

Townsend-Warner History Prize, 2020 - Paper One

I can honestly say that marking this year's Paper One has been an absolute joy as the quality of your pupils' responses was tremendous. At the top end there were an impressive nineteen candidates who scored over 80 with some standout performances: Luke Parker (Westminster Under) secured the top mark (89) with Benedict Baddock (Dean Close Prep) and Rajesh Pakrashi (Westminster Under) only one mark behind.

Candidates demonstrated strong knowledge of British monarchs and matching dates to major events. Historical figures were dealt with very well, as were the vast majority of the triplet clues. The number of high marks scored identifying the modern names of cities and the matching of historical palaces to rulers particularly impressed me. The toughest question on the paper, as measured by the small number of correct responses, was the identity of Mons Meg, the giant bombard that resides in Edinburgh Castle.

Following tradition, there were some highly entertaining answers worth mentioning: a high number of candidates thought that the great hero of the Risorgimento was either Biscotti, Amaretti or [the Duke of] Bourbon; Arthur Wellesley was accused of starting the Great Fire of London while Sir Anthony Hopkins was linked to the arrival of the potato in England during the 17th century. Many candidates also said, not unreasonably, that Pitt the Younger's greatest claim to fame was being younger than Pitt the Elder. All good stuff.

None of this, of course, would be possible without your inspiration and encouragement: thank you. Naturally, much time is absorbed preparing pupils for the rigours of scholarship papers, entrance exams and CE; but given this, it is truly gladdening to see how the wider subject of History, populated with fun facts, strange events and quirky individuals, is flourishing.

I wish all those continuing to Paper Two the very best of luck.

Mr Alastair Cook - Harrow School