



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel
in GCE History (9HI0/32)

Paper 3: Themes in breadth with aspects
in depth

Option 32: The Golden Age of Spain,
1474-1598

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Introduction to 9HI032

It was pleasing to see that candidates were able to engage effectively across the ability range in this series of exams in A Level paper 9HI032 that deals with The Golden age of Spain, 1474-1598. The paper is divided into three sections. Section A contains a compulsory question that is based on two enquiries linked to one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C comprises a choice of essays that relate to aspects of the process of change over a period of at least 100 years (AO1).

Most candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and there was little evidence of candidates being unable to attempt all three sections of the paper within the time allocated, although a very small number did not complete their response to Section C. There continues to be an increase this year in the number of scripts that were seen that posed problems for examiners with a lack of legibility of handwriting. Examiners are only able to give credit for what they can read.

In Section A, the strongest answers demonstrated an ability to identify and develop reasoned inferences from the source for both enquiries and to evaluate the source thoroughly in relation to the demands of the two enquiries on the basis of both contextual knowledge and the nature, origin and purpose of the source. Some candidates continue to use their contextual knowledge to describe events, sometimes with only tangential links to what is in the source, in great detail, rather than using it to illuminate and to discuss the sources. This sometimes resulted in candidates not dealing with the source adequately. In other cases, candidates might offer up no contextual knowledge to support their arguments and analysis. It is disappointing to note that a number of candidates did not explicitly address the focus of at least one of the enquiries or that candidates overlooked some element of the question. Some responses were seen where candidates dismissed one of the enquiries as having no material available for it. This will never be the case - both enquiries always have some relevant material, even though it is not necessarily always balanced.

In Section B, examiners were impressed by the number of responses that clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question and shaped their responses appropriately to meet the demands of the question. It continues to be the case that a number of responses were seen that had a tendency to only deal with one side of an argument; some of these were very impressive in dealing with that one side, showing the links between the issues that were raised, but it is essential that candidates acknowledge the existence of a counter argument, where appropriate. Candidates need to be aware of the chronological parameters of questions and to ensure that they write across the chronology. Equally, the evidence that is presented should come from within the timeframe of the chronology of the question.

Section C requires candidates to answer a breadth question. Coverage of the timeframe is obviously important in this question. To access bullet point 2 at level 5 candidates are expected to have responded 'fully' to the demands of the question. The requirements of questions will vary and key developments relating to the question may be more specific to the entire chronological range in some questions and options than in others. However, it was judged not possible for candidates to have 'fully met' the demands of any section C question unless at least 75% of the chronological range of the question was addressed. To access bullet point 2 at level 4 candidates need to meet most of the demands of the question. It was unlikely that most of the demands of the question would be met if the answer had a restricted range that covered less than 60% of its

chronology. There seemed to be greater use made of the practice of 'bookending' the chronology this summer with little between those 'bookends'. This approach is unlikely to meet the demands of the higher levels in bullet point 2. It would appear that in this section of the paper in particular, there are some candidates who are not reading the question with sufficient care and who are using their own preferred question focus rather than the one that has been set on the paper. This clearly has an impact on achievement.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:
Section A

- Candidates should read the question carefully, so that they ensure that they are dealing with both enquiries
- Candidates should aim to go beyond comprehension and summary of the sources by developing reasoned inferences that are fully discussed
- Candidates should read the caption and make full use of it when evaluating the source
- Candidates should make use of relevant contextual knowledge to support inferences and evaluation. It is not the quantity of contextual knowledge that is key, but the use to which it is put.

Sections B and C

- Planning of essays will help candidates develop an analytical approach
- Candidates should read the question carefully to ensure that they are answering the question that has been set, both in terms of its focus and its chronological parameters
- Candidates should avoid a narrative/descriptive approach; this often undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels
- Candidates should aim to range across the breadth of the chronology in Section C questions.

Q1. The source was a letter from a senior figure in the Spanish church and candidates were required to use it to form the basis of a response to two enquiries : the first to assess the threat posed by the conversos and the second to identify reasons why Torquemada had been appointed to lead the General Council of the Inquisition.

The majority of candidates found the source accessible and worked with it to identify a range of points relevant to both enquiries to establish a framework for their answer. A number of inferences could be made and supported by specific references from the source and/or contextual knowledge. Very few candidates deployed contextual knowledge that was not related to the points being made.

Most candidates responded to both enquiries but a small number stated that the source was not as helpful in regard to the first enquiry.

There was some sound evaluation of the source and candidates made effective use of the attribution as well as their contextual knowledge which, in a pleasing number of cases was impressive.

Q2. This was the most popular question in this section of the paper. The majority of candidates addressed the nominated factor first and there was some sound and well illustrated knowledge of the 'traditional rights'. They then went on to weigh this against other factors, notably the various resentments against Charles I and his representatives. This led to a balanced debate in many cases. However, a minority focused their

responses on hostility to Charles and were lacking assurance in their approach to the nominated factor.

Q3. The less popular question in this section of the paper. However, there were a number of effective responses who identified a range of points and often backed up their arguments with impressive specific evidence.

Q4. The most popular question in this section of the paper. Most candidates addressed the nominated factor first and made valid points but it was interesting that many were more assured dealing with the cost of the conflict rather than the military issues. Many understandably and usually effectively linked discussion of the revolt with issues involving England and France.

Most candidates focused attention on the Ottoman threat and this was covered very effectively in many responses. Overall there was a pleasing response to this question.

Q5. The less popular question on this section of the paper but there were some well illustrated responses with military detail but also some assessment of the significance of the innovations during the period. Some responses lacked chronological range.