

Townsend Warner History Prize 2023

Marking Townsend Warner Paper One always brings cheer to what is often a gloomy and cold start of term; I very much hope that it brought similar joy to your pupils. The quality of responses has been very high, with the average mark for those going forward to Paper Two up from last year to 61. At the top end there were an impressive fifty-three pupils who scored 70 or above, seventeen who secured above 80, and four outstanding candidates who exceeded 90.

As in previous years candidates demonstrated strong knowledge of battles and dates. The question on British monarchs was handled well, as was the triplet section. My overall impression is that your pupils have both broad and varied subject knowledge, which is wonderful to see. The toughest question, as measured by the relatively small number of correct answers, was the meaning of Operation PLUTO: an acronym for Pipeline Under the Ocean, used by the Allies to pump oil and fuel to Normandy following D-Day.

There were, as ever, some highly entertaining answers that are worth mentioning: The Expedition of the Thousand was led by Giuseppe Biscotti, Hereward the Wake was identified as a “king that was sleepy all the time”, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries was described (not wholly inaccurately) as “when Henry VIII broke into churches and stole everything.” I am forever calling upon my pupils to challenge the question and was delighted to see one candidate take it upon themselves to do just this when asked whom Charles I was married to, by asserting that he “simply did not have a wife!” All good stuff.

Thank you for all your support with Townsend Warner and I wish those continuing to Paper Two the very best of luck.

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