

HISTORY 2111
SAMPLE SHORT ANSWERS
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Below is a range of answers to the following short answer question, ranging from high A to low F. Carefully read and compare each answer and my analysis of each to get an idea of how to prepare to answer the essay questions on the actual exams.

1. Question: Identify, describe, and tell the importance of the following: The lateen rig

This answer is as close to perfect as it gets. It is well-organized and easy to understand; it includes every speck of relevant information about the lateen rig; it mentions other technological developments very similar to/closely connected to the lateen rig ; and it mentions other categories of things similar to technological developments (political transformations, religious motivations, and economic motivations) that were essential parts of the Age of Exploration. It includes not only all the relevant information to be found in the Course Outline but details mentioned only in class. It leaves out nothing, and it doesn't include anything that doesn't belong. Finally, it tells the importance of the lateen rig (which the question expressly requires): it helped enable deep ocean voyages and thus allowed the Age of Exploration to occur. It further emphasizes this fact in cause-and-effect terms by noting what wouldn't have happened had there been no lateen rig. This is as good as it gets.

10 points (and more, if I could).

ANSWER 1

This is a very high-A answer.

The lateen rig was a technological development of the Age of Exploration (1400s). It was adapted by western European states (such as Portugal and Spain) from East African vessels. Instead of square rigs (or square sails) the lateen rig was oriented fore and aft, allowing the ship to sail much closer into the wind. This allowed the ship to beat, or tack, more efficiently when sailing in a direction that was against the wind. The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible. Other technological advances included the compass; the astrolabe (a type of early navigational computer); and accurate clocks (useful for determining position). When combined with the caravel, a cutting-edge ship design, these advances enabled European mariners to sail into the deep ocean effectively for the first time in history and made long voyages of exploration out of the sight of land possible. Of course, advanced technology is always expensive, so it took the resources of the modern state (such as Portugal and Spain) to be able to afford it, but when combined with the backing of the modern state, along with the religious and economic motivations for exploration that developed with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the lateen rig and similar developments made the Age of Exploration possible. Without these developments, the Age of Exploration, and voyages of mariners such as Diaz, de Gama, and Columbus couldn't have happened.

ANSWER 2

This is an-A answer.

This is still a very solid answer. It has left off a few details here and there. The biggest difference is that the student hasn't related the technological developments leading up to the Age of Exploration to the other developments as the above answer did (i.e., religious and economic motivations and the political transformations—the rise of the state). Nevertheless, it's still a very good answer.

9 or 10 points.

The lateen rig was a technological development of the Age of Exploration. It was adapted by western Europe from East African vessels. Instead of square rigs (or square sails) the lateen rig was oriented fore and aft, allowing the ship to sail much closer into the wind. This allowed the ship to beat, or tack, more efficiently when sailing in a direction that was against the wind. The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible. Other technological advances included the compass; the astrolabe (a type of early navigational computer); and accurate clocks (useful for determining position). When combined with the caravel, a cutting-edge ship design, these advances enabled European mariners to sail into the deep ocean effectively for the first time in history and made long voyages of exploration out of the sight of land possible. These technologies made the Age of Exploration possible. Without them, the Age of Exploration couldn't have happened.

ANSWER 3
This is a B answer.

This answer is still fundamentally correct, but it leaves out some details, such as how, exactly, it works, as well as any mention of the caravel. Like answer ___ above, it also doesn't bring in relationships to the other transformations going on during the Age of Exploration.

8 points.

The lateen rig was a technological development of the Age of Exploration. It was adapted by western Europe from East African vessels. It allowed the ship to sail in a direction that was against the wind. The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible. Other technological advances included the compass; the astrolabe (a type of early navigational computer); and accurate clocks (useful for determining position). These technologies made long voyages of exploration out of the sight of land possible. Without them, the Age of Exploration couldn't have happened.

ANSWER 4

This is a C answer. It's a variation on Answer 1 above.

This answer is identical to the superb Answer 1 above, with one huge exception; it omits the passage that tells the importance of the lateen rig, i.e. how it influenced or reflected the development of history. Since the instructions require the student to "identify, describe, and tell the importance" of the term, this student has failed to follow the instructions and left out a crucial part of the answer, no matter how good the rest of it is. This is one of the most common mistakes that students make on short answer questions. Be careful that you don't make it!

7 points.

The lateen rig was a technological development of the Age of Exploration (1400s). It was adapted by western European states (such as Portugal and Spain) from East African vessels. Instead of square rigs (or square sails) the lateen rig was oriented fore and aft, allowing the ship to sail much closer into the wind. This allowed the ship to beat, or tack, more efficiently when sailing in a direction that was against the wind. The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible. Other technological advances included the compass; the astrolabe (a type of early navigational computer); and accurate clocks (useful for determining position). When combined with the caravel, a cutting-edge ship design, these advances enabled European mariners to sail into the deep ocean effectively for the first time in history and made long voyages of exploration out of the sight of land possible. Of course, advanced technology is always expensive, so it took the resources of the modern state (such as Portugal and Spain) to be able to afford it.

ANSWER 5

This is a borderline-C answer.

This answer starts leaving out some fundamental things, such as the fact that this class discusses the lateen rig in the context of European exploration. The student simply assumed I would know she was talking about Europe, but I never assume anything when reading an answer—it's the student's job to tell me. Additionally, the student states that the lateen rig originated in east Asia, not east Africa. While still generally explaining the lateen rig's importance, the student doesn't relate it to any of the other technological advancements, let alone mention the religious, economic, and political developments of the time.

6 or 7 points.

The lateen rig was a type of sail adapted from East Asian vessels. It allowed the ship to sail in a direction that was against the wind. The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible because it enabled mariners to sail into the deep ocean for the first time in history.

ANSWER 6

This is a borderline D answer.

This answer leaves out a lot of fundamentals and does almost nothing to relate the lateen rig to the larger picture, although it does include the hugely important point that it was key to the Age of Exploration.

5 or 6 points.

The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible because it enabled mariners to sail into the deep ocean for the first time in history. These technologies made the Age of Exploration possible.

ANSWER 7

This is a borderline D answer.

This answer is like the one just above, except that it leaves out that critical "importance" aspect. Maybe it implies that aspect, but the student needs to come right out and say it, and he hasn't done that here.

4 points.

The lateen rig enabled mariners to sail into the deep ocean for the first time in history.

This answer is strange in that the only thing it does is to tell the importance of the lateen rig, without identifying or describing the rig at all. In that regard it's the opposite of Answer 4 above.

3 points.

ANSWER 8
This is a borderline D answer.

The lateen rig was one of many technological advances that made the Age of Exploration possible.

This is as stripped down as it gets, omitting the importance and any relation to Europe, the Age of Exploration, or anything else that was involved in the Age of Exploration. The statement isn't even technically correct—a ship can never sail directly into the wind. The lateen rig simply allowed ships to sail more closely into the wind than square rigs.

3 points.

ANSWER 9
This is a borderline D answer.

The lateen rig allowed ships to sail into the wind.

The only positive thing about this answer is that it does correctly identify the lateen rig as a type of sail. I have no idea whether Drake and Magellan used it or not; certainly none of my materials indicates that they did, so at best the student is guessing. The student fails to relate the lateen rig to the other technological developments, or any other developments, of the Age of Exploration, other than implying (not expressly stating) that it allowed deep ocean sailing by Europeans.

2 or 3 points.

ANSWER 10
This is a high F answer.

The lateen rig was a type of rig or sail. Francis Drake and Ferdinand Magellan used it to sail around the world.

This answer is similar to Answer 8 but even more deficient.

2 points.

ANSWER 11
This is a borderline D answer.

The lateen rig made the Age of Exploration possible.

ANSWER 12
This is a low F answer.

Does this answer even need comment?

The lateen rig was a way of rigging political elections as was done in Parliament so the colonists were not represented there.

1 point, tops.

ANSWER 13
This is an F answer.

You have had every possible short answer question in your possession (along with, on the Course Outline, a lot of the information needed to answer each and every one of those questions) since the very first day of class. Is there any excuse for this?

[nothing in the bluebook but a blank page where a short answer is supposed to be]

Zero points.