WESTMINSTER SCHOOL
THE CHALLENGE 2017

HISTORY

Tuesday 25 April 2017

You have ONE HOUR for this paper. Answer ALL the questions in Section A and ONE essay from Section B.

You should spend 30 minutes on Section A and 30 minutes on Section B.

Please write in black or blue ink.

Section A:
King Athelstan (924-939) and the making of England

Historical background

King Athelstan (924-939) is often regarded as the first king to make England a single country. He built on the achievements of his grandfather, Alfred the Great, and his father and aunt, Edward and Ethelfleda, in resisting the threat from the Vikings and in expanding the kingdom of Wessex by joining together other, smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. He had coins made which described him as 'King of all Britain', and in one astonishing campaign to the north in 934, even managed to conquer areas of Scottish territory. The only previous rulers to claim such a large area of the British Isles were the Romans, and it seems that Athelstan was conscious of following their example.

Like his father, Alfred the Great, Athelstan saw that kingdoms were built on more than just battles. He supported educational and cultural projects; gave extensively to the church; and made links with other rulers in continental Europe.

Don't worry at all if you have never studied Athelstan or the history of Anglo-Saxon England. No 'own knowledge' is expected or required. All the information you need is to be found in the paper.

Source A

The historian and broadcaster Tom Holland wrote a book called *Athelstan* in 2016. The extract below is adapted from its concluding words.

'…the implications of what was fashioned by Athelstan and his dynasty more than a thousand years ago have recently come to possess a renewed power. As the bonds weaken that for the last 300 years have joined England and Scotland in a united kingdom, so inevitably have the English as well as the Scots begun to ponder what defines them as a nation… Perhaps we can see now, in a way that we could not even a few decades ago, just how astonishing the creation of 'England' actually was. The story of how, over the course of three generations, the royal dynasty of Wessex went from near-oblivion to fashioning a kingdom that still endures today is the most remarkable and momentous in British history.'

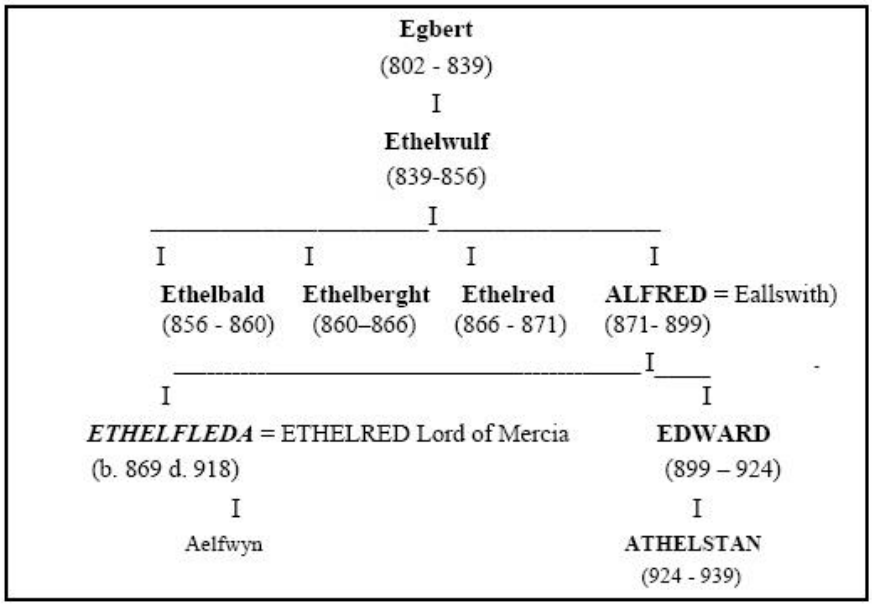
Source B

King Athelstan is depicted in this manuscript giving a gospel book to St Cuthbert, who was effectively patron saint of the north of England. The image dates from around 934. The type of crown worn by the king is similar to those of the late Roman emperors.



Source C

Wessex Royal Family Tree



Source D

More texts of law survive from Athelstan's reign than any other king in the tenth century. This extract comes from the 'Exeter Code', probably issued in the 930s.

'I, King Athelstan, make known that I have learnt that our peace is worse kept than I should like… my councillors say that I have tolerated it too long. Now I have concluded, along with the councillors who have been with me at Christmas at Exeter, that all [disturbers of the peace] are to be ready, themselves, their wives and their cattle and all things, to go wherever I wish…'.

Source E

An extract of a letter from Athelstan to the King of Scots, Constantine II (900-943), probably dating from around 933.

'Understand henceforth that you and your successors owe loyalty to me. You are a sub-king, not a king. I have taken in God's name the title 'King of all Britain', and you shall soon see the full meaning of my title. I wonder why you do not submit to my authority now, and prevent the bloodshed that will inevitably result from your pride. I am descended from a great line – my grandfather Alfred, my father Edward, and my aunt Ethelfleda all shared as I do in God's glory and favour. Your situation is not so blessed.'

Answer <u>ALL</u> of the following questions:

1. **Look at Source B**
   What might historians deduce about Athelstan from this image?
   [4 marks]

2. **Read Source D**
   What does this extract of Athelstan's laws tell you about the extent of his power as king? [4 marks]

   Read Source E
3. Why might Athelstan have written to the King of Scots in this way?

   [5 marks]

   Examine ALL the Sources
4. What do these Sources tell you about Athelstan's strengths and weaknesses as a king?

   [12 marks]

Total: 25 marks

Section B: Essay

Answer ONE of the following questions.

In answering your chosen question, you should try to use examples and comparisons from your study of History, together with your wider knowledge and reading, and you must write in good English. Remember to explain your answer fully. Each question carries 25 marks.

1. Sir Robert Birley, a British teacher and administrator, called History 'the most dangerous subject in the curriculum'. Explain fully whether or not you think he was right.

2. Is it possible to write the history of a culture which did not have a system of writing? Explain your answer.

3. Which is the worst History book you have read? Explain fully why it was so bad, and how it might have been improved.

4. People who take on British nationality are required to take a test, part of which asks questions on British History. Which historical topics would you include in that test, and why? Explain your answer fully.

Total: 25 marks

END OF PAPER