
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2H
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2H

France in Revolution, 1774–1815

Component 2H: The end of Absolutism and the French Revolution, 1774–1795

General Comments

On the whole, students succeeded in tackling this new AS format and used the time available to write some substantial answers to both the compulsory question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q03 was the more popular but both saw a range of responses from those with precise knowledge linked to the question to those that were weaker. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session. Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further evidence as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question.

Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

As far as the second element is concerned, a reasonable number of students were able to understand the content of the sources and were able to recognise and comment on the different views suggested by the sources. However, some misread parts of the sources; for example, a number of students misread Source B which talks about the removal of the privileged orders as though it was talking about the removal of privileges, and so missed the radical nature of the statement. A number of students also struggled with comment in Source A, partly because they did not seem to recognise that there was a genuine optimism that their grievances would be heard, and they often did not link this introduction to some of the well-known demands of the Cahiers. Some students tried to deal with the sources by analysing them sentence-by-sentence or phrase-by-phrase, which meant that they sometimes failed to deal with the overall argument, focusing on points which were not central to answering the question. This could also lead to some contradictory statements which made responses less convincing. Students tended to perform better when they summarised and commented on the argument of the source as a whole. Most students tried to evaluate the sources using contextual knowledge, for example, using their knowledge of the cahiers, enlightenment ideas, the range of people within the Third Estate and the influence of the church, to criticise and corroborate the arguments of the sources. The best students showed a good, detailed awareness of context; less able students used no or very little contextual knowledge or used knowledge which might have had some relevance to the source but did not contribute to answering the question.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was done reasonably well, although it was occasionally ignored. For Source B there wasn't always the recognition that Sieyes was primarily a political theorist whose views were, on the whole, ahead of those of the majority of the Third Estate. However, a reasonable number did recognise that his words were radical and picked up on his forceful tone which they were able to comment on in relation to the question. However, a large number of students accepted Source B quite uncritically and assumed that it represented the views of the Third Estate. There was some fairly good comment regarding the provenance of Source A regarding the unrepresentative nature of those drafting the cahiers and some noted the formal tone of this official document. However, this wasn't always linked effectively to the question.

Most students tackled the comparative element at the end and commented on the 'value' of the sources in relation to the views of the Third Estate before the meeting of the Estates General. A large number of students did not really grasp the fact that Source A was more valuable in reflecting the views of the Third Estate at this stage and that the revolutionary events which followed were a result of rapid politicisation in response to the events of the Estates General and the peaking of bread prices in July of that year. A number of students did, however, recognise that Source B was, though very influential later, fairly radical at this stage and less representative, especially when considering the Third Estate across France, most of whom were peasants who were heavily influenced by the Church and more concerned about the daily grind of life than political representation. It was important to come to a clear judgement as to which source was more valuable and why and, to achieve the highest marks that judgement would ideally have been supported by comments made earlier in the essay.

Section B

Question 02

This question illustrates the new approach to questions for this specification both by addressing an economic issue and considering consequences of actions or events. Good responses were able to offer some quite precise knowledge on Necker's actions, such as the publication of the Compte Rendu, his support for the American War of Independence, his use of loans and his attempt to reduce venal offices etc. However, some students tried to discuss issues other than Necker's actions which were not likely to be relevant unless they did have some genuine link to the question, such as the opposition Necker faced from some of the nobility which limited his effectiveness. As always, the more precise the knowledge and the tighter the links to the question, the more likely the answer was to achieve high marks.

Question 03

On the whole this question was done better, with more students able to offer a good range of evidence both to support the notion that Robespierre was responsible for the development of the Terror, and to counter it. Better answers recognised that whilst other factors, such as war and internal rebellion were more important initially, Robespierre became more responsible later as rebellions were successfully crushed and external enemies were defeated. Other approaches could be taken and there were some very good essays which discussed, for example, the actions of the Sans-Culottes, or other radical members of the CPS. There were, however, some students who seemed to know very little about 1793–1794 who wrote instead about events in 1792, such as the September Massacres, or otherwise commented very vaguely. It was an example of the need to know the chronology of this period to be sure of writing accurately within the time frame specified. All were rewarded according to the quality of argument, knowledge and judgement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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