
A-level

History

2D Religious Conflict and the Church in England, c1529-c1570
Report on the Examination

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General

The source-based question was, on the whole, handled more confidently by the 2018 cohort than by their predecessors. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding schools that there are 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 judgement. Although these three elements do not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it is sufficient for the judgement to emerge in the conclusion, something of each is expected in answers. Fewer students than last year wasted time writing introductions or paragraphs of comparative judgment. Since there is no requirement for this at A-level, this was a pleasing development.

Another positive development is that the essay questions were of near-equal popularity. Whereas, in 2017, the question on Elizabeth's reign was less popular than the other options, this year's question from the end of the specification elicited a similar number of responses to the other essay questions. This suggests that schools are taking on board advice set out in several of last year's Reports on the Examination: questions will be set on all sections of the specification.

Question 1

The compulsory question required students to assess the sources' value to an historian studying religious changes in England. As this is a theme at the heart of the component, most students were able to address the question appropriately. It is worth noting, however, that some students struggled to evaluate provenance and tone effectively. Schools are reminded that generic comments about provenance do not score highly. In particular, students could develop their treatment of 'bias', probably the least well understood concept in A-level History. Another issue, though not seen as frequently as it was last year, was that some students focused not on the sources' value, but their reliability. While there is, of course, some overlap, they are not the same: unreliable sources can still offer value to a historian.

Source A was an extract from a London chronicle, whose terse account of some of the important events of 1547-50 gave students plenty on which to draw. Nearly every answer included relevant information about the iconoclasm and emphasis on preaching that were features of the Edwardian reformation, as well as the closure of the chantries and the opposition that this provoked in Cornwall. The source's reference to the different ways in which Corpus Christi was marked by London parishes was an opportunity, seized upon by some, to comment on the lack of religious uniformity in the early years of Edward VI's reign. Good answers offered a balanced argument as to the source's value, pointing out that the chronicler's observations were limited by time and place, and did not reflect the response to religious changes in other parts of the country.

Source B, a poem written by an extreme Protestant tailor of Ipswich, was found the most problematic of the sources. This is not to say that students found it difficult to write about Peter Moone and his hatred of the Catholic priesthood ('thieves that... robbed soul and body') and 'the Pope's laws'. In fact, his occupation and location elicited a great deal of comment – some of it speculative (several students were under the impression that tailors were educated and well-travelled members of the gentry; others were unsure as to where Ipswich is) – but mostly valid evidence of contextual understanding. Much was made of the connections between East Anglia and the Low Countries, and the consequent popularity of Protestantism in eastern England. Moone's critique of the doctrines and practices of the pre-Reformation Church similarly enabled

students to show their knowledge, in particular of such changes as the introduction of the Bible in English and the dissolution of the chantries.

However, many students described the author's circumstances and/or his viewpoint without explaining how these were valuable in relation to the question. An answer must, in order to achieve a mark in Level 3 or higher, provide relevant evaluation of each source. Strong responses to this source identified Moone's treatise, whose publication would have meant certain death earlier in the century, as valuable evidence of the unprecedented expression of new religious ideas after the abolition of the Heresy Laws in 1547.

In contrast, most students coped well with Source C, an extract from the Putting Away of Books and Images Act 1550. The circumstances of the Act's introduction, following the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer and the Act of Uniformity in 1549, were well known. Students were able to infer from the source just how important the destruction of Catholic images and books was to the Edwardian regime, many commenting usefully on the source's clear and unambiguous tone and the fact that the government took the effort to enshrine its encouragement of iconoclasm in statute law. The source's limitations were similarly obvious to well-informed students. The source claimed that the Book of Common Prayer was 'much more consistent with the beliefs of [Edward's] subjects than other versions of service which have been used in past years'. The 'commotions' of 1549, notably the Western (or Prayer Book) Rebellion, suggested otherwise, as did the relative ease with which Mary repealed the Edwardian reforms after 1553.

Question 2

This question tested students' knowledge of the ways in which the Church in England was 'under threat' in c.1529 and their understanding of the extent to which these threats were serious. It was the least well-handled of the essay questions. Many answers were excessively descriptive in their accounts of clerical corruption in the pre-Reformation Church and the challenges posed by Lollardy, Lutheranism and Humanism. It was, of course, valid to include information about Cardinal Wolsey's misdeeds and the tragic case of Richard Hunne. In order to show understanding of the question's demands, however, it was necessary to do more than simply explain why the Church's popularity was waning. Another common mistake was the description of Lollardy as a 'new religious idea' and of John Wycliffe (who died in 1384) as its 'leader'. The stance of Henry VIII vis-à-vis the Church also caused problems. It must be remembered that the King, who was awarded the title *Fidei Defensor* in 1521, sincerely desired to remain in obedience to Rome. Although pressure was brought to bear on the clergy, through accusations of praemunire, and the papacy, via statutes such as the Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates, too much should not be made of the threat Henry posed to the Church. It was only after Anne Boleyn became pregnant that irrevocable steps were taken towards schism. Answers that used as evidence of 'threat' the break with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries and other, even later, developments missed the point of the question and did not score high marks.

There were, nevertheless, some excellent answers to this question. Balance is expected for Level 4 or higher, and this was in evidence in essays that examined, on the one hand, demands for reform in print and in parliament and, on the other, the enduring power and influence of the Church in England. Similarly, Henry's long-held humanist views, and his new-found interest in Caesaropapism, were contrasted with his reluctance to upset the status quo. The most persuasive answers concluded that the Church was secure at the end of the 1520s. This reflects the historiography: where once historians like Haigh and Duffy were called 'revisionists', now it is their

interpretation that holds sway. Few students now accept Dickens' view of the pre-Reformation Church as 'an unseaworthy vessel'.

Question 3

The Marian persecutions are a popular subject. This question gave students the chance to assess their significance as an obstacle to Mary I's restoration of Catholicism in England. However, the given factor caused some difficulties. While almost every answer discussed the persecutions, many lacked relevant evidence that they made Mary's task difficult. A common error was to presume that the publication of Foxe's Book of Martyrs and its subsequent popularity indicates public opposition to the Marian regime; since it was not published until five years after Mary's death, however, this was unconvincing. Better answers provided evidence of the public response to the burnings of heretics and the concerns raised by such insiders as Simon Renard, while also offering the counter-argument that the burnings actually worked. Students should never be afraid to interrogate the question and this was an opportunity to challenge the Elizabethan 'Black legend' of Catholicism.

Beyond the burnings, other obstacles in Mary's path included the brevity of her reign, her failure to produce an heir, parliamentary opposition to the return of monastic lands, and the accession of the anti-Spanish (and enemy of Cardinal Pole) Pope Paul IV. Less persuasive was the inclusion in many students' essays of long descriptions of Wyatt's rebellion, which was fundamentally a rising against the Habsburg marriage and not anti-Catholic.

Question 4

Students were asked to assess the extent to which the Elizabethan Religious Settlement was supported by Catholics and Protestants. Most students were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of opposition to the Settlement. Radical Protestants' dislike of crucifixes was mentioned by many, as was the Vestarian Controversy. Archbishop Parker's attempt to smooth ruffled feathers by assembling London clergy at Lambeth Palace was clearly memorable, as evidenced by the many detailed descriptions of the incident. However, it should be remembered that only 37 clerics refused to comply with the Crown's demand for uniformity. Rather too many students argued that Protestants opposed the Settlement on the basis of the actions of this tiny, if vocal, minority. Similarly, the dramatic rising of the Northern Earls was seen by some as incontrovertible evidence that Catholics opposed the Settlement. More nuanced answers recognised that the Earls' motives were somewhat more complex and that the uniqueness, and ultimate failure, of the Northern Rebellion indicates that Catholics, by and large, were prepared to accept the Elizabethan Settlement in the 1560s.

Overall, this question was answered more effectively than the other essays. It is, of course, more difficult to provide evidence of support (or toleration) than of outright opposition; many students, nevertheless, were able to show often very good understanding of the elements of the Settlement that made it possible for most English people to accept the principles set out in the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity and in the revised Book of Common Prayer. A significant minority, unfortunately, condemned themselves to low marks by writing only about the Settlement – often in great detail – without addressing the question of its reception in the 1560s.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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