
A-level History

Component 2E The English Revolution, 1625-1660
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There was evidence of more students being confident in their approach to the sources. There was some confusion between provenance and providence but many students adopted a structured approach of dealing with provenance, tone and content. This did hamper some from making useful links between the elements as well as being precise in their use of context. With regard to the essays some were let down by the generality of their introductions and inability to illustrate conceptual understanding. On a depth paper students also need to show a greater grasp of the core narrative detail. There was a good spread of selection to the essay question with question 2 being particularly popular.

Question 1

Stronger responses were marked by their structured and focused approach. They tended to have direct treatments of provenance and tone with excellent supporting selected context. All of this was shaped by evaluative language. There was some excellent comment on A as from the perspective of a supporter of the Rump but written in a fairly neutral tone. B was seen, rightly, by most as a justification by Cromwell. Few linked the context of Harrison being a key figure behind the calling of the Nominated Assembly as the leading millenarian Fifth Monarchist and the officer who led the troops that ended the Rump. Some were able to use the religious language and tone of Cromwell's speech in B in relation to the supposed nature of the Nominated Assembly, otherwise known as Barebones Parliament or the Parliament of Saints as part of Cromwell's justification for his removal of the Rump. Some did link Cromwell's approach to his ideological schizophrenia. It is clear that many had considered a range of sources by Cromwell as part of their course. For C there was some useful comment from the provenance of the source in terms of the origins of the account Ludlow received from Harrison and some also set this in the context of both being out of favour with Cromwell after the establishment of the Protectorate.

Question 2

The majority of students had a sound general grasp of the narrative of the years 1603-29. Some students limited their answer by not covering the full scope of the period. Another limiting element was the range of factors students introduced. The majority of students were able to write about Buckingham and foreign policy and, to varying degrees, as the favourite. Stronger responses set Buckingham's role in the context of other key factors, e.g. finance and religion, as well as considering the centrality of Charles as king in a system of Personal Monarchy. There was some confusion over Buckingham's position in relation to Arminianism and specifically the York House Conference. Those who went beyond Buckingham's assassination normally did so in the context of Parliament's radicalism or reaction to Charles as shown by the Petition of Right and the Three Resolutions.

Question 3

Some students produced general answers on the causes of civil war rather than shaping their material to the specific wording of the question. Some students would benefit from a stronger grasp of the narrative from October 1641 to August 1642. Secure in this context there would be more scope for developing analysis. With regard to events outside of Parliament there was good use of

the most important event, the Irish Rebellion. Stronger responses linked this to events in Parliament through the Militia Bill, Grand Remonstrance and the strengthening of the influence of 'King Pym'. There was less treatment of the role of the London Mob even when use was made of the Root and Branch Petition. There was also very little reference to iconoclasm or, more importantly, the attempts at neutrality pacts among many of the gentry and the actions of radical millenarian activists like Cromwell to show the continuing importance of events outside Parliament after the Militia Ordinance of March 1642.

Question 4

A key issue here was confused treatment of the Levellers. While there was clearly a religious dimension underpinning the Levellers, particularly with some of their leaders like Walwyn more than others, their activities were essentially more political than religious in relation to the New Model. Religious radicalism in the New Model would be better illustrated with reference to self-perception as an army of saints, the core of godly officers, regimental chaplains or the development of millenarianism. Using the impact of the Windsor Prayer Meeting, the battle of Preston and Cromwell's perception of himself as Gideon or more importantly that providence was directing them to deal with Charles was also fundamental to stronger responses. Stronger responses were also marked by setting the religious radicalism of the New Model in the context of other factors, most notably the role of Charles himself. In relation to this stronger responses had an excellent grasp of the core narrative and referenced the Heads of Proposals, the Engagement, Windsor Prayer Meeting, Preston, the Newport Treaty, Ireton's Remonstrance, Pride's Purge and the trial. In doing so some brought in the concepts of providence and necessity. Stronger responses also appreciated within this narrative framework the importance of Ireton compared to Cromwell the 'reluctant regicide'.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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