



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2A (A-level)
Question 01 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2A (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket.

[30 marks]

Student response

All three sources are valuable to an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket, but source B has the greatest value. This is because it is the most accurate of the three sources, while also having the most balanced tone, with the least focus on God or Satan's influence on the quarrel.

All of the sources have strengths and limitations of provenance. Source A is a hagiography and therefore its purpose is not to give the reader an accurate account of events, but to emphasise the saintly aspects of Becket's character in order to impart moral messages to the reader. This can be seen clearly in the suggestion that "It was Satan and the traps he laid that encouraged hatred towards Thomas". Because of this, any claims made by the source are called into doubt as an historian could not know whether they were true or invented to give a moral teaching without checking to see if they are corroborated by other sources. This reduces the value of the source to an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket. Source C also has hagiographical features: most notably the suggestion that Becket had foreseen that he would die in defence of his cause ("And I will die for my Lord when the time comes"). As the author of the source, was not present at the Council of Westminster, and wrote the source thirteen years after it, he could not have known this was said, and any second-hand information that might have led him to believe it was said is also unlikely to be accurate, due to the passage of time diminishing the reliability of the memories of those who were present at the Council of Westminster. Therefore, the most likely explanation is that Becket did not say this, and Roger of Pontigny invented it in order to make Becket appear more saintly. As with source A, this willingness to include untruths lessens the value of the source to an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket. This also means both sources take a religious tone, focusing on Satan and God, and how the two influenced events. This is to be expected, as both sources were written by monks, and does not cause the value of the two sources to be lessened greatly, as it is possible to read around the religious imagery. Both sources also were written by men who knew Thomas. Although it is uncertain how close they might have been to him, both had at least met him, and would therefore have had some knowledge of his character. However, while source C was written by a monk at the monastery which gave refuge to Thomas, and therefore may have some bias towards him, source A was written by a man who worked for both Becket and Henry II. This would suggest that the source should have a level of impartiality, or that if there is any bias it is warranted, because the author had experience of both men. Source A, therefore, would have more value to an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket from this perspective.

With regard to content, all sources have strengths and weaknesses as evidence for an historian studying the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket. Source C is primarily made up of

dialogue between The King and the Archbishop. If accurate, this dialogue would give an historian an image of how the two men interacted, making it valuable to an historian studying the quarrel between the two men. The source claims Thomas said he was willing to obey the King, "saving my order". Other accounts of the Council of Westminster tell us that all save one of the Bishops present offered to obey the king, saving their order, indicating that although the exact words the source claims were spoken are unlikely to be accurate (for reasons due to provenance, discussed earlier), the general meaning of the dialogue is based in fact. Therefore, this increases the value of the source to an historian studying the quarrel between the King and the Archbishop. However, because the valuable information that can be taken from the source has to be interpreted from the invented dialogue, and is not outrightly stated by the author, the value of the source is decreased. Its range is also limited: it has little value to an historian studying how the personalities of the two men might have influenced the quarrel, because it is made mostly of invented dialogue; it has little value to an historian studying the cause of the quarrel or its development, because it does not mention the issue of criminous clerks, or any action taken by the King or the Archbishop; its value mainly comes from the mention of the phrase "saving my order". Source A begins by suggesting that Satan was the cause of the quarrel between the two men, which is a suggestion of little value to an historian studying the quarrel. However, it then goes on to suggest other reasons for the quarrel, such as the king taking Becket's resignation as Chancellor as a personal insult. The source also describes a number of events that occurred during the course of the dispute, such as Becket excommunicating the lord of Eynsford. While it is true that Becket made a number of excommunications which angered the king and nobility, and the reasons that the source gives for the quarrel between the two men, it fails to mention both the Council of Westminster, and the issue of criminous clerks, which were the root of the quarrel. Therefore, this lack of range greatly reduces the value of the source to an historian studying the quarrel. Source B, like Source C, describes the Council of Westminster. Unlike both other sources, it mentions that the Council was called to resolve the issue of whether state or Church would have that right to inflict penalties on "clerks convicted of major crimes." It also discusses the implications of Canon law on this, and describes briefly Becket's response to the King's demands. The source is accurate in its claim that the king would not take Becket's request to not introduce a new procedure into account, as the king demanded that the Bishops present promise to observe the new procedures. The source, therefore, gives an accurate summary of the cause of the quarrel. It does not discuss any later part of the quarrel, which limits its value to an historian studying the quarrel, but it is important for any historian studying the quarrel to have an understanding of its cause, increasing the value of the source.

To summarise, Source A is limited by its failure to mention the Council of Westminster, despite its strength in provenance due to being written by a man who had worked for both men, and Source C is limited by its lack of range and hagiographical tendencies. Source B has the greatest value as it gives an accurate description of the cause of the quarrel with a balanced tone.

Commentary – Level 4

It is important to stress that this exercise does not require comparative evaluation and whilst students may wish to offer an opinion as to which source is the most valuable, this is not required. The answer does seek to evaluate the significance of provenance, tone and content on each source when assessing the value to an historian. Comment is often linked to knowledge of context, although this could be developed further. Reference to what is omitted in

each source is supported by contextual knowledge. A problem with the response is that the judgements on A and C especially may be seen as somewhat exaggerated or even misunderstood, but it is an effective attempt overall. This is a low Level 4 response.