
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2F
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2F

The Sun King: Louis XIV, France and Europe, 1643–1715 Component 2F: The Sun King, 1643–1685

General Comments

Centres and students had clearly worked hard on this unit and had learned a good deal about Louis XIV's reign. Few students ran out of time and nearly all students made substantial attempts to address the questions they chose. Perhaps inevitably in the essay questions, a question about Versailles (03) proved more popular than one on foreign policy (02). There was a wide range of abilities among the students and a wide range of approaches to the questions, some of which proved more effective than others. In general, the main advice to centres is to remind them that although this unit grew out of the legacy HIS1E unit, there are substantial differences in the thrust and nature of the course. Most obviously, the first 18 years of Louis's reign is covered which was not the case in the previous course. Perhaps more importantly for centres, it is a depth – not a breadth – unit and this will influence the sort of questions asked and thus the need for students to have precise detail about key events and issues in France over a limited period. A key difference is that there is now a source Question 01. This requires students to identify the key message of each source in assessing a given issue; students then have to determine which assessment is the more convincing based on their ability to use their knowledge of relevant events and a careful assessment of the source's provenance and tone where relevant. Therefore Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further guidance as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question.

Section A

Question 1

Nearly all students approached the question by looking at the provenance and tone and then the content of each source in turn with a final comparison at the end. This is an acceptable approach but in each of these three elements weaker students were not meeting the demands of the mark scheme. To address each element in turn:

An evaluation of provenance and tone (requiring some own knowledge),

Many students were satisfied with some limited comment on this which was often left as a free-standing comment at the start of their evaluation of the source. Source A was better understood in terms of its hostility to Mazarin was explicable through her imprisonment although few commented that her attitude was surprising as she was a supporter of Anne. Few spotted that Source B came from the era of Mazarinades and realised that the evidence given bore the reasonable construction that this was probably a Mazarin-inspired response to the criticisms of the Frondeurs. Moreover relatively few students integrated these comments with their evaluation of the content of the sources.

An evaluation of content and argument (requiring use of own knowledge)

All students understood the content of each source to a certain extent, assisted in Source A in particular by the tone. However very few students applied own knowledge to the content and argument of the sources, which was surprising for a discussion of a key personality and a key event in the specification. A more minor point was that students referred to the whole period of Mazarin's rule in their comparisons rather than the more limited period of Louis's minority. Better students tended to draw some comparisons as they went through the second source.

A comparison

Nearly all students ended their evaluation with a statement of their assessment based upon a comparison of the sources and a judgement on which one they considered to be the more valuable. However many students failed to integrate their evaluations of provenance and tone with the content and argument to draw their final comparison.

Section B**Question 02**

Many students were well aware of Louis's generic motives in his foreign policy but surprisingly few showed an understanding of the specific economic motives for the invasion of the Dutch Republic. Gloire was a popular choice of motive for students and this was better evidenced than answers to questions in the legacy specification. Many students also employed the acquisition of territory as an argument for Louis's actions but some failed to realise that the Dutch Republic and France did not share a common border. Moreover, they used the acquisition of territory in the eventual peace treaty of Nijmegen as evidence of this goal. While this is not strong evidence (goals can change between the decision to go to war and the end of the war) it is also weak as the territories mentioned like, Franche Comté, were not gained from the Dutch. Some students tried to gloss over the key factor as a motive in their answers which clearly limited their response and few students were aware of the tariff war that preceded the conflict.

Question 03

As may have been anticipated, most students attempted this question and had a good knowledge about what went on in Versailles, sometimes descending into narrative rather than putting together evidence for whether Versailles was built solely to control the nobility or not. A wide range of valid potential alternatives were employed, such as his hatred of Paris in part due to the Frondes, a memorial to his father or to impress foreign powers. Compared to previous years, students were able to provide good support for the role of gloire with some specific evidence. Some good students pointed out that Louis's motives changed over time and so what was his key motive at one stage was supplanted by another at a later date.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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