



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A Level History A

Unit Y302

The Viking Age c.790–1066

Sample Question Paper

Version 0.15

Date – Morning/Afternoon

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



OCR supplied materials:

- 12 page Answer Booklet

Other materials required:

- None



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| First name | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Last name | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Centre number | | | | | | | Candidate number | | | | |

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Complete the boxes above with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any 2 questions in Section B.
- Write your answer to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Do **not** write in the bar codes.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document consists of **8** pages.

Section A

Read the two passages and then answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in both of the two passages and explain which you think is a more convincing explanation for the success of the Great Heathen Army in 865.

[30]

Passage A

What caused Mercia's abrupt eclipse, and the eclipse of every other Anglo-Saxon kingdom, save Wessex, was an external factor that few apparently foresaw: the Vikings. Though originally from Scandinavia, many of these attackers came immediately from the Carolingian Empire (the empire of the Franks), where a number of distinct fleets had been operating since the 840s.

In autumn 865, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle stated that 'a great heathen army' came into England 'and took up winter quarters in East Anglia; and there they were supplied with horses, and the East Angles made peace with them'. This army went to Northumbria in 866, defeated the Northumbrians, and took York. In 867 they moved south into Mercia and 'made peace' without a battle. In 869 they went to East Anglia, killed King Edmund in battle, and 'conquered all the land'. In 871, they began raiding in Wessex. This was the year of Alfred's accession.

How did the Vikings achieve such rapid success? In 865, a 'civil war' impeded Northumbrian resistance. Elsewhere kings' first idea was 'to make peace', that is, pay the attackers off, a well tried Carolingian tactic that often worked well with relatively small Viking groups. But the 'great heathen army', incorporating many such groups to make a coordinated force was something else. These were enemies numbering thousands rather than hundreds. Their years in the Carolingian empire had given them immense experience in warfare on land and on water. They were adroit at finding, and building, fortifications; in defending them; and in raiding the countryside from them. They were adept negotiators for 'peace'. They found some aristocrats, and potential 'kings', willing to collaborate with them. Some of the 'army' leaders, at least, hit on the idea of settlement. The density of Scandinavian place names in eastern and northern England shows immigrant lords in control of extensive territories and, less certainly, immigrant cultivators on the land.

Adapted from: N. Saul, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, published in 2000

Adapted from: Nelson, J.L in Saul, N. (2000), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*.
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Passage B

The 850s witnessed a change in the scale and nature of the Viking attacks recorded by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Whereas the raids of the 830s and 840s were made by forces of around 30–35 ships, the army that attacked in Canterbury and London in 851 is said to have comprised 350 ships. By the 860s, fleets of 260 ships were still being recorded. The year 851 was also noteworthy for being the first time that Vikings overwintered in England.

It was the arrival of the ‘great heathen army’ of 865, reinforced by a ‘great summer army’ of 871 that came close to overrunning the whole of Anglo-Saxon England. Previous Viking attacks seem to have been about plunder and wealth, but this army was intent on settlement and conquest. Rather than coming directly from Scandinavia, this force appears to have been a loose confederation of groups already operating in Britain, Ireland and Francia temporarily united in the pursuit of common goals. The fact that the army contained a number of different kings and numerous earls in no way impeded its efficiency and capabilities.

The army first made peace with the East Angles, receiving horses and supplies from them, and in the autumn of 866 it turned its attention to York and Northumbria. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes a state of disunity and civil unrest: the Northumbrians had deposed their king, Osberht, and replaced him with Alla, despite the latter having no hereditary right to the throne. Though later Northumbrian sources describe Alla and Osberht as brothers, they nevertheless confirm the disunity and unrest in the kingdom. Having seized York and killed both claimants for the throne in battle, by 867 the Vikings had control of Northumbria. Post-Conquest sources describe the army subsequently plundering as far as the River Tyne and appointing an Anglo-Saxon, Ecgberht, to act as king over at least part of Northumbria.

Adapted from: N.J. Higham & M.J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, published in 2013

Adapted from: Higham, N.J. & Ryan, M.J. (2013), *The Anglo-Saxon World*. Yale University Press, UK. Reproduced with permission from Oxford University Press through PLS Clear.

Section B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** 'Wars of unification dominated politics in Scandinavia from 790 to 1066.' How far do you agree?
[25]
- 3*** 'The Viking capture of York in 866 was the most important turning point in the Viking settlement of England from 790 to 1066.' How far do you agree?
[25]
- 4*** To what extent were the Vikings who went to Ireland involved more in raiding than trading in the period from c.790 to 1066?
[25]

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