



2007 History: Renaissance Italy GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The quality of responses to the 2007 examination was higher than previously and reflected how well students were prepared for the examination. Fewer students left sections blank and most students were able to fully complete all sections.

The discriminating factor between mid-range and excellent responses continues to be the effective use of evidence. Students need to be careful when citing primary material and historians' views as there were many examples of misattribution or students using unidentified quotations. A number of students placed unremarkable single words in quotation marks. This does not constitute historiography. Also, a number of students struggled with the precise names of both the artists and the paintings and visual representations.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	0	1	1	3	7	10	14	18	19	15	11	7.0

Although this question allowed for a wide range of responses, the best answers acknowledged and analysed the debate that has occurred about the nature of the Renaissance and the experience of different groups at this time. A discussion of the differing views of historians was valuable. Students could have discussed a number of elements of this period, including the revival of learning based on classical sources, the defining role of humanism, the development in the arts and the rise of courtly, papal and civic patronage.

The following response considers a number of these elements.

The concept of the Renaissance was seen as a term to reflect the rebirth of classical ideas and models which occurred particularly within the Italian Peninsula. It was propagated by the 19th century historian Jacob Burckhardt as the birth of modernity, calling Renaissance Italians 'first born among the sons of modern Europe'. This engendered a radical break from a feudal, agrarian, pervasively Christian social milieu of the Middle Ages to the commercial, urban and overtly secular culture of the renaissance. However, later scholarship has suggested that there existed stronger lines of continuity; Ferguson terming the Renaissance an 'age of transition'. The notion that the renaissance was secular has also been challenged. Turner argues that, rather, Renaissance society sought a 'workable fusion' between commercial concerns and enduring Christian values.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	3	6	9	10	12	15	15	14	14	6.7

While many students knew about the development of Renaissance art, a significant number of these struggled to link these changes to specific classical ideas. The best responses used an example to link a particular change in art to a specific classical idea. The very best answers cited the classical author or artwork. Some suggested changes which were not derived from classical times and were therefore irrelevant. Students could have included any of the following: the application of ideas and motifs of Classical Greece and Rome; the development of the use of perspective and naturalism in the depiction of the human form; the emergence of the portrait to glorify the patron; and the use of classical form in architecture (for example, Alberti and Brunelleschi).

The following extract makes some of these links.

The intellectual and professional link between the humanists, patrons and artists provided a means through which classical ideas were transmitted. Niccolo Niccoli was friends with Brunelleschi and greatly influenced his classical interest. Alison Brown contends that 'Niccoli may well have been the man who infected the artists with a passion for everything classical'. Brunelleschi was the first to examine 'thoroughly and systematically the ruins of Ancient Rome' (Posner).

Section B

Most students dealt with Questions 1 and 2 of Section B very competently.

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Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	3	10	21	65	3.4

This question required students to realise that Cosimo was more careful and prudent and had not been taken in by the praises heaped upon him, whereas Lorenzo did believe in his 'exalted status'.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	2	5	12	26	29	25	4.5

In order to receive the six marks allocated for this question, students needed to go further than simply claiming that Lorenzo was a 'dictator'. Students needed to point out that Lorenzo's power was that of a de facto ruler, as seen by the fact that the witnesses, the ambassadors and Lorenzo's cousins took for granted that his intervention would mean the commuting of the death penalty and that, even though he held no office at this point that entitled him to do this, he also ordered the arrest and torture and exile of the four men.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	4	5	7	7	11	11	15	16	10	10	6.0

This question was familiar ground for most students. The best answers included a discussion of what the republican values were and analysed to what extent Lorenzo's rule challenged these values. Some students resorted to writing about Lorenzo's many achievements in patronage and festivals and equated these with republicanism, but better answers discussed his constitutional manipulation and the narrowing of the political base. It was disappointing that some very good analyses did not include both primary and secondary representations.

The following response is an example of an effective approach to this question.

The guild based republican government of the fourteenth century and the gradually more and more elite dominated governments of the early fifteenth century subscribed, at least in name to the Florentine republican values: 'a love of liberty' (Bruni), a broad based system with rotating offices and short tenures. Under Lorenzo's rule these values were eroded significantly, primarily through Lorenzo's use of official power means...

Section C

Question chosen	None	1	2
%	2	73	25

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	0	2	1	3	3	4	3	5	4	5	5	6	8	11	9	10	7	6	3	3	12.3

The essay questions were handled well by most students and it was encouraging to see that most students tried to avoid a simple narration of elements of social life. The best essays maintained a clear argument in response to the question. Both questions called on students to evaluate the motivations for social relationships in Florence and Venice. It was also essential that students used sufficient primary and secondary evidence to support their argument.

Question 1

This question provided students with a chance to evaluate the various social networks of neighbourhood, family, friendship, marriage, parish and confraternity. While the range of social relationships discussed by many students was often limited to 'parenti, vicini and amici', others included the value to both parties of patronage and some balanced the role of the relationships formed in the parish and confraternity in their discussion.

The following extract concluded a fine discussion of the nature of the different social relationships in Florence.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the social relations of family, friends and other structures held a social role that was independent of wealth and status. Weissman alludes to this when he refers to the neighbourhood as a source of 'social and psychic support'. Similarly Trexler calls patronage 'a measure of trust in a deceitful world. It was the confraternity which had an integral social role for Florentines. Weissman argues they offered 'a temporary suspension of class' and thus respite from the 'dense' and multifaceted ties of neighbourhood. The spiritual relationship was also of significance. Finally it was through the social welfare role, particularly evident in the confraternity of St Agnes and others, which the importance of relationships for means other than status and wealth can be seen.



Alberti characterised the ethos of Florentine society when he wrote that 'everything in the world is profoundly unsure'. In this competitive, distrustful and dangerous urban matrix; it was through the avenues of social relationships that wealth and status was undoubtedly pursued. While this engendered the 'agonistic' sentiment articulated by Certaldo 'test your friends one hundred times' relationships nevertheless played an important role in social and emotional support and respite.

Question 2

The question demanded an evaluation of how accurately social relationships in Venice could be described as based on cooperation between the different social groups. Again it was necessary to establish an argument and try to use the primary and secondary sources in support of the argument. Clearly the absence of overt class conflict needed to be part of the discussion, but the views of historians such as Denis Romano, who comment on the examples of conflict within the city, could have been examined.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

Bellini's painting 'The Procession in the Piazza San Marco' depicts a typical Venetian situation. With the cittadini and the popolani intermingling as they leave the Porta Della Carta to the right of the painting, the patricians all about the piazza, and the Doge's Palace, the ever present reminder of government visible, 'the message conveyed is clear: all are included and consensus prevails' (Fortini Brown). However, historians like Edwin Muir urge caution when assuming that all Venetian social relationships were characterised purely by 'love and fruitful happiness' choosing to contend that social relations were, instead, characterised by the pragmatic co-operation, that was to develop due to government policy, and competition between the classes.

Section D

Students appeared to find this part of the examination the most difficult. It was important to connect the elements of the painting to identifiable aspects of the Myth, rather than vague qualities of the city.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	8	18	26	48	3.1

Most students were able to identify at least some aspects of the Myth. Students could have referred to the peace and calm, blessed by God; the naval power that was such a key part of Venetian wealth; and the virtue of the constitutional arrangements of the Republic as represented by the Campanile.

The following is one such response.

The image of Venice as divinely protected and prosperous is portrayed in Veronese's painting. The Lion of St Mark represents 'Venice's on going divine care and attention' (Fortini Brown). The mast of a large sailing ship refers to Venice's far flung empires which brought in so much wealth to the city. Neptune, the God of the Sea is present and this reinforces the notion of Venice as being inviolate. The winged victories from above symbolise that Venice is the 'New Rome' and the shells they carry again refer the stato del mar. Thus the image of Venice being projected is one of stability and security with the protection of God. It is because of this protection that trade has flourished and Veronese makes reference to this.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	13	12	15	20	16	17	3.4

Many students found Question 2 confusing. The question asked students to analyse the changes to Venice's imperial policies, but some students were unclear as to how to relate this to the painting. The very best responses commented on how Venice was moving from open conflict towards diplomacy. Students could have commented on the relative peace that Venice had achieved by 1570. At this time, after the war with the League of Cambrai and the isolation of Venice from the states of mainland Italy and European powers, Venice had been forced to diversify. She had lost many of her colonies, including Crete and Cyprus, in the wars against the Ottomans and despite the victory at the Battle of Lepanto, her trade was restricted to the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. The voyages of discovery had meant that her trading monopoly had been broken.

The following response considers a number of the aspects above.

The century preceding the creation of Veronese's work was one in which Venice's maritime empire contracted and her expansion on to the terraferma increased. Indeed, following the disastrous war with the Turks and the fall of Venice's monopoly of trade with the East, following the discovery of trade routes around the Cape of Good Hope; the city's faith in its ability to command a position as Queen of the Adriatic was undermined. This contributed to the Patriciate's increasing expansion on to the mainland, subjugating cities like Verona. However, this entailed challenges within itself. The war of the League of Cambrai (1508–09), which included 'several humiliating defeats' (Fortini Brown) was an expression of Venice's European neighbour's enmity towards her landward expansion... Thus, the fact that Neptune and Mars now rest is intended to reveal that the challenges are now past, demonstrating how the Myth responded to and exploited historical circumstance and vicissitude' (Rosand).

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Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	4	5	7	10	10	13	13	14	9	12	6.0

There were a number of images that students could have referred to in their answer to this question. Students needed to show a familiarity with several images and also the positioning of images and sculpture that reflected the elements of the Myth and also how the Myth was being used at different points in Venice's history. Some mention could have been made of the positioning of this work in the Sala De Collegio and its political function. St Mark as the patron saint and protector of Venice was depicted in art works such as Palma Il Giovane's 'Allegory of the League of Cambrai' and on the Porta della Carta beside the kneeling Doge Foscari. Some of the carvings of the Lion in the Basilica of St Mark that date from the 14th century were relevant, and the saint is shown in a peaceful pose in Carpaccio's 1516 depiction, with his paws on land and sea. The Lion was used to represent the power of the Venetian Constitution over the Doge or the Venetian state on land or sea. Neptune was represented in the de Barbari map and both Mars and Neptune flank the Giant's Staircase.

The following extract was part of an excellent response to this question.

The Lion of St Mark was the most prominent symbol of the Republic of Venice. Above all the use of this iconography was important as it conferred pious values upon the city; equating it with Mark the Evangelist. This was evident in Carpaccio's 'Lion of St Mark' which bears the inscription 'Peace unto you Mark my Evangelist'. It gave visual representation to Sanudo's words that 'this city was built more by divine than human will'. Furthermore, the symbol of the lion was ubiquitous: from the top of the Pillar which framed the entrance to Venice to countless statues throughout the city in addition to official seals and banners. This created a pervasive sense of Venice's civic consciousness and pride. Similarly, in each city which Venice subjugated, a statue of the Lion was erected. Yet in times of challenge the lion could be utilised as a means of promoting divine protection and sanction – as seen in the leaping lion of Giovane's 'Allegory of the League of Cambrai'. Neptune was, in many ways a personification of Venice's claim of a unique relationship with the sea. The mercantile connotations of this relationship are illustrated in the inclusion of Neptune in the de Barbari Map depicting Venice as a 'favoured emporia' (Fortini Brown)....Mars was adopted, primarily in the 16th century as a symbol of Venice's military dominance. His statue appears at the Giant's Staircase...