



AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2B
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2B

The Wars of the Roses, 1450–1499

Component 2B: The Fall of the House of Lancaster, 1450–1471

General Comments

It was encouraging to find that most students engaged effectively with the new AS format and used their time to the full to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q02 proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very good and weaker answers to both and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further guidance as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question.

Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

Most students made a reasonable effort to consider the provenance and tone of the sources with much discussion of the different emphasis regarding blame. Some students took the source guidance entirely at face value without considering how it applied to the source – too many dismissed Source A as pro-Edward IV because the guidance noted that the chronicle used was usually supportive of the King. One important point was that, in this case, the source was not and students who noticed this were able to make relevant points regarding the value of what was presented. Too many generic and undeveloped comments were made with regard to 'bias' and centres should consider whether the blanket use of this term (as well as its misspelling) is helpful.

With regard to the second element it was common to find that responses attempted to evaluate content but a lack of contextual own knowledge made doing this very difficult and in many cases quite superficial. This is a major area for centres to work on with students. It is important that responses use own knowledge in order to draw conclusions about the material in the sources. Repeating back the material in the sources without this is not really sufficient to demonstrate significant understanding or to make meaningful comments or comparison. Generally, students who addressed content through a sentence-by-sentence (or even phrase-by-phrase) approach produced far less satisfactory answers than those who summarised and commented on the overall arguments. Examples from own knowledge of the alleged power of the Woodvilles, the character of Edward IV, marriages and offices, the role of New Yorkists and the disputed foreign policy interactions were often in evidence in the better responses.

In terms of the comparison, better students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the debate surrounding the relationship between Edward IV and Warwick. Many concluded that Source A was particularly valuable because it dealt with a range of issues regarding the alienation of the king's followers and the role of the Woodvilles and that it was unusually critical of the king. However, some noted the detailed development provided by Source B and its much sharper focus on Warwick in particular. Many emphasised that both sources would be valuable in explaining the debate from two contrasting angles, and, if well-reasoned, such a judgement was equally acceptable. However, students who merely asserted the superiority of one source over another, talked of the 'validity' – usually meaning accuracy of content – of the sources, or, in a few cases, simply ignored the requirement to address comparison, showed little understanding of what this question asked for.

Section B

Question 02

Most students were well aware of the 'loss of Normandy' and were able to consider it, along with a range of other factors, in accounting for the opposition to the Duke of Somerset's faction. However, in a number of cases students did confuse Normandy with Gascony and the offices held in France at the end of the war were often not securely understood; there was much confusion about Calais. Some students did struggle to address the concept of the faction that included Somerset and could not extend it to the King's household and others such as Suffolk when they made points about these. The most successful students developed convincing links. One, for example, was that Henry VI was heavily dominated by this faction in the time indicated and that therefore opposition resulted from what he did whilst under their influence. Another successful approach was to consider the link between Queen Margaret and Somerset. Most students were comfortable considering points such as the ambition of Richard of York and his actions. However, there were too many responses that were vague and general without specific examples of own knowledge to substantiate points. The unit is a depth paper and better responses used developed points. There were a number of more descriptive responses which, despite some good knowledge, received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical approach.

Question 03

Most students who attempted this question were able to consider arguments for and against the premise that baronial warfare had a devastating impact. However, there were a number of more descriptive responses which, despite some good knowledge, received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical stance, and it was disappointing to find that even among the more able students, some failed to offer any balance in their essay and presented a view that the impact was entirely devastating or not devastating at all. Some students failed to note the dates given in the question and wrote extensively about the period before 1459 or with detailed examples from the earlier period. Many were able to note the size of battles, especially Towton, and some good comments were made regarding locations as well as frequency. Some responses made cogent comments regarding the English Church and the economic situation. The question was quite open in nature and most perspectives were rewarded if they could be sustained. This was a broader question than 02 and in some respects this had an impact on the depth of knowledge deployed but nevertheless some responses were far too vague and assertive. Students who were able to notice trends and patterns regarding people, times and places often developed the most effective evaluation leading to convincing conclusions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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