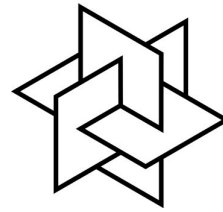


---

CE AT 13+

## HISTORY



**ISEB**  
Independent Schools  
Examinations Board

### Section 2 Example Essay Answer

---

Specimen 2024

#### Information

Section 2: Essay questions, worth 30 marks

Section 2 is divided into three time periods:

- Medieval Realms: Britain 1066–1485 (page 4)
- The Making of the United Kingdom: 1485–1750 (page 5)
- Britain and Empire: 1750–1914 (page 6)

ISEB makes every reasonable effort to obtain clearance to reproduce all third-party content that it uses in its assessment material. In the event that it has inadvertently used material without permission, or failed to acknowledge the copyright owner correctly, ISEB will be pleased to make appropriate amendments at the earliest possible opportunity.

All copyright acknowledgements are reproduced online in the ISEB Copyright Acknowledgement Booklet. This is produced for each series of examinations and is freely available to download at [www.iseb.co.uk](http://www.iseb.co.uk) after the live examination series.

**BLANK PAGE**

## SECTION 2: ESSAY QUESTIONS

### MEDIEVAL REALMS: BRITAIN 1066-1485

Answer all three parts of **ONE** essay question.

1. a) Describe two key events in the Battle of Hastings. [8]
- b) What do you judge to be the most important cause of the Battle of Hastings, and why? [8]
- c) 'Harold Godwinson lost the Battle of Hastings because he won the Battle of Stamford Bridge.' How far do you agree with this statement? [14]

*Example answers:*

- a) Describe two key events in the Battle of Hastings. [8]

*There were a number of important events during the Battle of Hastings. One key event was the moment when the Bretons on the left of the Norman's line fell back in confusion after failing to break the Saxon shield wall. When a number of Saxons followed them down the hill, William lead his cavalry to surround and destroy them. This weakened the shield wall and gave William the idea of faked retreats to draw down more Saxons. The second key event was in the evening as the Saxon shield wall began to break up under the Norman attacks. King Harold Godwinson might have already been wounded by an arrow, but when the Normans found him and hacked him to pieces, the Saxon army was crushed and leaderless. These were two key moments in the battle.*

- b) What do you judge to be the most important cause of the Battle of Hastings, and why? [8]

*There are a number of causes for the Battle of Hastings, including the ability of Harold Godwinson to march his men south to face William of Normandy's invasion force having defeated Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge. However, the most important cause was that William would not accept Harold Godwinson's claim to the throne. Even though the Witan and most Saxons supported his claim, William did have several valid reasons why he invaded in 1066, including the promise of the throne that Edward the Confessor had made to William in 1051 and the belief that Harold had betrayed his oath to support William's claim, made in 1064.*

c) 'Harold Godwinson lost the Battle of Hastings because he won the Battle of Stamford Bridge.' How far do you agree with this statement? [14]

*Did Harold Godwinson lose the Battle of Hastings because he won at Stamford Bridge? On the one hand this is a strong argument. Facing an invasion in the north of England by Harold Hardrada and with no sign of William of Normandy appearing in the south, Harold Godwinson took a gamble to march north to surprise the Viking army. His success there stopped one threat to his throne but left his army much weakened and out of place when William did invade soon after. Although victory at Stamford Bridge may have made Harold supremely confident, by rushing south to face the Norman invaders with a tired and battered army, and lacking archers, Harold made it much easier for William to defeat him at Hastings.*

*On the other hand, while Stamford Bridge was an important factor, it can be argued that Harold's decision making just before and during the battle were more important in deciding his fate. He could have remained in London longer, gathering more troops, before facing William in battle. As it was, he nearly won the battle because all his forces needed to do was to stay in their shield wall and deny the Normans a victory; had the Normans not won on 14<sup>th</sup> October, they would likely have run out of resources and equipment, and been forced to retreat. It can also be argued that Harold did not manage to control his men like William, but William's ability to roam the battlefield on horseback was not the way Saxon leaders fought, giving the Normans an important advantage. This was seen in William's ability to steady his men when a rumour swept his army that he was dead and it was also seen in Harold's inability to stop members of the fyrd from charging after retreating Bretons, weakening the shield wall.*

*The statement that the Battle of Stamford Bridge caused Harold Godwinson to lose the Battle of Hastings is true in some ways, but I cannot fully agree because of the importance of short-term factors involving Harold's and William's leadership right before and during the battle.*