

## **The Townsend-Warner History Prize 2021: Paper 1 – Report**

The Townsend-Warner History Prize has an illustrious history, and strikingly, an almost unbroken line of winners dating back to 1885. Yet certain years naturally stand out, when momentous events were taking place at home and abroad - especially the war years. That the competition took place during some of the most challenging of circumstances in the past is greatly comforting. And now the date 2021 will be remembered as one of those years. That the Townsend-Warner Paper 1 has taken place, with all the difficulties presented by online schooling and disrupted terms, coupled with the 'normal' pressure of scholarships and entrance papers, is simply wonderful. This is the first time I have received scripts scanned and sent from New York! Thank you for all your considerable efforts in setting and administrating within your schools.

The paper was a joy to mark, with some great responses from your candidates. At the top end nine candidates scored above 80, with standout performances from F Baring (Cargilfield) who secured the top mark (88); close behind were J Moesel (Cothill House) with 87 and C Lai (Shrewsbury House) with 86. Recently some bigger schools have dominated, but this year those first nine candidates came from nine different schools – very encouraging.

Candidates demonstrated a firm handle on military history, correctly identifying the war from the battle in question 1. They answered accurately on the question asking for links between three people or features and on the one matching the dynasties to the rulers. The toughest question on the paper, as measured by the small number of correct responses, was to explain the identity of the Huguenots.

As ever, there were some highly amusing answers along the way: a blunderbuss was identified by one candidate as “someone who makes a lot of mistakes” and a troubadour as a “reputed troublemaker”. The great Louis Armstrong was thought to have been the first man on the moon, while controversially the Spanish Ambassador was implicated in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

All the very best for the term ahead - and especially for those 255 historians who have qualified for Paper 2.

Alastair Cook     Harrow School