
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2H – France in Revolution, 1774 - 1815
Report on the Examination

7042
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General Comments

This year it was encouraging to see that more students are getting to grips with this question and far fewer are attempting to compare the sources. There are still a significant minority who describe the sources, or sometimes even make some good comments about them, but who fail to assess their value to an historian for the purposes of the question. This is something which inevitably limits marks as it is what the question requires. Contextual knowledge was also used more effectively to evaluate the sources this year which resulted in some more effective responses, although there were still some who displayed relatively little understanding of context. Finally, whilst tone is a factor to consider when assessing the sources, it is dependent on the individual source and how it is written, and only worth discussing when it genuinely has some bearing on the value of the sources. More students this year went a little overboard on tone, and some confused it with content. A sentence or two highlighting the value or limitation of the tone is normally sufficient to address the question.

Overall though, this question was tackled reasonably well by a good proportion of students with much more focus on the emphasis and argument of the source as a whole which led to much more effective responses.

Question 01

Source A

Most students were able to make very sensible comments about this source, with more able students able to recognise both the value and limitations of the provenance of the source. Those who had revised well were able to comment on the reality of Napoleon's rather unimpressive speech to the Ancients and the disparity between this source and what was actually said. However, there were other points that students could readily make, for example, about the reality of the Directors 'resigning' and Napoleon's 'devotion to his country' which many did, supporting them with relevant contextual knowledge. Some misread part of the source about the Five Hundred being in a state of confusion, and thought it was making a point about the problems of the Directory, but on the whole this source was understood relatively well. Those who explicitly assessed it for value using relevant contextual knowledge were able to do well.

Source B

This source was probably the most confidently tackled of the three. Many students were able to discuss the problems of the Directory as identified in this source, and more able students were able to point out why perhaps some of this was exaggerated to an extent. The most effective responses used the most relevant contextual knowledge to support points such as 'multiple challenges deprived it forever of the respect of the people'. Less effective responses supported this with the uprisings of 1795, or the early financial problems, whereas more effective responses ensured that their contextual knowledge was more specific to the source and the context of the coup in 1799. As with A, there was plenty of scope for balance when addressing the question for this source, and more able students were able to recognise this.

Source C

A surprising number of students were able to write authoritatively about the exile of Madame de Staël and to use this when assessing the value of the provenance of the source. Whilst there was some stock evaluation about the source lacking in value as it was written a long time after the

Coup of Brumaire, many students recognised the benefit of hindsight and were able to write well on this. The content was perhaps tackled slightly less well. Some students seemed to be eager to get the question finished by the time they reached the content of this source. However, despite a little misreading of parts of the source at times, the content was very accessible to those who remembered the events of the coup, and a good number of students picked up on the emphasis of this source, that this was indeed a military coup, which was graphically displayed with deputies scrambling out of windows in fear of the grenadiers.

Question 02

For this question there was plenty to write about, and more effective responses offered a good range of evidence to show the extent to which equality was brought about by the constitutional reforms, in the context of the period, rather than in the context of today. This was a problem for some students, who failed to recognise the revolutionary nature of the reforms and were overly negative. The more able students selected the most relevant evidence to support their argument, rather than discussing reforms which were tangential to equality. Credit was given where students genuinely linked their point to equality, and many did this well, for example with administrative reforms, where the link needs to be explained more, than with the end of feudalism, for example, where the link to equality is more obvious. On the whole, where students had enough knowledge and understanding of the reforms, responses were good.

Question 03

This was the least well-done of the three questions as a surprising number of students seemed to have very little clear knowledge about military defeat in 1793, and a smaller, though significant number, were very unclear about the development of the Terror in that year. As a result too many tried to talk about military defeat in 1792, or the Law of Prairial in 1794. As a result, these students were not able to do well on a question which required an understanding and knowledge of military defeat and the development of the Terror in 1793. More effective responses, however, grasped the many ways in which military defeat affected both the people at large and the decisions of the National Convention, leading to the establishment of the CPS, as well as putting great strain on the economy which also increased the discontent of the sans-culottes. Medium range responses recognised relevant factors such as the economy, internal rebellion and the sans-culottes, but didn't see any, or much, link between them, and therefore were most likely to be awarded marks in L3.

Question 04

This question elicited much more effective responses on the whole. Perhaps because it focused on the last part of the course, students seemed to have a more secure grip on the events of 1812-15 than they did for 1793. That said, less effective responses tended to focus overly on the invasion of Russia, or went too far back, focusing on mistakes made by Napoleon prior to 1812 in which case they struggled to get out of L2. Some students also found it difficult to link their points to Napoleon's downfall. However, there were a good number of responses which addressed the question relatively well, with some having impressive knowledge of the period which they were able to use effectively to assess the extent to which it was indeed Napoleon's mistakes and weaknesses which brought about his downfall. Many came to the conclusion that it was!

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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