



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel in
GCE History (8HI0/1B)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1B: England, 1509–1603: authority,
nation and religion

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PE report 8HI0 1B

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, Advanced Subsidiary Level, paper 1B.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause and/or consequence. Section B offers a further choice of essays, targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates in the main appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. This was most evident on Section C, as would be expected. Whilst the impact of this cannot be fully mitigated against, and the best advice is thus to plan time accordingly in the first place, the responses that appeared to experience such timing issues yet overcame them to some degree were those who offered more direct responses. To wit, those who wrote abbreviated question 5 responses that focused sharply on arguing and analysing the given views, rather offering extensive explanations and quotes, were more likely to still produce a reasonably effective response, than those failing to reach any comparative analysis and evaluation.

In sections A and B most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question. A minority of candidates, often otherwise knowledgeable, wanted to focus on causes and engage in a main factor/other factors approach, even where this did not necessarily address the demands of the conceptual focus. Candidates in the main were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections in terms of the greater depth of knowledge required where section A questions targeted a shorter-period, as compared to the more careful selection generally required for the section B questions covering broader timespan.

Candidates do need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer comparative analysis of the merits of

the different views, exploring the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence, both from the within the extracts, and candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence, or a drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider taught topic.

Question 1

Question 1 was the less popular choice with candidates in Section A of the paper. The vast majority of candidates were able to engage with the conceptual demands of the question sufficiently, and apply appropriate knowledge in order to allow them to access levels three and four. What distinguished within these tended to be down to two issues, which were often related. Firstly, the extent to which candidates were able to go beyond basic explanations of how any particular reason may have caused poverty, in order to explore and assess the impact this actually had. The second issue was the quality of supporting knowledge. A number of candidates seemed to have some understanding of certain factors worked to cause/contribute to the increase in poverty, but lacked the necessary detail to develop this very far. Those who were able to precisely examine and substantiate arguments as to the extent to which changes in the use of land, or other factors such as population growth, did actually contribute to increases in poverty, were best placed to reach the highest levels. With regards to the given factor, the strongest responses had a grasp of issues such as enclosure, rack-renting, increases in pastoral farming, and the changes in land use related to the dissolution, and were able to explore the relationship between these and other factors, or balance out the negatives and positives, e.g. arguments were put forward relating enclosure to progress in the woollen industry. Other issues which featured regularly were the impact of the dissolution of the monasteries, population growth, the debasement of the coinage and inflation, bad harvests and taxation. Many were able to give detailed knowledge on these issues; stronger responses were clearer in shaping this material towards poverty. For example, on the former, some candidates offered explanations of the impact of the closure of the monasteries which lost sight of the issue of poverty. More successful responses focused the material around clear arguments such as the impact on the monks and nuns, or the loss of support given to the locality when a monastery closed. The strongest offered convincing attempts to ascertain the way in which such reasons contributed and their relative importance, e.g. placing the dissolution within the chronological timeframe of the, or exploring the relationship between factors, such as population growth, inflation and changes in the use of land.

Question 2

Question 2 was the more popular of the two within Section A. The vast majority of candidates attempting this question seemingly found it accessible and straightforward, and thus it was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to offer a reasoned consideration of the given issue, Henry's need for a male heir, and were largely able to focus this towards the demands of the question, and thus avoid lapsing into descriptions of his marital issues. Stronger responses tended to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of how exactly this shaped religious change, e.g. recognising and exploring how Henry's own dynastic needs brought about a process which facilitated religious reforms which did not necessarily reflect his own personal beliefs. In some cases there was emphasis on the significance of Henry VIII's personality – at times with general references to 'greed' or a desire for power or money. Whilst such arguments were often reasoned and supported, at times these were couched in a general or assertive manner. The fundamental stages of the dissolution of the monasteries featured heavily, as did the role of 'anti-clericalism' in England, or the role played by individuals with reformist inclinations, such as Cromwell, Cranmer and Anne Boleyn, e.g. some candidates were successful in assessing Cromwell's legalistic role, and the extent to which his own religious beliefs were evident in the religious reforms of the 1530s, or exploring the relationship between Henry's needs, and the opportunities this gave to those in favour of reform whose proximity drew nearer to Henry. A further discriminating factor in the success of responses was the extent to which candidates were able to focus on the precise demands of the 'growth of Protestantism', going beyond explanations of causes with only partial linkage to religious change in general.

Question 3

This was the more popular of the two questions available to candidates in Section B, and produced a range of responses. The majority were able to reach the higher levels with a predominant focus on the second-order concept of significance, and sufficient relevant material. In terms of issues covered, consideration of parliament dominated, and there were a number of responses which only considered parliament. Other aspects of government which were examined were typically the reforms to the Marcher and Northern Councils, the Privy Council, local government and the legal system. Some candidates did attempt to make use of other material from across the course studied, with mixed success, e.g. valid points were made relating to taxation, foreign policy, rebellion, Edward's age and Mary/Elizabeth's gender, although in some cases this was not well focused.

As a whole, responses were more confident in discussing changes to the role of parliament than the continuities in the role of parliament, although those with a secure grasp of the essential function of Tudor parliaments recognised these. Much was made, largely successfully, of the Reformation Parliament. Some good responses were clear in identifying and examining how the powers of the monarch and the role of chief ministers remained essentially the same across the period, with specific reference to individuals (primarily Henry and Elizabeth, although Mary's relationship with the House of Lords featured in some). Most importantly, such material was successful when securely focused on the question.

Successful responses were those which had sufficient coverage of aspects of government beyond parliament to offer a comparative analysis, and a clear focus on the demands of the question. Less successful responses tended to be those who seemed insecure in their understanding of the concept of government, or who lacked focus on the demands of a question targeting the issue of significance.

Question 4

This was the less popular question in Section B of the exam. Where candidates were able to offer sufficient valid material on Tudor culture, they tended to be successful in using this to examine the extent to which there was change. However, a significant proportion of those answering this question lacked sufficient knowledge of the topic. In such cases, some candidates attempted to try to use material from across the course of study of varying degrees of relevance, e.g. the influence of overseas trade, or religious changes, but were less successful in relating this to cultural change.

Stronger answers were able to focus on 'change' and to explore material in relation to this, and within these drama, music, art and foreign influences featured most prominently.

Question 5

Most candidates were able to access the higher two levels, generally by recognising and explaining the arguments in the two extracts, and building on this with own knowledge. The strongest responses tended to offer a comparative analysis of the views, discussing and evaluating these in the light of contextual knowledge. Most candidates were able to identify the differences between Extract 1 and Extract 2, e.g. how Extract 1 offers an account of the difficulties faced in Ireland and related issues, whereas Extract 2 emphasises that Elizabeth's government was ultimately able to overcome these. It was pleasing to see that few responses became side-tracked in an attempted analysis of the provenance of the extracts.

Where candidates were less successful, this tended to be (i) limited use of contextual knowledge, or offering valid contextual knowledge, but with limited linkage to the discussion of the views, or (ii) a tendency to describe and explain the extracts, rather than attempt to discuss and assess the arguments they offered.

Candidates' knowledge and understanding of issues was varied, with knowledge of Essex's role and Spanish involvement in Ireland being frequently cited, whilst others were able to successfully relate the arguments in the extracts to the issue of levying troops for Ireland, or the socio-economic impact of war. A discriminating factor in success was to some extent was the deployment and development of knowledge offered, i.e. the difference between referencing an issue with contextual knowledge linked to the extract, and, at the higher levels, exploring this in relation to the precise focus of the question, and assessing the validity of argument. With regards to judgement, it was pleasing to see a substantial number of candidates offer reasoned and considered assessments of the merits of both arguments, regardless of their ultimate decision. Overall, Question 5 produced a strong response from a good number of candidates.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A/B responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question
- Sufficient consideration given to the issue in the question (e.g. main factor), as well as some other factors
- Explain their judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate their reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic they are writing about in order to justify their judgements
- Focus carefully on the second-order concept targeted in the question
- Give consideration to timing, to enable themselves to complete all three question with approximately the same time given over to each one
- An appropriate level, in terms of depth of detail and analysis, as required by the question – e.g. a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions

Common issues which hindered performance where when responses:

- Answers which pay little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. write about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempt to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked – most frequently, this meant treating questions which targeted other second-order concepts as causation questions
- Where a response does not give sufficient consideration to the given issue/proposition in the question (e.g. looking at other causes, consequences, etc, with only limited reference to that given in the question)
- Answers which only gave a partial response, e.g. a very limited span of the date range, or covered the stated cause/consequence, with no real consideration of other issues
- Assertion of change, causation, sometimes with formulaic repetition of the words of the question, with limited explanation or analysis of how exactly this was a change, cause, of the issue within the question.
- Judgement is not reached, or not explained
- A lack of detail

Section C responses:

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question, as opposed to seemingly pre-prepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification
- Thorough use of the extracts; this need not mean using every point they raise, but a strong focus on these as views on the question

- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits
- Careful use of own knowledge, e.g. clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources, confidently using this to examine the arguments made, and reason through these in relation to the given question; at times, this meant selection over sheer amount of knowledge
- Careful reading of the extracts, to ensure the meaning of individual statements and evidence within these were used in the context of the broader arguments made by the authors
- Attempts to see beyond the stark differences between sources, e.g. consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or attempts to reconcile their arguments

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Limited use of the extracts, or an imbalance in this, e.g. extensive use of one, with limited consideration of the other
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations
- Using the extracts merely as sources of support
- Arguing one extract is superior to the other on the basis that it offers more factual evidence to back up the claims made, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered
- Heavy use of own knowledge, or even seemingly pre-prepared arguments, without real consideration of these related to the arguments in the sources
- Statements or evidence from the source being used in a manner contrary to that given in the sources, e.g. through misinterpretation of the meaning of the arguments, or lifting of detail without thought to the context of how it was applied within the extract
- A tendency to see the extracts as being polar opposites, again seemingly through expectation of this, without thought to where there may be degrees of difference, or even common ground