

Section A

Nominated topic: The Terror, 1793–1794

- 1 Study all the following documents and answer the questions which follow. In evaluating and commenting on the documents, it is essential to set them alongside, and make use of, your own contextual knowledge.

A *Robespierre urges the Convention to maintain the Terror.*

In order to lay the foundations of democracy and virtue, in order to arrive at the peaceful reign of constitutional laws, we must finish the war of liberty against tyranny. Subdue liberty's enemies by terror, and you will be right. The government of the Revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny. Anyone who tries to interpose their gentleness to protect the wicked from the avenging blade of national justice is like those who would throw themselves between the henchmen of the tyrants and our brave soldiers' bayonets. All weakness merely strengthens our enemies, England and Austria. Woe to those who seek to turn the people against the terror!

Robespierre, Speech, 5 February 1794.

B *A Parisian observer writes to his brother about the Terror, describing conflicts among the revolutionaries.*

The ferocity among the Patriots is more savage than ever. The Committee of Public Safety has just had executed some twenty of the most notable revolutionaries. One unfortunate victim, bowing his head to the blade, cried out, 'Farewell humanity!' Danton has just been arrested, on the night of 10 Germinal. This occurred because Danton and Desmoulins tried to halt the action of the guillotine, so now they will have to suffer it themselves.

It is Danton's misfortune to have recovered some credit among good patriots after he joined with Camille Desmoulins in '*Le Vieux Cordelier*' newspaper to try to stop the massacres of the Revolutionary Tribunal. These two men have kept some trace of humanity and hoped that a return to good principles might cause their own cruelties to be forgotten. Danton's popularity gave offence to Robespierre, and threatened his powers and those of the dictatorial Committees. Today Robespierre is King of the Revolution and cannot be challenged.

Nicholas Ruault, Letter, April 1794.

C *A member of the Convention looks back on the Revolution and explains the reasons for the nature of the Terror.*

Those who refer to a so-called system of Terror are wrong. Nothing was further from a system. Men in the Convention were dragged into it little by little without knowing where it was going. They went further and further because they dared not draw back. Desmoulins and Danton perished because they talked of moderation. The Terror was introduced bit by bit because of the opposition from the Revolution's internal and external enemies. This brought about an exaggerated kind of patriotism. This began with the educated class making speeches and ended with the lower class committing atrocious acts. Most believed that they were performing a praiseworthy act and serving their country, but the Terror was more deadly for the friends of Liberty than for its enemies.

Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau, *Memoirs of the Convention and the Directory*, 1824.

D *Another member of the Convention recalls why he supported the Terror.*

Whoever was to blame, the blood shed during this period covered our glorious revolution with an indelible stain. But no-one wanted to push the Revolution down these sinister paths which harmed the whole nation. Doubtless a few fanatics calculated it was necessary to shed blood to establish liberty. Doubtless some fierce republicans wished to destroy their political opponents. But they never imagined that even humble men and women would be struck down. Danton recoiled from the bloodshed he had brought about. Even Robespierre had doubts. We supporters of the Mountain* looked at the results of our measures and shuddered, but we consoled ourselves with the thought that we were serving the nation by ridding ourselves of feelings of pity and remedying the ills of France. Convinced that we were surrounded by treachery, we did not dare to stop the Terror because we feared we had nothing to put in its place. We could not end terror without losing our Revolutionary energy. The welfare of France was the goal which had to be attained.

René Levasseur, *Memories of a Former Member of the Convention*, 1831.

*The Mountain was the name given to the more radical members of the Convention because they sat on the highest seats in its meeting hall.

E *A historian provides an explanation for the Terror.*

The Terror was neither the result of vicious political philosophy nor the defence of a nation under pressure from war and revolt. Pressure from the *sans culottes* forced the Convention to adopt extreme policies. The reluctant deputies were swept along by a mass agitation caused by food shortages and rising prices. Requisition of food and imposition of controls on grain prices – the *Maximum* – alienated the peasants; taxation and price controls alienated the middle classes. The government needed the support of the working men of the towns and the agricultural labourers. They would only get this as long as the *Maximum* was retained. This was only possible through terror and intimidation. St Just drafted the decree to take away the property of suspects and distribute their property to the poor. The Terror was necessary to bring about class warfare.

Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution*, 1935.

- (a) To what extent does Document C support the evidence in Document D about the attitude of members of the Convention to the Terror? [10]
- (b) How convincing is the evidence provided by this set of documents for the view that the Terror was primarily brought about by the need to defend the Revolution against its internal and external enemies? In making your evaluation you should refer to contextual knowledge, as well as to all the documents in this set (A–E). [20]

Section B

Answer **one** of the following questions. Where appropriate, your essay should make use of any relevant documents you have studied as well as contextual knowledge.

- 2 'The nobility were responsible for the problems the monarchy faced by 1788.' Discuss. [30]
- 3 How successful were the reforms introduced in France in the period 1789 to 1791? [30]
- 4 How influential was the 'crowd' in the development of the French Revolution in the period 1789 to 1792? [30]

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