively. Less successful answers tended to forget the specifics of the question and just talked about Church related issues without effectively linking to the precise question. Time was wasted, for example, with lengthy descriptions about the manner of Church-State relations in Henry I and Stephen's reigns and also with lots of discussion about the conquest of Ireland. It is important that students read the question carefully: this question was about 'control' and the 'English Church' and, so, unrelated discussions about Henry's relations with the Papacy were not rewarded, unless they were convincingly linked to the specific question.

Question 03

This was the least popular of the essay questions, asking students to think about the extent to which Henry failed in his dealings with the French crown. Examiners were not looking for students to be able to write about every decade of Henry's reign, but they were looking for students to say something about Louis VII and Philip II- which the vast majority did. Indeed, most students decided that Henry was successful in dealing with Louis, but not with Philip. The more successful answers here tended to take a thematic approach, the ones which were organised chronologically often lapsed into telling the story. Often this was in great detail, but with limited analysis of the relative success/failure of Henry's actions. Good answers were able to point to a range of examples, including the French Kings' manipulation of Henry's sons, Henry's military abilities and some very nuanced understanding of Henry's feudal position with regards to his continental possessions.

Question 04

This was a popular choice of essay, and the examiners were pleased that the vast majority of those attempting it restricted their comments to just Richard and John. The minority who began looking at alternative factors (often long term Angevin Despotism or Philip's abilities) misused their time on a pre-prepared answer, rather than focusing on answering the specific question set. Knowledge about John's failings was generally good, although the best answers were able to explain exactly how humiliating the Poitevan Lusignan family led to the loss of Normandy. Equally, the treatment of the Mirebeau prisoners and alleged murder of Arthur were undoubtedly problematic for John, but students at the top end were able to explain why the killing of Poitevans and the heir to Brittany caused problems specifically in Normandy. Some students ignored the end date of 1204 and became bogged down in descriptions of John's issues in England post 1205.

When dealing with Richard's legacy, some students became less focused in their answers. Students knew a lot about Richard's reign in England, or his activities on crusade, but then were only vaguely able to say why this might have caused problems for John by 1204. Knowledge about the state of the war between Richard and Philip by 1199 was much patchier. Some students unconvincingly argued that Philip had only wanted to attack Normandy because of Richard's behaviour whilst on the Crusade, which was then narrated in great detail. This was not very compelling, given the French Crown's long-term desire to reduce the size and power of their powerful Angevin neighbours. More pertinent here might have been discussion of Richard's refusal to marry Alys, which brought the whole question of the possession of the Vexin to the table.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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