

# A-level **History**

7042/2H France in Revolution, 1744-1815  
Report on the Examination

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## Question 1

There were two main elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance, tone and emphasis and an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge). Comparison is not a requirement at A-level. The best responses took the sources one at a time and treated them completely separately, perhaps with a short conclusion weighing up the value of that source in relation to the question, before moving on to the next source. The better responses also tended to be those where the provenance of the source was addressed before evaluating the content as this tended to result in a more holistic understanding of the source, enabling the student to understand what was written in the light of who wrote it, why and when. An understanding of the emphasis of the source also tended to encourage students to focus on the major argument of the source, rather than taking a line by line approach which is to be discouraged.

Overall students seemed to have a stronger grasp of how to approach the source question this year, with most attempting to discuss provenance and content, although the lack of relevant contextual knowledge did often weaken responses. Some students tended to discuss provenance using stock statements about the nature of speeches or letters, rather than using the context and content of the particular source when assessing the provenance. However, stronger students were able to do this very effectively. Although students should consider whether there are any limitations to the value of the sources, and highlight them where they exist, in reality there will not always be limitations to the value of every source and it is acceptable to state this, rather than attempt to create some unconvincing balance. However, students were not penalised for doing this.

Source A was perhaps the source which students found most challenging to understand in context. Nonetheless, a good number did identify the context of the expulsion of the Girondins, and a smaller number understood that he was also writing at the start of the reaction to that expulsion in areas like Lyons. Those that understood this were better able to comment on the source as a whole, although there was still scope to discuss the source's provenance and content even without that, as there was some understanding of Robespierre's relationship with the sans-culottes and his recognition of their importance. Some students used contextual knowledge from 1789 and the storming of the Bastille to support this source, which, whilst receiving some credit, was not particularly helpful in evaluating this source in relationship to the time period in the question.

For the provenance most students were able to identify why Robespierre's authorship made this source valuable and made sensible comments about this being a private notebook. Some unfortunately failed to explicitly evaluate the value of the provenance, which inevitably weakened responses. As stated above, an understanding of the timing of the source was helpful both in terms of provenance and content.

Most students found Source B more straightforward with the majority recognising the context of the source, which was helpfully mentioned in the content, and then were able to use precise contextual knowledge such as the Law of Suspects, to evaluate the content of the source.

For the provenance a small minority thought that the Paris Commune were opposed to the sans-culottes which led them to misunderstanding some of the content as well as the provenance. However, the majority did understand where Chaumette's sympathies lay, and, as stated above, the context in which he was speaking, which enabled them to write sensibly about the provenance.

Again Source C was well understood with many students identifying this as the source which showed the sans-culottes in action in Lyon as part of the Revolutionary Army which had been

established through their demands as described in B and were able to use this to highlight the value of the source for the purpose of the question. Some were also able to use precise knowledge to challenge the content of the source, such as the notion that four hundred conspirators would be killed in a single shot or to support the methods of execution used there.

In terms of provenance most were able to identify that the Cordeliers Club was a radical club, closely associated with the sans-culottes, and that Ronsin was therefore writing to people who would rejoice in the news of the retribution they were delivering in Lyons. Many students also identified that he was boasting to his friends, and that this could serve to limit the value of the source.

Where marks were low for this question, it was largely because students had limited understanding of the context of the sources and failed to use contextual knowledge when evaluating the content and provenance of the sources. Those who did use precise contextual knowledge to form their judgements, tended to do very well. The fact that this question was based on material from the first half of the course possibly meant that students found it more challenging.

### **Question 2**

This was a very popular choice of question with many students able to write about privileges, and to balance it with discussion, for example, of the cost of war. As a result most were able to get into L3 and above depending on the level of precision and understanding. However, whilst most students could discuss the separate issues, many failed to really understand how income and expenditure are related, or how it was possible for a small percentage of the population to have such a high proportion of the wealth. As a result judgements could be quite unconvincing. However, some students did do very well on this and were able to demonstrate very good understanding of the multiple reasons for the debt.

### **Question 3**

This was the least popular question although it was answered by over a third of students. Most were able to discuss the coups of 1797 and 1798 and to offer balanced comment. However, stronger students were also able to discuss a wider range of ‘threats’ such as the Babeuf Plot and the Vendee to form a more substantiated judgement. There were some very good responses to this question.

### **Question 4**

This was another popular question with most students able to discuss a range of factors with balance. Weaker responses took a very narrow approach, attempting to make strong judgements on the basis of very partial evidence, which made them unconvincing. However, when this was done well, there was good recognition of the benefits and the drawbacks of Napoleon’s rule, with an examination of those factors which had the greatest impact on society, whether for good or for ill. A small number of students attempted to divide society into different groups, and whilst there was some merit to this, they sometimes failed to see the impact on society as a whole. The best

responses recognised the turmoil experienced by French society over the course of the revolution and were able to identify the relative stability of these years as a definite benefit.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.