

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **HISTORY B**

## **(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)**

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**J411**

For first teaching in 2016

**J411/11 Summer 2023 series**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper 11 series overview .....	4
Section A overview .....	5
Question 1 (a) .....	6
Question 1 (b) .....	6
Question 1 (c) .....	6
Question 2 .....	7
Question 3 .....	8
Question 4* .....	10
Question 5* .....	14
Section B overview .....	15
Question 6 (a) .....	16
Question 6 (b) .....	17
Question 7 .....	19
Question 8* .....	20
Question 9* .....	21

## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper 11 series overview

The J411 June 2023 series reverted back to the first pre-pandemic structure since 2019. Components 11–19 therefore composed of the chosen Thematic Study alongside the selected British Depth Study. Paper J411/11 was The People's Health, c.1250–present with The Norman Conquest, 1065–1087.

## Section A overview

To do well on the Thematic Study, candidates needed to be able to:

- present a historical summary of an area of content they have learned
- offer an explanation in response to a historical question (e.g. explaining the causes or consequences of something)
- recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a statement in an essay-style question.

It was clear from the majority of responses that most candidates had been well-prepared and were able to deploy their knowledge accurately on Question 2 and at least in part in the essay-style questions, particularly candidates who opted for Question 5.

However, on Question 3, while many candidates were able to accurately identify reasons why national and local governments find it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period, far fewer were able to develop these reasons into full explanations. Similarly, although most candidates who chose to answer Question 4 were able to identify reasons for public health improvements in the 1800s, many were unable to successfully explain the connection between cause and consequence.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recalled at least two valid responses for Question 1</li> <li>• analysed public health in medieval monasteries by organising their response around a historical concept (most frequently, reasons why public health in monasteries was good, the impact of wealth and religious belief on public health in monasteries or the differences between medieval towns and monasteries). They supported their responses using specific examples (Question 2)</li> <li>• fully explained, in Question 3, at least one reason why national and local governments found it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period (1500–1750)</li> <li>• effectively used a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their responses (Question 4 and Question 5)</li> <li>• were able to link cause and consequence together by identifying a tangible improvement in public health brought about as a result of their chosen cause, in Question 4 particularly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not produce a valid response to any part of Question 1</li> <li>• described aspects of medieval monasteries but did not consider how to organise and present their response as a historical analysis OR misinterpreted the term 'monastery' and instead answered the question about medieval towns (Question 2)</li> <li>• identified valid reason(s) in Question 3 but were unable to develop their responses with precise evidence and/or use it to address the question OR provided responses rooted in the wrong period (usually medieval or industrial)</li> <li>• made accurate but generalised points which they were unable to support with specific evidence in the essay question, or else gave precise evidence but did not explain how it helped to address the question being asked (Question 4 and Question 5)</li> <li>• did not identify a public health improvement which could be linked to their chosen cause, which limited their mark in Question 4.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Name **one** way in which the authorities in medieval Britain (1250–1500) tried to prevent the spread of disease in towns. [1]

There were many invalid responses to this question. Most frequently, candidates offered examples relating to the prevention of the spread of plague in the early modern period, such as Plague Orders or bringing in a policy of isolation. There were also frequent responses which did not relate to actions by the authorities, such as the burning of herbs or carrying posies of flowers.

However, there were a wide range of responses rooted in the medieval period which were given marks, such as the King's orders to clean the streets during the Black Death, the use of gongfarmers and moving dung heaps to the outskirts of towns. There were some candidates with very precise knowledge about measures taken by individual town authorities, which were all given marks as well.

## Question 1 (b)

- (b) Give **one** example of a problem with living conditions caused by the rapid growth of towns in the period 1750–1900. [1]

There were few problems here and most candidates were able to provide a valid response, such as overcrowding, pressures on water supply and waste management, pollution, and poor ventilation in housing. Responses which simply described types of housing (e.g. 'back-to-back houses') without identifying a problem associated with this were not given marks.

## Question 1 (c)

- (c) Give **one** example of a government action since 1900 that was introduced to improve air quality. [1]

Many candidates found this straightforward and most cited the Clean Air Act of 1956, or accurately identified what this did. Other valid responses which were given marks included the banning of smoking in public places and various measures to encourage less or cleaner car use. Responses which named new technology but did not link this to a government action (e.g. 'wind turbines') were not given marks.

## Question 2

2 Write a clear and organised summary that analyses public health in medieval monasteries.

Support your summary with examples.

[9]

Most candidates were able to include some relevant knowledge about public health in medieval monasteries in their responses to this question. Additionally, while there were some responses which contained unorganised descriptions, most candidates did approach their summary in an analytical way, clearly organising their responses in a valid historical format. Most frequently, candidates considered causation (reasons why health in monasteries was good, such as clean water and effective waste management, or the underlying reasons for good public health, such as the wealth of the Church), and consequence (the impact of various features of monasteries on monks' health). Fewer candidates made use of diversity (i.e. differences between health in monasteries and health in town).

The main reason in this series for responses not moving beyond Level 1, despite clear organisation, was a lack of development or a lack of precise examples. Many responses were not inaccurate but were too vague to move beyond Level 1. To move into Levels 2 and 3, responses needed to contain precise examples relating to medieval monasteries. There were many good examples of things such as the layout of monasteries, for example, latrines over rivers and the importance of clean water for religious reasons. However, many responses did not demonstrate the required knowledge of medieval monasteries to move into Levels 2 and 3.

A minority of candidates misunderstood the question or were unfamiliar with the term 'monastery' and instead wrote about medieval towns. Some candidates incorrectly asserted that public health in monasteries was very poor. These types of response could not receive any marks.

### Assessment for learning



'Approaches to public health in late-medieval towns and monasteries' is a bullet point on the specification, so it is vital that candidates are familiar with the term 'monasteries' and are able to demonstrate specific knowledge about health within them.

### Question 3

- 3 Why did national and local governments find it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period (1500–1750)?

Explain your answer.

[10]

This question made reference to 'public health issues' in the early modern period. This was interpreted by candidates in a variety of ways, with most choosing to discuss the problems of plague and the Gin Craze. A small number examined public health problems caused by the growth of towns.

The majority of candidates were able to identify at least one reason why national and local governments in this period found it difficult to deal with public health issues. The most common valid response was the lack of understanding about the causes of disease, usually in relation to the spread of plague. Other frequently cited reasons which were given marks included the rising population in towns which put pressure on waste management and water supply, and government measures being unpopular and subsequently ignored in relation to the Gin Craze. Many responses offered at least one full explanation, supported by precise evidence/examples, and they were rewarded at Levels 4 and 5.

However, many candidates were unable to progress beyond Level 2 or Level 3 because they lacked specific detail to support their response and/or were unable to explain why their reason **meant it was difficult** for governments **to deal with the problem**.

There were also many responses which veered away from the question's focus, instead addressing a different question, i.e. why authorities took little or no action, instead of answering the question of why they found it difficult to deal with problems. These were not given marks.

There were a fair number of responses to this question which lapsed into discussing the response of ordinary people to plague, such as prayer and carrying herbs and posies, instead of focusing on the actions of local or national governments. These were marked at Level 1 only.

Finally, a minority of candidates provided responses rooted in the wrong time period (usually medieval or industrial), discussing things such as flagellation, industrialisation and cholera. These were not given marks.

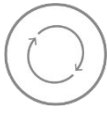


Exemplar 1

3	<p>National and local governments found it difficult to deal with public health issues in the early modern period (EMP) as most of the imposed laws were either ignored or they were impossible to enforce. For example, the Gin Acts of 1729 and 1736, <del>was</del> which made it compulsory to have a £20 license to sell gin amongst other requirements, were relatively ineffective as <del>it</del> <sup>they</sup> were not enforced and there were thousands of places selling cheap gin in bars, but also sheds and attics. The enormity of the scale of gin drinking meant it was hugely popular, so the government had trouble.</p>
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This is a good example of a candidate who was able to correctly identify one reason at the beginning of their response – the fact that laws imposed by national governments were ignored or not properly enforced, placing the response in Level 2. They then go on to give some detail about this, describing the government’s attempts to control the ‘Gin Craze’ with legislation (Level 3). They finish off by saying the legislation was ineffective because it was not fully enforced, meaning the government had trouble controlling the craze as people simply continued selling gin illegally. This explanation, which addresses the question, meant the response was placed in Level 4. To move into Level 5 a further full explanation of a different reason is required.

**Assessment for learning**

 Candidates need to be comfortable with the four different time periods on the specification and be able to differentiate between them. It is also really important that candidates remain focused on answering the precise question in front of them.

## Question 4\*

4\* How far were improvements in public health in the 1800s brought about by improved scientific understanding about disease?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

This question focused on public health improvement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the reasons for it. Candidates were asked to consider not only how scientific understanding about disease was responsible for improvement, but also other factors. The vast majority of candidates had clearly studied the period and were familiar with the terms referred to by the question.

The point most often raised by candidates to support the statement was the development of Pasteur's Germ Theory (which they most frequently linked to the 1875 Public Health Act). Scientific-style research which furthered understanding about the link between living conditions and disease (such as Chadwick's detailed investigations resulting in the 1848 Public Health Act) was seen less often. To challenge the statement, candidates put forward reasons such as:

- the 'Great Stink' of 1858 and advances in engineering/improved industrial machinery, leading to the development of London's sewers by Joseph Bazalgette
- the extension of franchise to some working class men in 1867 and the role of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, both of which also influenced the passage of the 1875 Public Health Act
- the abandonment of *a laissez-faire* attitude and an acceptance of an increased role for national government in public health, reflected in both Public Health Acts
- the role of 'civic' pride, resulting in many local improvements to health
- the role of individuals (e.g. Chadwick/Disraeli/Joseph Chamberlain).

Responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

However, although most candidates were able to describe accurately a factor or factors, far fewer were able to reach the higher levels by successfully identifying a tangible improvement in public health which occurred as a result. To reach Level 3 and above, although detail was not required about the resulting change or improvement (and the same improvement could be cited more than once), candidates did at least need to be able to identify one in order to engage fully with the question. Many responses did not do this.

Similarly, responses describing public health improvements themselves without explaining why they were brought about were also not fully addressing the question and were marked at Level 2 only.

There were also a significant number of responses which simply described the work of John Snow or went on to argue that his investigations into the causes of cholera had an impact on the government's decisions to bring about public health reform. This was not valid and could not be marked above Level 2.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates tended to make accurate but vague assertions about scientific advancement in this period, which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. These responses were generally placed in Level 1. A small minority of candidates wrote about the wrong time period – usually plague in the medieval or early modern period. These were not given marks.

## Exemplar 2

	<p>4) In many ways improvements in the 1800s were brought about by scientific understanding. For example, Louis Pasteur's Germ theory of 1867 linked dirt and bad hygiene with germs and disease. This meant that people finally understood what was causing disease so they could begin to effectively deal with disease. This caused the 1875 Public Health Act to be put into action, which forced local governments to appoint medical officers to take responsibility for sewage, housing, water and local parks and toilets. This act <del>effect</del> made Britain a cleaner and more hygienic place with much less dirt and disease, and was heavily influenced by Louis Pasteur's Germ Theory.</p>
	<p>Also, improvements in the 1800s were also brought about by scientific understanding of people like Dr John Snow. He investigated a cholera outbreak near a water pump in Broad Street, and successfully proved that cholera was caused because of water. This idea then spread and understanding and knowledge was passed onto the population. This discovery also influenced the 1875 Public Health Act, which demanded local authorities to take responsibility of sewage and water, which helped prevent the spread of any more water-borne diseases like cholera. This shows us that because of Dr John Snow's new</p>

		scientific discovery and <del>understanding</del> <sup>understanding</sup> , public health had improved.
		However, improvements in public health in the 1850s were also brought about by the Great Stink of 1858. This awful smell, caused purely by heat on the river Thames, caused parliament to hire the engineer Joseph Bazalgette to build a new sewage system in London. Bazalgette built thousands of miles of sewers, specifically egg-shaped sewers, throughout London which directed sewage away and out of the city. This meant that London became a much cleaner, more hygienic and healthy environment and helped stop the spread of cholera. This shows that a significant improvement in health in the 1850s was due to chance, of the Great Stink which spurred parliament into action.
		Finally, improvements in public health were also due to political reform in the late 1800s. Conservative prime minister Benjamin Disraeli brought about the Reform Act, which granted working class men the right to vote, which meant that political parties and the government had to start directing their actions, manifestos and responses towards the working class, because they became the majority of voters. This meant that a lot of action was taken to improve public health for the working class, such as the 1875 <del>Sanitation and Drainage</del> Artisanal Dwelling Act, which gave local authorities the power to clear slum areas and improve living conditions for the working class, which would be highly beneficial for the health of the population and to stop the spread of disease.
		Overall I believe that many improvements were due to improved scientific understanding about disease, such as the work of Louis Pasteur, Dr. John Snow and Alexander Fleming, because if the cause of poor health and disease wasn't known, no effective action could be taken and public health could never truly improve. Also, public reform did help improve health for the poor, but only really <del>in</del> in the 20th century, not the 1900s, because the

		Artisans Dwelling Act was actually quite weak and ineffective, and Joseph Bazalgette's sewers only improved public health in London, not the whole country. Overall, I believe that improvements to public health in the 1800s were mainly due to improved scientific understanding about disease.
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This is an example of a response which was marked as a balanced argument containing three explained points (one point to support the statement and two to challenge it). The paragraphs on the Germ Theory, the 'Great Stink' and the extension of the franchise all:

- identify a valid factor
- give sufficient detail about that factor using precise historical evidence
- fully engage with the question by explaining how that factor led to a public improvement, identifying a tangible change.

The paragraph on John Snow and cholera was only given marks at Level 2 for the reason explained above. The whole response was marked at the top of Level 5.

## Question 5\*

5\* 'Responses to epidemics between 1900 and 2000 were **not** effective.'

How far do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer.

[18]

On the whole, candidates scored more highly on this question than on Question 4.

The vast majority of candidates understood what the question was asking and had studied the two twentieth century epidemics of Spanish Flu and HIV/AIDS. Although not strictly necessary, most discussed both in their responses as it gave them a wider scope of material from which to draw.

The question was asking about responses and their impacts. A wide range of points were given marks by examiners, including:

- effective responses to the Spanish Flu, such as: the government public information film featuring 'Dr Wise' and more localised responses, including the work of Dr. Niven in Manchester and Dr. Hood in London
- less effective responses to Spanish Flu, such as, the lack of impact of the government film, given its lateness and lack of copies available
- less effective responses to HIV/AIDS, including: the panicked and prejudiced media response, which provoked over-reaction; the responses of firefighters, some Churchgoers and parents of school children; and government instructions to hospitals to detail AIDS patients
- later, more effective responses to HIV/AIDS, such as: successful public information campaigns; the responses of charities; and the impact of figures such as Princess Diana in helping to stamp out misconceptions about the disease's spread.

At Level 3 and above, candidates were given marks for demonstrating specific historical evidence to support their points and using this evidence to address the question about effectiveness. Again, responses reaching Level 6 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

Candidates whose points were at Level 2 usually had a lack of precise detail and/or did not use their knowledge about responses to explain why it was effective or ineffective.

There were a number of attempts to discuss the response to the Spanish Flu outside of its proper historical context, with many responses incorrectly asserting 21<sup>st</sup> century/Covid-type responses to this question, such as central government mandates on isolation, wearing face masks and shutting schools. These were not given marks. Similarly, candidates who based their response on what the government 'should have done' rather than analysing the responses that did happen, rarely moved out of Level 1.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates who have precise historical evidence at their fingertips will reach the high levels on essay questions, but they must also be able to deploy that evidence effectively, explaining how it answers the question asked.

## Section B overview

To do well on the British Depth Study, candidates needed to be able to:

- analyse and compare interpretations
- devise historical questions
- recall and apply their knowledge to support and challenge a historical interpretation in an essay-style question.

It was clear from the majority of responses that most candidates had been well-prepared for Questions 6 and 7. In Question 7, they were able either to compare the overall impression given about the impact of The Norman Conquest, or else compare details between the two interpretations.

In the essay-style questions, most candidates opted for Question 9 and were able to accurately use their knowledge about the reasons for William's victory at Hastings in 1066, at least in part. There were fewer candidates who opted to respond to Question 8, and this question tended to be answered less successfully.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picked out a general feature in Interpretation A in relation to how the image made Norman castles appear threatening and intimidating, and then supported this with two points of development (Question 6 (a))</li> <li>• used Interpretation A to ask a historical question (i.e. based on a second-order concept such as causation, consequence or change), and gave some kind of indication of how that might help us to further understand Norman castles built in England between 1066 and 1087 (Question 6 (b))</li> <li>• compared the overall message about the impact of The Norman Conquest in Interpretations B and C and went on to give a reason that they differed on the basis of these specific interpretations, e.g. given the context of B or the purpose of C (Question 7)</li> <li>• effectively deployed a range of knowledge in the essay question, using precise evidence to support their responses (Question 8 and Question 9)</li> <li>• focused on the precise terms in the interpretation, i.e. whether Anglo-Saxon society was 'free, equal or democratic', in Question 8 specifically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pointed out different features/methods in Interpretation A instead of focusing on one way the image made castles look threatening/intimidating OR did not answer the question about the interpretation, and instead just wrote generally about why Norman castles were intimidating/threatening (Question 6 (a))</li> <li>• did not actually ask a question or tell us something they wanted to find out from Interpretation A, instead telling us what they knew about Norman castles (Question 6 (b))</li> <li>• summarised Interpretations B and C separately; OR only compared the interpretations' provenance; OR wrote about how reliable each interpretation was (Question 7)</li> <li>• made accurate but generalised points which they were unable to support with precise evidence in the essay question, or else gave precise evidence but did not explain how it helped to address the question being asked (Question 8 and Question 9)</li> <li>• did not stick to the terms in the interpretation, but instead offered a generic essay about whether or not Anglo-Saxon society was a 'Golden Age' (sometimes offering irrelevant material), for Question 8.</li> </ul>

## Question 6 (a)

- 6 (a) In **Interpretation A**, the image gives the impression that early Norman castles were threatening and intimidating.

Identify and explain **one** way in which it does this.

[3]

The aim of this question is to get candidates thinking about the methods used by writers, artists, filmmakers, etc to put forward a particular interpretation of a historical figure, period or event.

The vast majority of candidates were able to access the interpretation and they understood the question. Most scored 1 or 2 marks by picking out a specific feature (e.g. 'The tower is shown on top of a very high motte.') and then going on to develop their response by explaining how that feature made the castle look threatening or intimidating. Where candidates started with a very specific feature such as this, they sometimes struggled to make two points of development about their feature. The most successful responses were the ones which began with a more general point, e.g. 'The image suggests the castle is very heavily defended.', went on to give an example of this, e.g. 'For instance, there are soldiers and sharp, wooden spikes.' and then said how this made the castle look threatening or intimidating, e.g. 'This makes it seem like the castle was built to terrorise the Saxons.'

Responses which picked out several features rather than one feature as the question asks were unable to move past 1 mark.

In this series, more so than in previous ones, many candidates did not always remain focused on the interpretation itself and the techniques used by its creators to give a certain impression. Instead, they drifted off into discussing the features of Norman castles more generally, and why they were intimidating. Where the focus on the interpretation was not clear enough, examiners were unable to give more than 1 mark for these responses.

### Assessment for learning



It is important that candidates are familiar with the concept of an interpretation and see this as an opportunity to explore briefly the methods used to create a certain impression. Therefore, it is important that candidates remain focused on the on the interpretation in front of them.



## Question 6 (b)

- (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 Norman castles built in England between 1066 and 1087. [5]

The intention of this question was to test candidates' ability to come up with a genuine historical enquiry, using the interpretation as a starting point.

The vast majority of candidates were able to ask a question, or questions, or indicate something that they would like to find out. At Level 1, these were typically things such as finding out about how long it took the Normans to build these castles, whereabouts they were built, and which materials were used. Some questions focused on this particular castle rather than coming up with a wider historical question about Norman castles more generally.

More successful responses, rewarded at Level 2, framed a wider historical enquiry around a second-order concept, such as causation, with the most frequent question being why castles were built by the Normans in this period, and what their main purpose was. Other lines of investigation that were given marks were how castle-building changed across the period, what the impact of castle-building was on the local Saxon population, and how similar/different Norman castles were in different areas. Fewer candidates were able to go on to indicate how this might help us to analyse and understand the topic (Level 3).

Some candidates told us things they knew about castles, or answered their own question, which is not what the question is asking them to do. Several candidates had clearly been told to use certain words such as 'significance' or 'diversity', but their attempts to place these within their response often betrayed a lack of understanding and came across as muddled or contrived.

## Exemplar 3

b.	From the image i can infer that the norman castles were built for defensive purposes and i would like to investigate the impact of the norman invasion and how the conquest conflict affected the people of anglo-saxon in England this would allow us to learn how the control of the normans was resisted and the need for a capable defensive castle, but also whether or not the building of them was necessary and if they were used in a violent way.
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This is an example of a response that achieved full marks. The candidate centres their investigation around consequence, i.e. the impact of castle-building on the local population. This takes the response into Level 2. They then go to explain that this enquiry would help us to understand whether or not they were necessary (due to resistance) and whether they were used in a violent way.

### Misconception



This question does not require candidates to answer their question and it is not asking what candidates already know. Furthermore, although it is expected that candidates should be familiar with the concept of historical enquiry, there is no requirement that they use particular words or phrases and sometimes it is counter-productive to instruct them to do so. Candidates should also make sure that they consider the second part of the question, and explain how their question with help further understanding of X.

## Question 7

**7 Interpretations B and C** both focus on the impact of the Norman Conquest on England.

How far do they differ and what might explain any differences?

[12]

This question offers candidates the opportunity to show that they can identify the different ways that historical events, periods or figures are presented, and explain why they may differ.

The interpretations in this question, about the impact of The Norman Conquest, were accessible to most candidates. The vast majority of candidates were able to pick out individual points to show how they were similar or different and were rewarded at Level 2. Most frequently, this was pointing out that the interpretations both agreed that the Conquest was a significant event in England's history which resulted in a great deal of change. Differences at this level included B focusing more on changes linked to language and the people, while C focused on architecture. Some candidates did not quite get on to comparing how the impact of the Conquest was presented in each interpretation but did point out differences in how the Normans themselves were seen.

However, many candidates were able to explain the different overall impressions given about the impact of The Norman Conquest on England. Most typically, this involved comparing B's negative portrayal of the Conquest's impact with C's more positive or balanced one. Where candidates were able to support these comparisons using relevant detail from the interpretations, their responses were placed in Level 3.

Fewer, but still a fair number of candidates were then able to explain why B and C had portrayed the impact of the Conquest in these lights, and these responses moved into Level 4. Successful responses fully explained reasons for this difference, going beyond the lines given in the provenance. Responses which simply asserted, for example, that 'B is negative because Freedman believed in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons so he would see the Conquest as negative' did not meet this criterion. More successful responses explained *why* this meant he would see the Conquest as negative, e.g. because it made 'slaves' of the Anglo-Saxons and brought 'foreign' influence on Anglo-Saxon 'blood'. Alternatively, many candidates explained that the reason C was more positive was that it was written by a heritage group whose main focus was more likely to be on the architectural impact on the Conquest. They were therefore trying to attract visitors to the 'spectacular castles and great abbeys' that they manage.

A minority of candidates' responses did not proceed beyond Level 1 because they either dealt with the interpretations separately, with no valid comparison, or else compared the provenance of the interpretations rather than their content. Only a very few candidates misunderstood the question and attempted to evaluate the interpretations by explaining how reliable they were, given what they had learned (this was not what the question was asking).

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should take a moment before beginning their response to consider, 'What impression does the author (or artist, etc.) want to give me about X?' They should then select details from the extract (or image) to support their response. They should also be encouraged to consider specific reasons that a particular organisation or individual might want to give us that impression. Because these will be interpretation-specific, it is important that candidates are given numerous opportunities to 'bump into' historical interpretations to practise this kind of thing routinely. Generic or pre-learned responses will rarely make it to the higher levels.

## Question 8\*

8\* In his 2012 article 'The dark side of the Anglo-Saxons', historian Ryan Lavelle argues that late Anglo-Saxon society was 'certainly not free, equal or democratic'.

How far do you agree with this view?

[20]

This was a less popular question and, on the whole, was not answered as well as Question 9.

Candidates who chose this question had clearly studied Anglo-Saxon society and knew what the question was asking. Valid points raised included:

- how the position of women in Anglo-Saxon society (e.g. the legal right to own land, equal value in the Wergild system, and the ability to divorce an adulterous husband) challenges the interpretation because society could be considered 'equal'
- how the position of Ceorls (who made up the bulk of the population and took part in local decision-making and trials in local courts) also challenges the interpretation because society was in some ways 'free' or 'democratic'
- how the hierarchical nature of society (particularly the existence of thralls and the Wergild system) meant that Lavelle was correct in arguing society was not 'equal'
- how women's rights in practice rarely matched the theoretical sexual 'equality'
- how Ceorls were, by 1065, becoming more tightly bound to the Thegn they served, and were therefore not really 'free'.

At Level 2 and above, candidates included precise evidence to support their point and explained how it addressed the question of whether Anglo-Saxon society was 'free', 'equal' or 'democratic'. Responses which attained Level 5 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

However, there were a number of responses which fell back on generalised points about 'good things' and 'bad things' about Anglo-Saxon England or instead used their knowledge to address whether or not there was an Anglo-Saxon 'Golden Age'. This analysis, although of course related, is not what the question was asking. Some candidates attempted to include material which was not relevant to the question, such as the Church, culture or architecture in Anglo-Saxon England. These kinds of responses could not be marked beyond Level 1.

Less successful candidates tended to list facts they knew rather than make a wider point and then use specific evidence to support it, or else made accurate but vague assertions which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. Sometimes these responses wrote about modern democracy, suffrage and parliament, and then asserted that Anglo-Saxon society was lacking these elements. These responses were also generally placed in Level 1.

## Question 9\*

9\* The history website BBC Bitesize argues that 'William's victory at Hastings in 1066 owed much to his planning and experience'.

How far do you agree with this view?

[20]

This was, perhaps not surprisingly, the most popular choice of the two essay-style questions. On the whole, candidates seemed well-prepared for this question, which was asking why William won the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

The quality of the responses varied enormously. A wide range of valid points were given marks by examiners and included:

- how William's careful military planning and preparation in Normandy (such as building ships, moving supplies to the coast and negotiating support) increased his chances of success at Hastings
- how William's preparation could also be seen in the fact that he brought along pre-built parts of wooden castles, which allowed him to establish his position in Pevensey and prepare for battle
- how William's previous experiences in Normandy meant he was able to deploy a range of successful tactics (for example, goading Harold Godwinson into early battle by pillaging his lands once he landed, and the successful use of the 'feigned flight')
- how William's victory could equally be attributed to luck (for example, had he landed in England when he intended to he would have been faced with a full Saxon army, thereby decreasing his chances of victory, and it was only the wind which prevented this. Furthermore, it was lucky for William that Hardrada's and Tostig's army landed in the North first, drawing the Saxon army away, and meaning William could land unimpeded)
- how Harold's army was considerably weakened by their battle with the Norwegians at Stamford Bridge, along with their long marches, which worked in William's favour
- how Harold decided not to wait for longer in London to reinforce his troops, which ultimately benefitted William.

As with Question 8, candidates were rewarded at Level 2 and above when they included precise evidence to support their point and explained why it meant that William was victorious at Hastings. Responses which attained Level 5 put forward four explained points, with at least one point on either side of the argument.

One of the common misconceptions examiners came across in these responses was that a Norman army, with its use of cavalry and archers, was always going to defeat an Anglo-Saxon army fighting on foot, with many candidates assuming that the outcome was inevitable because the Norman style of fighting was 'superior'. More successful responses explained the impact of the use of archers or cavalry on the outcome of this particular battle. For example, many candidates explained how the Norman cavalry, although unable to make much impact at the start of the battle, became instrumental once the Saxon shield wall was broken.

Less successful candidates tended to produce a narrative of events of 1066 – sometimes muddled – rather than organise their responses into discrete points and direct their knowledge at the question, or else made accurate but vague assertions which did not demonstrate the knowledge required. These responses were generally placed in Level 1.

## Assessment for learning



As with Questions 4 and 5, candidates who have precise historical evidence at their fingertips will reach the high levels on essay questions, but they must also be able to deploy that evidence effectively, explaining how it answers the question asked.

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