**Practice Question 1**

Evaluate the interpretations in both of the two passages and explain to what extent the commons had a key role in rebellion in Tudor England.

Source 1

The commons of Tudor England, the vast mass of the people who had no formal political role and could only bring their grievances to the attention of the government by riot or rebellion, were conventionally regarding in gentry discourse as fickle, irrational and stupid, and feared as a many-headed monster. ‘The people’, said Archbishop Whitgift, ‘are commonly bent to novelties and to factions and most ready to receive that doctrine that seemeth to be contrary to the present state and that inclineth to liberty’. The ruling class commonly claimed to regard the multitude as beneath contempt; since the aim of government propaganda in time of rebellion was to ensure the loyalty of the gentry, it was usual to emphasise the base origins of ‘the rascal mob’ and make little of such gentry support as the rebels maintained.

Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* revised ed. (2008), p. 6.

Source 2

But how could the voice of ‘the commons’ be convincingly constituted as a political actor when no *individual* commoners could claim competence in political affairs? To answer this conundrum, the Pilgrims constructed their rebellion in such a way that they could claim to speak for the common or public good rather than their own self-interest, using quasi-republican techniques in their organization and decision-making process and employing mass meetings, votes, and representative councils to construct their programme. The use of these techniques did not imply that Tudor subjects were applying classical republican ideals to their own governance, but rather, as Patrick Collinson has shown for a slightly later period, the experience of community co-operation and public dispute resolution in local life provided the English commonalty with a remarkably participatory political model that they could import into national politics when the occasion rose.

Ethan Shagan, ‘The Pilgrimage of Grace and the public sphere?’ in *The politics of the public sphere in early modern England* ed. Peter Lake and Stephen Pincus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)