
A-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 1A The Age of the Crusades, c1071–1204
Report on the Examination

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General

Many of the students sitting this paper had clearly revised and prepared very thoroughly. Time management was very good and there was some impressive subject knowledge displayed, with a generally high level of conceptual understanding shown. There was lots of enthusiasm and confidence shown in many of the answers, and it was good to see that students were willing to embrace the breadth element of the questions in many instances. It is worth remembering that the essay questions are always based upon the six key questions outlined in the specification and will also seek to test from a range of issues: change, continuity, cause, consequence, similarity, difference and significance. To this end, there are no set question stems at A Level and students need to prepare for a range of different question types.

Question 01

With this question, students were required to evaluate three separate extracts in relation to an issue – the Islamic response to Outremer in the period 1099 to 1144. They were not asked to compare the given extracts, nor evaluate their provenance and bias. Those that did this wasted valuable time, although they were not penalised for so doing. The answer did not require an introduction –nor an overall conclusion, but some concluding judgement on each extract in relation to the question posed was helpful to meet the criteria for the highest marks.

The most obvious differentiator between student answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each extract. Some students adopted a line-by-line approach, which neither showed any overall understanding, nor kept the answer focused on the question demands. For the benefit of those preparing students for a future examination, it might be worth reiterating the importance of first considering the topic to be addressed (which follows the 'in relation to...' in the question) and then assimilating the whole extract before starting to write. Students should be reminded that the key argument of an extract does not necessarily appear in the first line. In this year's paper, for example, Extract A began by saying 'it has been argued...came with the fall of Edessa in 1144'- but the author of A does not agree with this and their view is that the turning point came much earlier.

Extract A argued that the growth of jihad was slow and gradual, with the Field of Blood being a tentative turning point. B suggested that the reason for a slow response was disunity in the Muslim world and that it was Zengi who turned the tide, however even he was not fully committed to waging jihad. However, C took a different view and argued that, despite disunity, the Franks faced serious threats from the Muslims from a very early point (e.g. Harran in 1104). Given these different interpretations, with their contradictory arguments, it was surprising how many students found all the extracts 'convincing'. Whilst there needed to be a balanced evaluation, those who took their full import on board provided much more nuanced judgement, demonstrating comprehension of, and sensible reflection on, the passages concerned. The most able students effectively tackled the sub-arguments within each extract alongside the overall interpretation. However, it was not necessary to comment on every statement, and those who did so often finished up providing lots of scarcely relevant information on peripheral detail- often taking a 'fact checking' approach rather than keeping focused on the issue in the question.

Sadly, some students were simply careless in their reading of the extracts and thus argued for or against suggestions that were not actually part of the passage concerned.

Question 02

This was very slightly the most popular choice of essays, and tended to produce good answers, although a number of responses ignored the breadth element to the question and this limited their marks somewhat. It was expected that good answers would consider, in some detail, the situation for Alexius prior to the First Crusade (including his reasons for requesting help from the West) and also afterwards (e.g. by considering the Treaty of Devol and its impact). This question could be tackled in two different ways, both of which produced effective answers. The vast majority considered ways in which the Crusade strengthened Alexius (e.g. he regained territory in Anatolia which would help with tax revenues and military recruitment) versus ways in which it didn't (e.g. the ongoing arguments over Antioch). However, equally as effective were the answers which considered other ways in which Alexius strengthened his position in contrast to how the crusade helped. This second approach was not initially anticipated in the indicative mark scheme, but was perfectly acceptable and rewarded as per the generic marking levels. Indeed, there was some impressive knowledge about the Byzantine Empire on display in many answers. Students who gained higher marks had a good understanding of Alexius' position and aims before the crusade, where weaker responses tended to be more vague in linking their points to Alexius' position or the position of the Byzantine Empire more generally. Some weaker answers made assumptions such as the fact that the establishment of Outremer meant that Alexius had a local ally. In reality this was not necessarily the case and the antagonism over Antioch probably outweighed any positive relations with men like Raymond of Toulouse. In terms of the six 'Key Questions' from the specification, this option combined the debate over 'How did the Byzantine Empire change?' alongside 'How were key individuals affected by developments?'

Question 03

This was the second most popular essay choice and seems to have produced the best answers comparatively to the other options. The highest marks were gained by students who had secure knowledge of events from Amalric's reign and could then successfully show how these directly impacted upon Baldwin IV. Weaker answers could sometimes talk about, for example, the Egyptian campaigns, but could not show how this weakened Baldwin IV in the longer term. Students could choose which areas to discuss, but it is important to remember that a solid understanding of Amalric's reign was a requirement. Some students made little effort to talk about this, dismissing it in favour of other factors- which did not lead to especially high marks. A few students became confused over the basic chronology, but generally the level of understanding was very pleasing to see.

Question 04

This was the least popular essay option, although only marginally, yet it produced some impressive answers. This breadth paper has a minimum requirement of 20 years for the essay questions, and thus questions with a broad scope should be treated as such. It was not expected that students talk about every year between 1185 to 1204, but fair coverage should be attempted. Sadly, some students failed to go beyond 1192 and this did limit marks. The best students produced detailed analysis showing how there were serious problems in Outremer and they also looked at how some problems became less significant over time- thus achieving balance. Weaker answers lacked precision in the examples chosen, or they failed to appreciate that events such as the Treaty of Jaffa in many ways strengthened Outremer (certainly from the position in 1187). Unfortunately some students who had very good knowledge, failed to balance their answers and they only considered problems- rather than 'how significant' these problems were, which did limit marks. It is worth noting that 'Outremer' is not the same thing as 'crusaders' and so lengthy descriptions of the

Fourth Crusade, without links to how this affected Outremer, were not relevant for this question. Many students took a chronological approach, but this was fine so long as regular analytical links were made.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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