



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

HISTORY

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. General Introduction

The Junior Certificate History syllabus was examined for the first time in 1992. The Ordinary Level examination is a 90-minute written paper in which candidates are required to answer questions from four sections with a total mark allocation of 180, as follows:

Section 1: Picture Sources	(35 marks)
Section 2: Document Sources	(35 marks)
Section 3: Short Answer Questions	(60 marks)
Section 4: People in History	(50 marks)

Candidates are required to attempt all four sections. An element of choice is offered in sections 3 and 4.

The Higher Level examination is a 150-minute written paper in which candidates are required to answer questions from six sections with a total mark allocation of 180 as follows:

Section 1: Picture Sources	(15 marks)
Section 2: Document Sources	(15 marks)
Section 3: Short Answer Questions	(20 marks)
Section 4: People in History	(40 marks)
Section 5: Stimulus-based Question	(30 marks)
Section 6: Theme-based Questions	(60 marks)

Candidates are required to attempt all six sections. An element of choice is offered in sections 3, 4, 5 and 6.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination paper and the accompanying marking scheme, both of which are available on the SEC website www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

A total of 17,240 candidates sat the 2008 examination at Ordinary Level in 2008. This represented a slight increase on candidature in 2007 and 2006.

2.2 Performance of candidates

The following table illustrates the examination outcomes at Ordinary Level in 2008:

	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
Numbers	1,850	5,108	4,869	11,827	4,290	583	456	84	1,123
Percentage	10.7	29.6	28.2	68.6	24.9	3.4	2.7	0.5	6.5

Table 1: Numbers and percentage grade breakdown for Junior Certificate Ordinary Level History, 2008

The table below shows the grade breakdown statistics from recent years alongside those of 2008:

		A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2005	17,585	11.6	31.2	32.1	74.9	22.0	2.3	0.7	0.1	3.1
2006	16,745	10.1	33.3	33.1	76.5	19.8	2.5	1.0	0.1	3.6
2007	17,021	12.8	34.2	29.8	76.8	19.3	2.7	1.1	0.1	3.9
2008	17240	10.7	29.6	28.2	68.5	24.9	3.4	2.7	0.5	6.6

Table 2: Percentage grade breakdown for Junior Certificate Ordinary Level, 2005-2008

Compared with the mean of recent years, the percentage of candidates awarded grades A, B and C in this examination decreased and the percentages who failed to reach grade D have increased.

2.3 Analysis of candidate performance

Examiners noted that while candidate performance in Section 1 (Picture Sources) was generally very good, candidate performance in other sections of the examination was more varied. In particular, examiners noted that some candidates found Section 2 challenging.

Examiners also noted that many candidates did not score well in Section 3, which tested their general knowledge of the syllabus, or in Section 4 which demanded relatively detailed biographical accounts. It was noted that some candidates had an incomplete or uncertain grasp of historical content and that, lacking that knowledge base and chronological sense, they had not fully developed the skills required to understand or appreciate history.

Examiners also noted a tendency for some candidates at this level to submit incomplete scripts and noted that this factor contributed to the increase in the EFNG rate.

Section 1 – PICTURES (35 marks)

Three sources were given with this section:

- A photograph of the entrance to the burial site at Newgrange, Co. Meath
- Photographs of a high cross and a round tower at the early Christian monastic site of Clonmacnoise, Co. Westmeath
- A reproduction of a woodcut illustration showing a Gaelic chieftain and his family at a feast.

Each of the three sources was used as a stimulus and as a source for the student in answering this section. Examiners noted some excellent responses to these questions.

Candidate responses to the questions on Picture A showed that many candidates were familiar with the burial customs of pre-Christian Ireland and were competent in extracting relevant evidence from the source.

The answering of the questions on Pictures B1 and B2 was also good, with the exception of part (iii), where many candidates incorrectly identified *bibliography* as the monastery room where copies of the Bible were made.

The quality of responses to the questions on Picture C was varied. Although most candidates could identify relevant evidence from the picture for part (i), the remaining elements of the question were less successfully answered. While a minority of candidates showed some appreciation of the impact of plantations on Ireland and of the concept of propaganda, Examiners noted that many found it difficult to clearly and coherently express this.

Section 2 - DOCUMENTS (35 marks)

Two document sources were given with this section:

- Extract from an account by a Spanish sailor of his meeting with the Emperor of the Inca people of South America
- Extract from Nollaig Ó Gadhra's book, *Civil War in Connacht*, describing an incident at Tuam, Co. Galway during that war.

In this section, candidates were tested in their ability to locate, interpret and communicate historical information using documentary sources. Examiners noted that, while the questions were typically straightforward and mostly answerable directly from the text, the response of many candidates was disappointing. It was noted that a number of candidates did not attempt some questions and this lack of perseverance in attempting questions has also been noted in previous years.

In answer to Question 2(a), while most candidates were correct at (i) and (ii), responses to (iii) and (iv) showed a lack of coherence. Most candidates identified one correct element in answer to (v) and most candidates also cited Columbus and his discovery of America correctly in answer to (vi).

In answer to Question 2(b) most candidates were correct at (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v), but were less successful in responding to (i) and (vi). Many candidates were unable to explain the concept of bias as asked at (vii).

Section 3 – SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS (60 marks)

In this section, candidates were asked to attempt ten questions from a selection of twenty, ranging across all three sections of the three-year syllabus. The length of candidate responses varied considerably in this section. The range of questions attempted was broad and many candidates attempted more than the required ten, with a small number attempting less than the required number.

The more successfully attempted questions include the following:

- (i) a definition or an example of a primary source
- (ii) carbon 14 and dendrochronology were frequently cited
- (viii) importance of spices for food flavour and commerce
- (x) Shakespeare and *Romeo and Juliet* were frequently cited
- (xv) emigration and death were frequently cited.

Candidates were less successful in their responses to the following questions:

- (iv) failure to match monastic site and associated saint
- (vii) failure to properly define *guild*
- (xi) lack of knowledge of Northern European artists
- (xiii) lack of understanding of the term *Reformation* and concept of religious change
- (xvib) lack of understanding of social context for changes in the role of women.

This section is designed to test the candidates' general knowledge of the course. Examiners noted that many of the less successful candidates failed to attempt the required number of questions. Examiners also noted evidence of vagueness in some responses.

Section 4 – PEOPLE IN HISTORY (50 marks)

This section is divided into *two* parts.

In part A, candidates were asked to write about *one* of the following persons:

- A (i) A person living in an Ancient Civilisation outside of Ireland
- A (ii) A monk in a medieval monastery

A (iii) A named religious reformer at the time of the Reformation.

In part B, candidates were asked to write about *one* of the following persons:

B (i) A named revolutionary leader (in Ireland, France or America) during the Age of Revolutions, 1770-1815

B (ii) A worker in a factory or mine in industrial England around 1850

B (iii) A person involved in the struggle for independence, 1916-1922 **or**
An old person talking about social change in Ireland during the twentieth century.

Because this section carries a maximum marks value of 50 out of a total of 180, a good performance here can be a significant factor in the determination of the overall grade. Examiners noted an increase in the number of candidates attempting only one part of Section 4 this year. Only three quarters of the candidature attempted both parts of Section 4, which meant that some 25% of the candidates had already forgone 25 marks or 14% of the examination.

The table below shows the popularity and the average score for the different options within Section 4:

	Popularity (percentage)	Average Score (percentage)
A1. Ancient Civilisation	27.5	28.0
A2. Medieval Monk	35.0	53.0
A3. Religious Reformer	24.2	63.0
B1. Revolutionary Leader	6.7	66.0
B2. Factory/Mine Worker	20.8	65.3
B3A. Irish Independence	9.2	67.6
B3B. Social Change	52.5	57.6

Table 4: Junior Certificate History Ordinary Level: Popularity and Average Scores for Options in Section 4

A (i) This question was quite popular (27.5%). However, answers were often vague and general in nature, did not offer the name of the ancient civilisation, and included anachronistic or irrelevant material. The average score (7.03 marks or 28%) was the lowest of all the options.

A (ii) This question was popular (35%). However, it was also poorly answered, mostly because of confusion between the life of the medieval monk and the life of the monk in the early Christian period. Examiners noted a number of excellent responses, but the average score was in the high grade D range (13.14 marks or 53%).

A (iii) This question was quite popular and was attempted by 24.2% of candidates. Martin Luther was the most popular choice. The question was almost always well answered, but examiners noted that many candidates gave rather extensive treatment to Luther's personal life. The average score was in the middle grade C range (15.66 marks or 63%).

B (i) This question was the least popular of all the options in Section 4 and was attempted by only 6.7% of candidates. Examiners noted some excellent responses in which full accounts of the life of a planter were given, while a small number was notable for a lack of historical content. The average score was in the high grade C range (16.5 marks or 66%).

B (ii) This question was fairly popular (20.8%). Examiners noted some variety in the quality of candidate responses. The less successful answers were characterised by vagueness and it was not unusual for answers to conflate material about factory-workers and mine-workers. The average score was in the high grade C range (16.32 marks or 65.3%).

B (iii) In this question, candidates had a choice of answering on a person involved in the Irish independence struggle (1916-1922) *or* on social change during the twentieth century. The vast majority of candidates chose the latter option (61.7%), with those opting for the social change question outnumbering the others by almost six to one.

Despite its popularity, responses to the social change option were frequently disappointing. Examiners noted some vagueness and repetition in many responses, as many candidates failed to demonstrate a grasp of the concept of social change and merely gave a static picture of Irish society at some unspecified point in the twentieth century. The average score was in the low grade C range (14.4 marks or 57.6%). Social change is integral to the syllabus and this type of question has appeared on previous papers.

The alternative question on a person involved in the Irish independence struggle, was quite unpopular (9.2%), but proved to be the highest-scoring option in Section 4. The average score was in the high grade C range (16.91 marks or 67.6%). Examiners noted that the four least popular options in Section 4 resulted in the highest average scores.

2.4 Conclusions

- The results in the 2008 Junior Certificate History Ordinary Level examination were not entirely consistent with the outcomes of recent years. The main reasons for this included a poor performance by many candidates in Question 2 and the failure of some candidates to complete their answers.
- Most candidates attempted the full quota of questions from the four sections and coped satisfactorily with the demands of the examination. 10.7% achieved grade A, 57.9% achieved grades B and C, and a further 24.9% received grade D. Overall 93.5% of candidates were awarded a grade D or higher.
- Examiners noted the high quality of answering of some candidates and expressed the view that some of candidates might have been better served by attempting the Higher Level paper. However, Examiners also noted some level of partial and/or incorrect answering on the part of some candidates which suggested deficiencies in their historical knowledge.
- Those candidates who failed to achieve grade D showed little or no knowledge of content and demonstrated few or no historical skills. In some cases, responses were characterized by vagueness and repetition.
- Typically, low-scoring candidates attempted little beyond Sections 1 and 2 of the examination and tended to rely heavily on material from Sections I and II of the syllabus. This suggests that they may find it somewhat difficult to cope with the more abstract material and the volume of content encountered in the final year.
- The persistent tendency on the part of some candidates not to complete the examination continues to adversely affect candidates' grades.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers are advised to

- Pay particular attention to the issues of chronology and historical context. Students who have a good grasp of these tend to develop a liking for, and a confidence in, the subject.
- Advise students that answers to the questions in Section 1 are not necessarily always to be found within the picture, but by reference to the historical context from which it comes.
- Note that in Section 2, the document extracts are intended as sources to allow candidates to demonstrate simple document-handling skills. It should be noted that as well as locating items of fact/opinion directly from the extract, candidates may be asked to offer their own opinion or an interpretation derived from the text.

Students are advised to

- Attempt all the required questions. Sections 1, 2 and 3 should be answered on the spaces provided on the examination paper, while Section 4 should be answered in the separate answer-book provided.
- Note that the concept of change should be intrinsic to the study of, and answering on, the social history of Ireland in the twentieth century.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

A total of 32,806 candidates sat the 2008 examination.

3.2 Performance of candidates

The following was the grade breakdown in 2008:

Grade	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
Number	5,220	8,183	9,192	22,595	7,463	2,294	430	24	2,748
Percentage	15.9	24.9	28.0	68.9	22.8	7.0	1.3	0.1	8.4

Table 1: Number and percentage grade breakdown for Junior Certificate Higher Level History, 2008

The table below shows the grade breakdown statistics from recent years alongside those of 2008:

Year		A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2005	33,326	16.5	29.0	28.6	74.1	19.6	5.2	1.0	0.1	6.3
2006	34,565	15.8	26.4	29.2	71.4	21.9	5.6	1.0	0.1	6.7
2007	34,290	15.0	27.3	28.9	71.2	21.7	6.0	1.1	0.1	7.2
2008	32,806	15.9	25.0	28.0	68.9	22.4	7.3	1.3	0.1	8.4

Table 2: Percentage grade breakdown for Junior Certificate Higher Level History, 2005-2008

Examiners noted that the overall standard of answering was very good and the A, D and combined EFNG rates are all marginally higher than in 2007.

3.3. Analysis of candidate performance

Section 1 – PICTURES (15 marks)

Three sources were given with this section:

- Gold objects from the Broighter collection
- An artist’s impression of the court of prince Henry the Navigator
- A photograph taken in Dublin in 1959

Overall, candidates performed well here, although Examiners noted that few candidates were awarded full marks. While Question 1 (b) was often well answered, it was evident from the responses to Question 1 (a) that few candidates were familiar with the term “rescue or salvage archaeology”. Many candidates incorrectly identified the form of transport at Question 1 (c) (a).

Section 2 – DOCUMENTS (15 marks)

Two document sources were given with this section:

- Extract from Giorgio Vasari’s *Life of Leonardo da Vinci*
- Extract from the record of the court-martial of Countess Markievicz

Many candidates scored full marks for their answers on Document 1. In the case of Document 2, most candidates scored highly in their answers to (i), (ii) and (iii). However, few candidates correctly named the British Commander who accepted the rebels’ unconditional surrender, as asked at (iv).

Section 3 – SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS (20 marks)

Candidates were asked to attempt ten from twenty short questions which test their general knowledge of content across the syllabus. While in previous years candidates tended to answer extra questions in this section, many candidates in 2008 did not answer the required ten questions and 16% of candidates answered fewer than four correctly. Moreover, one element of an answer was frequently given, when the question clearly asked for two elements. Questions (xii) to (xx), all from Section III of the syllabus, posed difficulty for some candidates. Examiners noted that, as in previous years, many candidates found Section 3 the most challenging section of the course.

Examiners noted the following in relation to some of the questions in this Section:

- (ii) and (iii): the terms ‘court cairn’ and ‘stone quern’ were frequently confused
- (iv) was not popular and many who attempted it were unable to correctly name the monk associated with a particular Early Irish monastery
- (vii) few candidates managed to identify two features of Renaissance architecture

- (xiv) the terms of the 1921 Treaty were sometimes offered instead of the terms of the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement
- (xv) the achievements of other governments were frequently attributed to the Inter-Party government
- (xvi) few candidates were able to cite two actions taken by Hitler to become dictator
- (xvii) to (xx), when attempted, were frequently incorrect.

Section 4 – PEOPLE IN HISTORY (40 marks)

This section is divided into two parts:

In part A, candidates were asked to write about *one* of the following persons:

- A (i) A person in ancient Ireland
- A (ii) The lord or lady of a medieval castle
- A (iii) A *named* religious reformer at the time of the Reformation.

In part B, candidates were asked to write about *one* of the following persons:

- B (i) A settler on a *named* plantation in Ireland during the 16th or 17th century
- B (ii) A German soldier who took part in Operation Barbarossa (June 1941)

OR

- A British or American soldier who took part in D-Day (June 1944)
- B (iii) A *named* political leader in the Republic of Ireland, 1960-1985.

The chart below shows the level of popularity of the different options in this section and the average mark gained by the candidates.

	Popularity (percentage)	Average Score (percentage)
A1. Ancient Ireland	9.3	85.5
A2. Medieval Lord/Lady	13.5	71.5
A3. Religious Reformer	65.9	95.0
B1. Plantation Settler	50.5	66.5
B2. Soldier in World War II	29.1	61.0
B3. Irish Political Leader	5.5	48.0

Table 4: Junior Certificate History Higher Level: Popularity and Average Scores for Options in Section 4

A(iii) and B(i) were the most popular topics and also the highest scoring topics. Some candidates who chose A(i) did not site their answer in a particular period of ancient Ireland such as Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age. The lack of context impacted on the marks awarded for the question. While some of the answers to A(ii) were of a very general nature, Examiners noted that many often contained very good material on the

features of the medieval castle. A(iii) was generally very well answered, with the majority of students writing about Martin Luther.

The Plantation of Ulster was the most popular choice in section B(i), followed by the Plantation of Laois/Offaly. Those who chose Laois/Offaly, however, scored less well as the answers frequently lacked sufficient detail. B(ii) and (iii) were less popular and few candidates who opted for these got full marks. In B(ii), answers on the German soldier taking part in operation Barbarossa and on the British or American soldier taking part in D-Day tended to be general in nature, with insufficient historical information. Seán Lemass and Eamon deValera were the most popular choices in B(iii), but a number of candidates wrote on Michael Collins, a character outside of the date parameters.

Section 5 – REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS (30 Marks)

Three sources were given with this section:

- An account of the execution of King Louis XVI of France
- An illustration showing the attempted French landing in Bantry Bay
- An extract from a speech by Wolfe Tone

The questions on the sources were relatively straightforward, although some candidates lost marks in A(iii) and B(i). While part C was more challenging, many candidates wrote excellent answers on the causes of the American War of Independence and, to a lesser extent, on the Reign of Terror. Fewer candidates attempted part C(ii), and answers frequently dealt with the events of the 1798 Rebellion rather than the reasons for its failure.

Section 6 – THEME-BASED QUESTIONS (60 marks)

Candidates are expected to attempt *two* of the four parts:

- A. From Farm to Factory
- B. Social Change in twentieth-century Ireland
- C. Political Developments in twentieth-century Ireland
- D. International Relations in the twentieth century

The chart below shows the popularity of the different options in this section and the average mark gained by the candidates.

	Popularity (percentage)	Average Score (percentage)
A. From Farm to Factory	50.2	60.99
B. Social Change	49.8	60.33
C. Political Developments	31.0	66.66
D. International Relations	47.1	68.99

Table 5: Junior Certificate History Higher Level: Popularity and Average Scores for Options in Section 6

A. From Farm to Factory

This was the most popular question but it was not always well answered. Few candidates were awarded the full six marks for part (ii). In part (iii) (a), some candidates wrote about working conditions instead of living conditions, and developments in modern transport were sometimes given in answers to part (iii) (c).

B. Social Change in twentieth-century Ireland

Candidates who are well prepared tended to do very well in this question and it seems particularly suited to candidates who find political history challenging.

This was the second most popular question in Section 6, but it earned the lowest average mark. Marks were lost in part (i) because few candidates knew what material is contained in church records and in part (iv), many candidates confined their answers to a description of the changes in communications, whereas the focus of the question was on the impact of these changes.

C. Political Developments in twentieth-century Ireland

This was the least popular question in this section yet many of those who attempted it did very well. While many candidates correctly identified five of the six blanks in part (i), the ‘Curragh’ in (i) (5) was the least well answered. The Civil War and Life during the Emergency were the most frequently answered topics in part (ii), but some candidates confused the War of Independence with the Civil War. Part (ii) (d), The Civil Rights Movement, was rarely attempted and the marks awarded were generally low.

D. International Relations in the twentieth century

This question was generally both popular and well answered. Most candidates were able to correctly identify two reasons for the popularity of Fascist leaders. In part (ii) (c), many candidates ignored the date parameters of the question and wrote about the Holocaust. Part (iii) sometimes went unanswered.

Topic 1, *The Rise of the Superpowers*, was by far the most popular of the three options in part (iv), and was attempted by 89% of the candidates who did this question. Many candidates wrote very detailed answers on the Berlin Airlift and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

3.4 Conclusions

- The results in the 2008 Junior Certificate History Higher Level examinations were in keeping with the outcomes of recent years.
- The overall performance of candidates in this examination indicates a very high level of knowledge and skills.
- The percentage of the candidates who failed to reach a D grade was inflated somewhat by the clustering of E, F and NGs. This may indicate that, in a small number of cases, some candidates had been entered for what proved to be the inappropriate level.
- Sections 2 and 5, both document-based, were answered particularly well.
- Candidates who attempted Section 4 A (i) were expected to locate the person in a specific historical period - Stone Age or Bronze Age or Iron Age - from ancient Ireland. Some failed to do so.
- Some candidates wrote at length on the early twentieth century in Section 4 B (iii), even though the date parameters were clearly stated as 1960-1985.
- As has been noted in previous years, there was evidence that candidates found Section 3 of the syllabus particularly demanding.
- Candidates who performed poorly in Question 6 C showed little grasp of the concept of social change and many could offer few practical meaningful examples of the phenomenon.

3.5 Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations to teachers

- Teachers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the marking scheme for this examination.
- Careful consideration is recommended in the matter of the choice of level for some candidates.
- Teachers should encourage candidates to attempt all the required questions, even if they are unsure of the answers. Examiners commented on the number of questions and parts of questions that were left blank.
- Examiners noted that some topics such as the early Irish and Medieval monasteries, living conditions and working conditions in industrial Britain, the War of Independence and the Civil War and the Anglo-Irish Treaties of 1921 and 1938 are frequently confused by candidates. Further clarification of these would be beneficial.

Recommendations to students

- When writing about historical figures, the focus of the answer should be on their career, works, achievements etc. rather than on their personal biographical details.
- When asked to write about a named person in Section 4, you should first identify a particular individual and then write about his/her historical importance. If you are not asked to name a person, then the question requires that you place that imaginary person in the correct historical context and to consider relevant historical events from his/her perspective.
- In questions on social change, marks are only awarded for clearly stated changes. Candidates are expected to specify the changes that have occurred, showing ‘the before and after’ of these changes and how the changes affected people’s lives.
- It is important to read the examination questions carefully and to answer the specific questions asked.
- Students should take careful note of the given date parameters in the questions.

