3.6 Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88: Elizabethan Society and the Problem of the Poor: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 1HI0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write in full sentences for Questions 2 and 3. You are advised to spend about 30 minutes on this pack.

1 Give two consequences for a vagrant caught begging again after an earlier punishment under the 1572 Act.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain why the problem of poverty grew more serious in England during Elizabeth's reign.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 'The Elizabethan government's Poor Laws were mainly designed to help the poor, rather than to control and punish them.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

(Total for Question 3 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.6 Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88: Elizabethan Society and the Problem of the Poor: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

they could be tried as a felon **B1**

unless someone agreed to take them into service for two years, they could face execution **B1**

Answer: Trial as a felon, and possible execution unless taken into two years' service.

Question 2

Level 1 Identifies one or two general reasons for growing poverty, with little or no supporting detail or explanation. **1-3**

Level 2 Identifies and begins to explain one or two reasons, supported by some accurate detail. **4-6**

Level 3 Explains two or three reasons, each supported by accurate and relevant detail. **7-9**

Level 4 Explains three or more reasons in a well-developed, logically structured way, supported throughout by precise and accurate detail, showing how the reasons connect. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Population growth across the sixteenth century increased competition for land and work, while wages failed to keep pace with rising prices (the price revolution).
- Enclosure of farmland, particularly the conversion of arable land to sheep pasture, reduced the amount of agricultural work available in the countryside, pushing landless labourers towards towns or vagrancy.
- A series of poor harvests, including in the 1550s, drove up food prices and caused hardship among the poorest.
- The earlier dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII had removed an established source of charitable relief that the poor had previously relied on.
- The decline of some traditional local industries added regional unemployment on top of these wider national pressures.
- These causes reinforced one another, so that by the middle of Elizabeth's reign vagrancy and poverty were widely seen as a growing and interconnected crisis needing a national, not just local, response.

Question 3

Level 1 Shows limited relevant knowledge of the Elizabethan Poor Laws, and offers only a simple, unsupported opinion on the statement. **1-4**

Level 2 Shows some relevant knowledge and identifies relevant factors, but the argument is only partly supported and lacks a developed judgement on how far the statement is accurate. **5-8**

Level 3 Shows good relevant knowledge and explains a range of factors, reaching a supported judgement on how far the statement is accurate, with some links made between factors. **9-12**

Level 4 Shows precise, well-selected knowledge and explains a range of factors in a balanced way, reaching a fully supported and sustained judgement on how far the statement is accurate, with clear analytical links between factors and consistently accurate use of specialist historical terminology. **13-16**

Indicative content:

- Supporting: the 1572 compulsory poor rate raised real money specifically to support the 'deserving poor', a genuine and increasingly systematic form of relief.
- Supporting: the 1576 Act required JPs to provide materials so the unemployed could work, aiming at real relief through employment rather than simple punishment.
- Against: harsh corporal punishments for vagrants, including whipping, branding and the threat of execution for repeat offenders, show a strong concern with deterrence and public order, not compassion.
- Against: the sharp legal distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor meant many of the poorest, judged work-shy, received punishment rather than help.
- Balanced: houses of correction combined an element of relief (providing work) with an element of punishment (compulsion and penalties for refusal), showing the two aims were not fully separate in practice.
- Judgement: the laws combined genuine, increasingly systematic relief for those judged deserving with real fear of, and harsh punishment for, those judged undeserving; the Elizabethan Poor Laws are best understood as pursuing both aims together, though the growing willingness to raise and spend real local tax money on relief suggests government concern went beyond simple social control alone.

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