

GCSE (9–1)
Candidate Style Answers

HISTORY B

(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)

J411
For first teaching in 2016

J411 - The Norman conquest, 1065 - 1087

Version 1



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Introduction

This resource has been produced by a senior member of the GCSE History examining team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied. It illustrates how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provides some commentary on what factors contribute to overall levels.

As these responses have not been through full moderation, they have not been graded and are instead, banded to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

Question 6(a)

In Interpretation A the historian Robert Bartlett argues that the 'Harrying of the North' had a powerful impact on northern England. Identify and explain one way in which he does this.

High level response

Robert Bartlett argues that the Harrying of the North had a powerful impact on the north by saying that 'the Normans devastated the North of England.' He is talking about how they burned and destroyed crops and villages to prevent any more rebellions by the English. In the Domesday Book you can see whole areas worth nothing in 1086, but in 1066 they had been thriving villages.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given 1+1+1 = 3 marks as it identifies a way in which Bartlett argues the Harrying of the North had a powerful impact on the north of England and the answer has an explanation which is developed, bringing in own knowledge and explaining how the impact could still be seen in many areas by 1086.

Medium level response

He shows the impact on the North by saying 'huge areas across northern and central England was laid to waste'. This means that lots of land was totally destroyed when William killed the animals and destroyed the crops in the fields.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given 1+1 = 2 marks because it identifies a way that the historian argues the Harrying of the North had a powerful impact and gives a basic explanation of this.

To improve the answer could use more own knowledge to develop the explanation further e.g. referring to the evidence from the Domesday Book about the reduced worth of the land in 1086 compared to 1066 or by explaining further why William carried out the attack.

Question 6(b)

If you were asked to do further research on one aspect of Interpretation A, what would you choose to investigate? Explain how this would help us to analyse and understand the Harrying of the North.

High level response

After reading Robert Bartlett's interpretation about the Harrying of the North I would like to do further research on how violent the attack was and I would look at whether all areas in the north were affected as badly as this. I would look at the Domesday Book and see if there was a pattern of severe attacks in certain areas or if it was across the whole of the north of England. This would help us to understand whether the Harrying of the North affected all the communities or if it was just certain ones. We could then go on to research whether this was because local lords were refusing to follow William's feudal system. It would also help us to understand how William used his army and whether his army would have been big enough to devastate the whole of the north because it was a huge area of land.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given level 3 as there is a strong understanding of second order concepts, in particular diversity but there are also links to causation too as the answer says that looking at the diversity could also help to understand the reasons for the attacks. There is also sound knowledge and understanding of the key issues.

Medium level response

If I did further research on Robert Bartlett's interpretation I would want to look at why William decided to attack the north so brutally. I would look at if there were more uprisings in the north than in the south, because in the south William only built castles. I might find out that William had just got fed up with dealing with rebellions across the country and so he wanted to teach them a lesson. This would help us understand more about why the Harrying of the North was more brutal in other areas.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given level 2 as it does base the answer around the second order concept of causation and shows that the further research would help us to understand more about why William was so brutal in the north. The response shows some knowledge and understanding of relevant key features and characteristics.

To improve there could be more knowledge about the Harrying of the North or a stronger understanding of the second order concept.

Question 7

Interpretations B and C are both illustrations of Norman motte-and-bailey castles. How far do they differ and what might explain any differences?

High level response

Both interpretations B and C show motte and bailey castles from Norman England however there are differences between them. One of the main reasons for these differences is that they are aimed at different audiences. B is from a book for adults whilst C is from a book for primary school children.

One difference between the interpretations is that B is an illustration of a real castle at Pickering and shows what historians think the castle would have actually looked like just after the Norman invasion. It could have been built just after the Harrying of the North to control the locals. It is made from wood because wood was quick to build with and it would still have scared the English into behaving. Interpretation C is a castle from later in the period and is built from stone. It is part of the local community and is built next to the houses. This isn't a specific castle but a 'typical' castle so the artist will have probably based the drawing on information from lots of different sites. This helps to explain why there are differences.

Another difference is the way the castles look. B looks dark and powerful and threatening with soldiers with weapons keeping guard. This might be because when it was built Pickering Castle was to force the people in the north to accept William after the Harrying of the North. The artist could show it like this because it is in a book for adults and they won't be scared but want to know that the conquest was a difficult time and William was trying to control the people. Interpretation C looks like a friendly place which is there to protect the whole community. As this book is for primary school children they want to teach them about different parts of a castle (so they have labels) and how it looked but don't want to give them nightmares. They are probably talking about castles in general and not castles that William used to make sure he had control in England.

So overall the interpretations are really quite different. They both show motte and bailey castles, but they are from different time periods so are made from different materials, one is a specific castle and the other is just a typical castle. They are also for two very different audiences, B for adults and C is for primary school children.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given level 4. The response gives detailed analysis of differences between the two interpretations and gives convincing and valid explanations about why they might differ. There is also a judgement about how far they differ in reference to the purpose of the interpretations. There is evidence of a good level of relevant knowledge.

To improve the answer could have a more substantiated conclusion and give some more examples of differences e.g. the differences in specific aspects of castles covered in the drawings.

Medium level response

Interpretation B and C are both pictures of a motte and bailey castle and they both have mottes and a bailey and they are both from the Normans times. But there are some differences. B is a castle that must have been built early on because it is built from wood. The Normans did this because it was quick to build when they were trying to control the English. The castle in C must have been built later on because it is built from stone. Another difference is that C is labelled and B isn't. This is because C is for a school textbook so it has labels so the children can learn about castles. B is for a book for adults and so it doesn't need labels. It also looks more scary as it has soldiers. So overall they are quite different interpretations because one is for adults and one is for children and they are about castles at different times.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given top level 2. It offers some examples of similarities and differences between the interpretations and explains one reason why they are different – one is aimed at children and one is aimed at adults. There is also reference to them being about castles from different time periods. There is a basic judgement about how different the interpretations are.

To improve the answer needs to identify further differences and develop the explanations about the reasons for the differences.

Question 8

In an article for the BBC History Magazine in 2012, the historian Ryan Lavelle argued that late Anglo-Saxon England was “by no means a ‘golden age’”. How far do you agree with this view?

High level response

I agree with Lavelle’s argument that Anglo-Saxon England was ‘by no means a golden age’. Many historians talk about Anglo-Saxon being a golden age because they think that England was an amazing country which was then ruined by William the Conqueror invading in 1066 and making England like France. To show it was a golden age they talk about the strength of kings like King Alfred who defeated the Vikings and took control of England as one country. Another argument is that Anglo-Saxon England was a golden age because everyone was equal. They weren’t as there were slaves and ceorls but they say that slaves could be freed and ceorls could become thegns if they owned 250 hectares of land or if they had three successful trips abroad. They argue that this means that there was social mobility and that there was even a chance to discuss ideas and make decisions at moots so it was a bit like early democracy. Women were also seen as being equal as in 1066 5% of land was owned by women and if a woman was killed her wergild was the same as for a man. They also look at the wealth of England with coins and a really good system of trade with lots of other countries. They argue that this shows other countries wanted our goods as they were so good and we were able to buy raw materials like silver from Germany or gems. They also see the standard of craftsmanship as evidence of a golden age. For example, the Alfred jewel, the Fuller brooch and the Sutton Hoo treasure were all amazingly beautiful and are seen as more examples of the golden age along with the books, which were written in English rather than in Latin showing England had its own special culture.

However many historians forget to look at the diversity of Anglo-Saxon England. If you look at this you see that there were a few people who were very rich and wealthy but most people were not rich or wealthy, nor did they live in a rural idyll with the beginnings of democracy. In reality there were different social groups and it was very difficult to move between them. Most people were ceorls who had to work very hard to make enough to feed their families. 10% of the population were slaves who belonged to their masters and could be whipped or branded as a punishment. Women, whilst they could own land, were not really equal to men as only 5% of the land was owned by women and they were usually related to the earls. In terms of the moot there was discussion about issues but a thegns opinion was worth 6 ceorls so it wasn’t really a democracy or even the beginnings of a democracy. There is also the diversity in the time period. Many of the amazing treasures discovered are from around 900AD however there aren’t as many towards the end of the period. The Church also seemed to be in decline towards the end of the period as the bishops and archbishops were more interested in working for the king than for God and there was a lot of corruption amongst the clergy. Archbishop Stigand was guilty of simony and pluralism and even the Pope had criticised the English church for not being holy enough.

So with the huge range in experience of life for Anglo-Saxon people from being rich to being a slave and with the declining standards in the church by 1066 it is hard to argue that Anglo-Saxon England was a golden age, perhaps it would be better to say that Anglo-Saxon England was a diverse country with some people very wealthy and able to afford books, jewels and to trade and many others who had a very hard life on a day to day basis. So Anglo Saxon England was indeed ‘by no means a golden age’.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given a top Level 5. It demonstrates a strong knowledge of the key features of late Anglo-Saxon England. There is a clear understanding of the interpretation given in the question and there is a clear and structured argument reaching a substantiated conclusion evaluating the interpretation. There is a clear understanding of the second order concept of diversity and reference to change over the period.

Medium level response

I don't agree with Ryan Lavelle's argument that Anglo-Saxon England was 'by no means a golden age'. Lavelle thinks this because there were lots of poor people called ceorls who had to work really hard and then there were the earls and thegns who had lots of power and money. Also the Anglo-Saxons had slaves and slavery is not something from a golden age.

However, a lot of historians think it should be called a golden age because of how wealthy England was. England had trade with lots of other countries and imported silver from Germany to make coins. There were also amazing craftsmen who could make things like the Fuller brooch and the Alfred Jewel which shows that even ordinary people had amazing skills. There were also books written in English instead of Latin which shows that England was separate from Rome and so must have been independent which shows it was a golden age. The King and the earls had lots of power over the country and even women had more rights than they had when the Normans took over England. Women could own property in Anglo-Saxon England and they were worth the same wergild as men. So overall I don't agree with Lavelle that England was by no means a golden age because they had wealth, trade, strong leaders and even women had more rights than they did later on in the middle ages.

Examiner commentary

This answer was given a low Level 3. The answer demonstrates sound understanding of the key features of the period using appropriate terminology and having a good working knowledge of the terms. There is some understanding of second order concepts (diversity) and although it isn't explicitly made throughout the answer there is reference to differences between groups several times. The candidate clearly understands the interpretation and has given arguments for both sides as well as reaching a supported judgement. There is a clear structure.

To improve this answer the candidate needs to have a much stronger focus on second order concepts and to show stronger knowledge of key features of the period.



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