

Examiners' Report

June 2025

GCE History 9HI0 32

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Introduction

It was good to see candidates engaging in this series of exams with GCE A level paper 32 that deals with The Golden Age of Spain, 1474-1598.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A contains a compulsory question that is based on two enquiries linked to one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts -cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference and significance. Section C comprises a choice of essays that relate to aspects of the process of change over a period of at least 100 years (AO1).

Most candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and few did not complete all 3 sections. There were some scripts where reading the handwriting was a serious problem.

Question 1

The majority of candidates found the source accessible and identified key points relevant to both enquiries. Most candidates made effective use of the caption in their evaluation of the value of the source.. There was generally pleasing evidence of the deployment of contextual knowledge to develop the points that were identified. There was a general understanding of how attitudes towards the Muslim community changed from the policies of Ferdinand and Isabella to the reign of Charles who was more concerned about the perceived threat to the Catholic Church. The role of other individuals was also considered by many candidates. The tightening up under Philip was generally well dealt with as were economic and social factors that played a part in the increasing unrest that sparked the events of 1568.

Question 2

The key features of the relationship between Charles and his people were well known and understood by the majority of candidates. Many candidates opened their responses by relating the roots of the initial problems leading up to the Comuneros revolt and then moved on to deploy how matters improved with Charles recognising that he would benefit from establishing a better relationship with the nobility and showing more understanding of their attitudes. Some effective contextual knowledge was deployed to illustrate this, eg Charles appointing more effective ministers such as Gattinara and focusing his attention more on Spanish interests.

Question 3

This question was the more popular in Section B and promoted a pleasing number of focused and wide ranging responses. In a minority of scripts the answers would have been more effective with clearer planning. The nominated factor was well dealt with in many scripts with reference to King Philip focusing his time on Madrid and rarely visiting Aragon. Most responses cited evidence indicating that the King felt that the financial contribution of Aragon was very limited and his appointment of ministers such as Almenara antagonised Aragon. There was a clear understanding of the resentment felt that the fueros were not being respected. Many candidates were keen to write about the role of Peres but, in some cases, the significance of his involvement was not as clear as it should have been.

Question 4

This was clearly the more popular question in Section C and there were a very pleasing number of wide ranging and well informed responses. There was some neglect of the earlier part of the timeframe but overall the chronological parameters were effectively dealt with. The nominated factor was well dealt with with both conflict over trade routes and fears of the strategic threat to Spain as a result of increased Turkish incursions in northern Africa. The strength of Suleiman was well illustrated and specific issues from Rhodes to Tripoli to Malta to Lepant were covered in the majority of responses. Fewer candidates explained how the threat diminished after the death of Suleiman when his successors, Selim and Murad were relatively ineffectual.

The majority of responses identified a range of other issues, the rivalry with France, notably over influence in Northern Italy, the problems in the Netherlands and conflict with England. There were also effective points made re the commitments in the New World and the burden of the financial cost of such a range of interests and conflicts.

Question 5

This question was less popular than question 4 but the responses were generally well informed with an effective range of points. The nominated factor was well dealt with, with a range of specific detail citing the significance of De Cordoba, notably at Cerignola, the development of the tercios with reference to Pavia and later developments, notably in gunnery under Alba and Parma. The strongest candidates covered a very wide range starting with the importance of the Hermanidad under Ferdinand and Isabella, discussing the role of the conquistadores in the New World. There were also interesting discussions of the development of siege warfare tactics, notably by Parma in the siege of Leyden.

Paper Summary

The following advice is offered:

SECTION A

Candidates should read the question carefully and respond to both enquiries

Responses should go beyond comprehension of the source and seek to identify inferences which can be developed into reasoned inferences

Candidates should read the caption carefully and make use of it especially in their evaluation of the value of the source. They should avoid stereotypical judgements

Candidates should deploy contextual knowledge to provide specific evidence to support points in their analysis.

SECTIONS B & C

Sustained analysis is an essential requirement in high level responses

A clear plan will help to develop focused and structured responses

A clear and accurate sense of chronology is a characteristic of higher level responses

Coverage of the required timeframe is vital in Section C

Candidates should avoid a narrative/ descriptive approach

Candidates should make clear the relative significance of the points they focus on in their analysis.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
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