**A Level Exam Question Guidance**

**Unit Y102**

**Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest 1035 - 1107**

**1 hour and thirty minutes – 1 sources question and 1 essay**

*Timing: You should aim to spend* ***50 to 55 minutes on the source****, and* ***30 to 35 minutes on the essay****; the sensible approach remains to do them in the order on the paper – sources first, essay second.*

**Section A**

**The Source question -30 marks**

Question reads **“Study the four sources and then answer question 1”.**

You must:

**Read all four sources first** before attempting to write an answer to the question.

**Check the question closely** – what is the focus of it? Your answer will need to stay close to that. In the sample paper, the question is *“Using these four sources in their historical context, assess how far they support the view that William II ‘Rufus’ was totally ruthless in dealing with opposition to his rule.”* I have underlined the focus issue of the question.

The examiners’ mark scheme states that the highest level (Level 6 – 26-30 marks) will show the following characteristics:

*The answer has a very good focus on the question throughout. The sources are fully evaluated, using both provenance and detailed and accurate knowledge of their historical context in a balanced way, in order to engage with the sources and reach a convincing, fully supported analysis of them in relation to the issue in the question*

So – a top mark answer must:

* Keep a clear focus on the question, referring back to it regularly and ensuring the argument is consistently applied to the question.
* Evaluate each source thoroughly. This involves three aspects in each source:
* Analysing the **content** of the source, to draw out both obvious and implicit points.
* Placing the content into a **detailed historical context**; this is where you will use your own knowledge of the reign of William Rufus to challenge or support points made in each source.
* Examine the **provenance** of the source. What do you know of the author and his purpose? When was the source actually written and how does this impact on its content? Does the source have any regional or political bias that might explain some of its conclusions? (See the further note below on source provenance).
* Engage with the sources, using them to form a broad view of the issue on the question and showing that you are able to read and understand sources as a way of gaining insight into the period under study.

The most sophisticated answers may show some level of cross-reference (eg how source B impacts upon a point made in Source A) but this is not an essential requirement. The best advice is to use cross-referencing if you feel confident enough to do so but not to force it.

Most source answers will thus follow the following structure:

1. **Short introduction**, simply outlining the general approach of the sources. This is the example given by the examiners in their exemplar:

*Only Source C does not support the view that William Rufus was totally ruthless in dealing with opposition to his rule, although Source B is more implicit in its support with its comments about the actions of his bishop, whilst Source D partly supports the view in its comments about his military prowess. Source A argues the most strongly that he was ruthless.*

You will see that this amounts to a snappy overview. It does not recount the source content, but it does quickly show where each source stands on the issue in the question (the “total” ruthlessness of William II). Your final judgement on how you treat the relative reliability of the sources will wait until your conclusion.

1. **Analysis and evaluation of each source** in turn, using the formula noted above. The examiners’ mark scheme provides guidance on a source by source basis; **however**, the exemplar answer uses a “grouping” system, examining first Source A, then Sources B and D together, and then finally Source C (see introduction above).

The virtue of “grouping” sources according to their point of view is that it allows for a clear introductory overview, is a good way of quickly assessing the overall judgement of the sources, and permits some straightforward cross-referencing.

1. **A concluding judgement**. Much of the work will already have been done in your examination of the sources in the main body of the essay, but the conclusion provides a chance to comment finally on the focus issue in the question. It should have a clear judgement – “The sources agree that Rufus was ruthless, but differ on how totally ruthless he was.” You do not have to refer to all of the sources again in your judgement, but should be able to use one or two specifically, as well as place them in the overall historical context that you have been using to analyse each source. The conclusion does not have to be long. The examiners’ suggested one from their exemplar is:

*The sources do suggest that Rufus was, if not totally ruthless, very ruthless in his dealings with opponents. He used advisors who were willing to uphold this approach, as seen in Source B, and even when he did use other tactics it was to give the power to enforce his will. However, it must also be remembered that not only were monarchs of this period expected to resort to force, he faced a strong threat to his throne from his brother.*

**Further Note on Source Provenance**

The examiners are not looking for detailed knowledge of the source writers. They expect to use whatever information they provide themselves on the exam paper, and to possibly add to that from your own knowledge. BUT do not go overboard on this. Keep your provenance comments firmly focused on the question. For example, a detailed explanation of the different Anglo-Saxon Chronicle manuscripts, where they were written and when, is not expected. Life histories of William of Malmesbury or Henry of Huntingdon are also not expected.

Also, do not read sentiments into the source that aren’t there. Many historians admire the writing and historical approach of William of Malmesbury for example, but there is no doubt that he is also capable of some extremely partisan judgements. Base your judgements on what is on the exam paper, not on more generalised or imperfect memories of what others have said about the particular writer.

Similarly, whilst the relevance of Malmesbury or Huntingdon writing in the 1120s or 30s is helpful, you do not need to provide a thorough assessment of Henry I’s rule to understand the context of their writing. That they are writing later, have had time to reflect on the outcome of events, and are reliant upon other people’s accounts, is usually sufficient to be able to place the source’s provenance in context. If in doubt, stick to the information provided on the exam paper, which is what the examiners have deemed sufficient.

Finally, avoid talking about a particular source being “biased”. All sources are biased, and the simple statement of this is unhelpful. You will be looking to identify the point of view expressed, the likely political or religious stance held, and thus the credibility of the source writer’s judgements.

**In Sum**

The examiners in their mark scheme lay out the following broad guidelines (I have underlined the key points):

* At Level 5 and above there will be judgement about the issue in the question.
* To be valid judgements, they must be supported by accurate and relevant material.
* At Level 4 and below answers may be simply a list of which sources support or challenge the view in the question.
* Knowledge must not be credited in isolation, it should only be credited where it is used to analyse and evaluate the sources, in line with descriptions in the levels mark scheme.

**Section B**

**The Essay Question – 20 Marks**

This advice is very similar to that given for the American paper essay question, as both are standard analytical essays, requiring both good knowledge of the period and the ability to make judgements about it according to the demands of the essay question. *The essay focuses on the earlier part of the course – i.e. from Edward the Confessor to the death of William the Conqueror.*

You are looking here at a 3 part essay.

An introduction that gives brief context and definition and outlines the direction of the essay.

The main body of the essay (it is helpful to work on the basis of 3 paragraphs, 2 if time pressured) that looks at possible factors and assesses their significance on the question.

Finally a conclusion that evaluates the themes discussed and makes a clear judgement on the question. For example -

**‘Edward the Confessor was an effective monarch.’ How far do you agree with this view?**

Intro – defines the terms of the question (what is meant by “effective” in this instance) and gives a broad overview of your likely answer

Main body – considers in what ways Edward was effective (based on the definition provided in the intro) and wasn’t, and provides appropriate historical context (what was the expectation for medieval monarchs?).

Conclusion – assesses the importance of the arguments considered in the main body of the essay and provides a clear judgement about whether Edward was or was not effective.

Again, this is fairly straightforward and you have about 35 mins to write the essay. A sound and clear introduction will be key – it will set you on course and you can refer to it if you get stuck. Take a minute or two at the start to consider your options but once decided write to the plan outlined in the introduction.

Stay tightly focused –you want to be consistently addressing the question. Interim judgements in each paragraph is also good practice.

The best answers will also be able to link paragraphs together – think about the best order of your themes to make it easy to move between them.

For this entire paper, revision is key. As a content / knowledge based paper is it vital that you know the details across the breadth of the course from 1035 to 1087, including content from the very start and the very end. The questions are set up to test different periods within the course, so there is no room for gambling on leaving sections out. This is a paper you should do very well in but given the short time frame it is also one where a lack of revision and focus on the question will cost you dearly.

**In Sum:**

The examiners’ guidelines are here, and I have again underlined the key points.

* At higher levels candidates will focus on ‘how far,’ but at Level 4 may simply list the evidence that suggests whether Edward was an effective monarch.
* At Level 5 and above there will be judgement as to the extent of the factors to which Edward was an effective monarch.
* At higher levels candidates might establish criteria against which to judge the effectiveness of Edward as a monarch.
* To be valid judgements, claims must be supported by relevant and accurate material. If not, they are assertions.
* Knowledge must not be credited in isolation, it should only be credited where it is used as the basis for analysis and evaluation, in line with descriptions in the levels mark scheme.