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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

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

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7042  
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## General Comments

It was pleasing to see that with regards to AO1 and AO2, many students were well prepared for the exam. This was, in part, due to the Advanced Information. Considering that this cohort had not sat GCSEs, it was encouraging to see that students coped well with the rigours of the exam and many wrote confidently in both the sources and essay questions. The Advanced Information had enabled students to demonstrate precise and accurate knowledge, although this did bring its own issues in terms of students having been prepared by their teachers to answer particular essay questions which some then tried to answer in the exam. There was lots of knowledge evidenced, although if a student slipped into description and narrative, rather than applying appropriately to the specific question, it was difficult to get beyond a high level 2 or low level 3. The students had been well prepared for the sources question in terms of addressing provenance as well as content, and virtually all addressed the provenance first before evaluating the content. This resulted in a more holistic approach. The vast majority also attempted to discuss the emphasis and main argument of the sources rather than paraphrase line by line. Only a very few still tried to compare the sources, which is not required at A level. Again, there was a tendency for some students to write lots of information in order to provide context, rather than deploying pertinent, well-targeted information in relation to the source's value to the historian for a given purpose.

### Question 1

#### Source A

Students found this source straightforward to understand in terms of provenance and content. Better responses included precise contextual knowledge of the provenance, for example the date of 1801 was evaluated in terms of the plebiscite of 1800 in which 99.9% supported the new constitution and therefore showed support for Napoleon. It was pleasing to see some students develop that further to offer a comment on the provenance's limitation because the turnout had only been 25% and the source was focused only in Paris, leading to a level 4 type of response. Weaker responses, seen in level 2, tended to offer stock phrases such as the nature of a private letter making it more trustworthy. Unfortunately, some students wrote about the features of Napoleon's control, through propaganda and censorship, when the focus of the question was very much on the crowd's reaction to Napoleon. It is very important to hold to the fore, the question that the historian wants answering, in this case, the reaction of the French people to life under Napoleon from 1801 to 1808. 'The crowds looked on in awe' was used by many to support this; 'multitudes thronged the boundary railings' less so. It was good to see that most students offered a judgement on the value of the source for the purpose required – although some contradicted themselves at the end of the evaluation from what they had written at the start.

#### Source B

This was again an accessible source in terms of provenance and content and virtually all students were able to comment correctly on the opposition to conscription. Regarding provenance, most students were able to comment on the Gendarmerie and their role in enforcing conscription. However fewer were able to link this to source's value. The fact that gendarmes had to be 1.7 m was not relevant, for example, whereas having to be impartial and honest was. Better responses, of a level 4/5 type, commented on the biased tone within the source and the implausibility of them not 'striking anyone' and again linked this to limiting the value of the source. Unfortunately, in wanting to demonstrate an understanding of context, some students lost focus by writing in detail about Napoleon's relationship with the Pope and the Concordat. It was as if, because of the

reference to the church and parish priest, they were wanting to write about religion and how Napoleon used it to control the population. Only a few picked up on its value in demonstrating a range of different people's reaction to conscription and in particular, those such as the mayor and parish priest, who were expected to support Napoleon's regime.

#### Source C

This was the least effectively evaluated source in terms of content. Again, nearly all students addressed provenance and many knew who Fouché was. Fewer knew its value of that for an historian seeking to learn of the reaction of the French people to life under Napoleon during the years 1801 to 1808. For example, a narrative of Fouché's role in the Terror was not relevant, whilst a link to his relationship with Napoleon was. Some students, as seen in level 2 type answers, lost focus by writing extensively about the imperial nobility, rather than the people's reaction to it. Not many students discussed the reaction of different groups, preferring to focus primarily on the nobility mentioned in the first paragraph. Better responses included comment on the fearful reaction of the bourgeoisie and Parisian shopkeepers under the newly established imperial nobility. Some became confused with the term 'enlightened' and wrote needlessly about the Enlightenment. It appeared that some students were running out of time and rushed through this source which will have limited their answer to level 3. Others had written unnecessarily detailed plans for the sources which may have used up valuable time. Time management needs to be stressed.

#### Question 2

This was a popular question and all attempts included relevant information on the sans-culottes. The Advance Information had enabled students to revise the journées of the 20<sup>th</sup> June and 10<sup>th</sup> August, as well as the September massacres and, as such, knowledge on this was good. Less secure was the knowledge and understanding of the role of the deputies in the Assembly and Convention. Very few students were able to demonstrate precise and specific knowledge of their actions beyond the temporary suspension of the King after the 10<sup>th</sup> August journée. The main thrust of the essay should have been to compare the impact of the sans-culottes with the deputies and to make a judgement as to who had the greater influence in the fall of the monarchy. It was pleasing that students kept within the parameters of the dates given, although some discussed the death of the King, which weakened their argument. It was disappointing that some, otherwise promising answers, included other factors in the fall of the monarchy and so did not progress from level 2 or low level 3. This was because the relevant evidence for the set question was often limited by the students wasting time on irrelevant, even if accurate, information. A discussion on the role of war per se, or of the King, in the fall of the monarchy was not relevant to the question and, as such, gained little credit unless linked to the main themes.

#### Question 3

There was lots of relevant and linked information on Robespierre's fall from power in July 1794, which was pleasing to see. A lot of students knew the reasons for his fall, such as his role in the Great Terror of June – July 1794 and his behaviour in the last three weeks of his life. Better answers avoided chunks of narrative and description, which is a level 2 response. The execution of Danton and Desmoulins in April 1794 was more problematic. However, students could still be awarded a level 3 without extensive knowledge of either men, as long as they were able to demonstrate an understanding of them being rivals who were eliminated. Better answers were able to argue their importance as Indulgents who no longer supported Robespierre in his pursuit of further Terror. Some weaker answers focused on the causes of their execution rather than the

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consequences regarding Robespierre's popularity. This prevented the essay from being well-balanced and made it harder to reach level 4 or above.

#### Question 4

This was a fairly straightforward question for those students who had revised The Hundred Days. The question lent itself to balance and many answers demonstrated a genuine interest in Napoleon's final days in power. This, however, could lead to some digression and a loss of focus when students explained the reasons why Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo which, again, wasted time and so making it harder to go beyond level 3. Again, the temptation was to answer a 'fall from power' essay rather than an analysis of whether or not Napoleon was misguided in leaving Elba and re-establishing himself as ruler in March 1815.

Better answers were those which balanced well the argument of Napoleon misjudging the changed situation in France due, for example, to the First Peace of Paris and Charter of 74 articles, against that of his understanding the wishes of the French people (Acte Additionel) and the unpopularity of Louis XVIII. Most students were able to demonstrate an understanding of the military situation and better answers linked it directly to the question. Level 5 answers were able to evaluate with specific and precise information the extent of Napoleon's misunderstanding and to argue convincingly that it was not 'total'.

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

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