



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

HISTORY APTITUDE TEST

Wednesday 5 November 2014

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.

A separate 20-page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

Complete the information requested in the spaces provided on the answer booklet. Please write very clearly.

The question paper consists of 4 pages. Answer all parts of all questions.

You have two hours for this test. We recommend that you read the entire paper before beginning to write your answers. Spend about a third of your time on reading, thinking and planning, and the rest of the time writing. You should allow about seventy to seventy-five minutes for Questions One and Two, and about forty-five to fifty minutes for Question Three.

If you find the texts difficult and unfamiliar, don't worry: the exercise is intended to be challenging, but we hope you will also find it thought-provoking. There is no 'right' answer to many of the questions: you will be judged on the intelligence of your argument, how clearly you make it and how effectively you support it. You should use your own words in answering the questions.



**Admissions
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QUESTION ONE (30 marks)

This is an extract taken from a book about the Comanche empire in North America. Please read through the passage carefully and think about what it is trying to say. You do not need to know anything about the subject to answer the questions below.

Over the past three decades, historians have conceived entirely new ways of thinking about Native Americans, Euro-Americans, and their tangled histories. Moving beyond conventional top-down narratives that depict Indians as bit players in imperial struggles or tragic victims of colonial expansion, today's scholarship portrays them as full-fledged historical actors who played a formative role in the making of early America. Rather than a seamless, preordained sequence, the colonization of the Americas is now seen as a process that created new worlds for all involved. Indigenous societies did not simply vanish in the face of Euro-American onslaught. Many adjusted and endured, rebuilding new economies and identities from the fragments of the old ones. Indians fought and resisted, but they also cooperated and coexisted with the newcomers, creating new hybrid worlds that were neither wholly Indian nor European. By foregrounding indigenous peoples and their intentions in the story of early America, recent scholarship has reinvigorated a field that only a generation ago was suffocating under its parochial and mythologizing tenets.

Significant as this revisionist turn has been, it is not complete. Too often the alterations have been cosmetic rather than corrective. Historians have sanitized vocabularies and updated textbooks to illuminate the subtleties of colonial encounters, but the broad outlines of the story have largely remained intact. Outside a circle of Native and early American specialists, the understanding of Indian-Euro-American relations is still limited by what Vine Deloria, Jr., called 'the "cameo" theory of history': indigenous peoples make dramatic entrances, stay briefly on the stage, and then fade out as the main saga of European expansion resumes, barely affected by the interruption. With too few exceptions, revisionist historians have limited themselves to retelling the story of colonial conquest from the Indian side of the frontier. They have probed how Native peoples countered and coped with colonial expansion and have largely overlooked the other side of the dynamic—the impact of Indian policies on colonial societies. Such an approach reinforces the view of European powers as the principal driving force of history and tends to reduce indigenous actions to mere strategies of subversion and survival. To recover the full dimension of Indian agency in early American history, we must once again re-evaluate the intersections among Native peoples, colonial powers, frontiers, and borderlands. We have to turn the telescope around and create models that allow us to look at Native policies toward colonial powers as more than defensive strategies of resistance and containment.

- (a) In your own words, write a single sentence identifying the main argument of the first paragraph. (10 marks)
- (b) What does the author argue in this passage about recent attempts made by historians to integrate Native Americans into the history of colonialism in North America? Answer in not more than fifteen lines and using your own words. (20 marks)

QUESTION TWO (30 marks)

Write an essay of 1.5 to 3 sides assessing and explaining who were the 'winners' and 'losers' in any historical event, process or movement. You may answer with reference to any society, period or place with which you are familiar.

Please note: You will be assessed on the relevance of your argument to the question, your choice of evidence, and the clarity of your presentation.



QUESTION THREE (40 marks)

The passage below comes from a trial record of the interrogation of a beggar in the town of Augsburg in Germany in 1558. The underlined text refers to the questions and statements of the court official. You do not need to know anything about Germany in the sixteenth century to answer the question below, nor should you draw on any information from outside the source.

Thursday, the 25th of February 1558, Simon Schweyer, beggar boy from Lindau testified without torture as follows:

1. How long has the boy been begging here and how often has he been put out of the city? He has been around here with his mother for seven winters or so, and his mother sent him into the city to beg. He has been put out six or seven times.
2. Is it true that he has been locked in the Fool's House at least fifteen times, and that he has taken an oath to stay out no less than five times. He has never been in the Fool's House, but his brother Michael, who is two years older, was in it about three times. Michael does not come here to beg anymore, and is in Oberhausen with their mother and father.
3. Where is he staying here in Augsburg, or who is giving him shelter? He has very seldom spent the night in the city, and when he has, he stays in a bathhouse on Lech Lane behind the bakers. He does not know the bather's name.
4. It is known that his father and mother are staying in Oberhausen, and that what he and his mother have earned begging, they squander out there. With whom are they lodging? They are lodging with a young man named Schneidt in Oberhausen, whom they give 6 *kreuzer*¹ a week for rent. His father drinks about a measure² of wine per month.
5. What do they have to pay for their lodging, and what do they have for income besides begging? In summer, his father sometimes makes hackles³ and sells them, and he also repairs pots. Otherwise they have no trade other than begging.
6. Is it true that his mother claims to have epilepsy whenever someone does not want to give her anything or threatens her under questioning. She also sometimes pretends to have an attack and falls down on the street, but is only faking to move the people to have more sympathy for her so they will give her something. His mother is ill and does not trick people with it.
7. They eat and drink the best in Oberhausen, and support not only themselves by begging here but also their landlords. No, they do not do that.
8. His father also goes begging; what illness or infirmity does he claim to have? His father does not beg, but he has a bad back.
9. What other beggars are there in Oberhausen who support themselves only from begging, and make enough from it to feed themselves? There are a lot of beggars outside the city, but he does not know them, and does not know what they have to support themselves or now.
10. Where are these beggars staying? He does not know the names of the peasants they stay with.
11. He and his father and mother also beg on Wertach Bridge [a bridge known for the presence of many beggars]; how long have they been doing it? They have never sat on the bridge or begged on it, rather they have sought alms here and there. The boy requests mercy.

Punishment recorded: Simon Schweyer, a boy of sixteen years, was put out of the city seven times for begging, and each time he was strictly forbidden to return, but in spite of this he came back in. Therefore he was disciplined in the irons and earnestly warned not to be found here again or he would face public corporal punishment.

What does this source reveal about society in Augsburg in the sixteenth century?

¹ A unit of currency

² A serving measure, approximately 1.05 litre

³ A type of comb used for separating the fibres in linen and other textiles

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