



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2F The Sun King: Louis XIV, France and Europe, 1643 - 1715
Report on the Examination

7042/2F
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The responses to the questions on this year's paper illustrated the full ability range of students sitting the examination. All levels of the mark scheme were used for both Section A and B, with some students progressing to the very top of Level 5. These responses were highly sophisticated and very impressive. Whilst there were some answers which were awarded Level 1, these were quite rare and there were very few students who had little to write on the questions.

Both Sections A and B were marked according to the respective generic levels mark schemes. The indicative content was also referred to, but any answer worthy of credit was awarded the appropriate mark, regardless of whether the information provided by the student was detailed in the indicative content as this is indicative, not prescriptive.

Adjustments to the marks within these levels were made according to how well the student's work matched the level requirements. The mid-point of the band was always used as a starting point, with students reaching the top of the band demonstrating some evidence of the level above even if most of the response was firmly in the level below. Equally, students fell towards the bottom of the level if the answer did not consistently meet all the criteria of that level throughout the response.

Overall, there was little difference seen in the quality of the responses to the different areas of the specification content, and, to this extent, the questions proved effective at differentiating between students.

Question 1

The source question was appropriately challenging and clearly differentiated between students when it came to their ability to assess value in relation to the question. Some students did this very well and were able to clearly explain why points were either valuable or limited in value in relation to the specific question set. These responses used contextual knowledge and were able to explore both value and limitations before reaching a judgement on each source in turn, which was very impressive.

Other students were implicit rather than explicit in their assessment of value. Some students were quite mechanical and would claim that a point was valuable without really explaining why – asserting rather than demonstrating value.. Others would dismiss points as 'biased' whilst others argued whether the sources were or were not convincing rather than valuable. Nevertheless, most students were able to assess all three of the sources and provide at least some limited comment on each.

When assessing Source A, most students commented on the author, Marshal d'Estrées, and suggested that he was in an informed position to comment on the role of Mazarin in the Frondes as he is described as a 'French general' and would have had an awareness of the mistakes made by the Chief Minister. Some students also commented on his posting to Rome and suggested that this could limit the value of the sources as he was not in France during the Frondes. Some students were able to analyse the provenance further and comment on the purpose and nature of the source to conclude that Marshal d'Estrées account appears balanced without an agenda which would suggest that the source provided a valuable insight into the perspective of some of the

French military on the role Mazarin played in the Fronde. Students who were able to analyse the content of the source successfully, alluded to the fact that Marshal d'Estrées outlined some legitimate reasons why Mazarin was blamed for the Fronde.

When assessing the value of Source B, most students were able to successfully comment on the author of the source and how, as it was written by Mazarin himself, it provided a valuable insight in how he wanted his role in the outbreak of the Fronde to be perceived. Unfortunately, some students mis-read the author of the source and attributed it to the diplomat receiving the letter making the majority of the analysis invalid. Some students commented on the private nature of the letter, but some overstated this and suggested that this meant that Mazarin would be truthful. There was lots of comment on the reasons for the Fronde stated in the source, such as Mazarin stating that he was disliked because he was a foreigner, which students tended to argue was valuable as this is an accurate insight into how people felt towards Mazarin at the time and was a key reason why opinion turned against him. Some students commented on the exaggerated tone of the source and suggested this limited the value. However, other students considered the tone when assessing the purpose of the source and argued that the need for such a defensive letter to be written to a close friend provides a valuable insight into Mazarin's own insecurities and highlights the very aspects of his character which led him to play a leading role into the outbreak of the Fronde.

When assessing the value of Source C, most students were aware that the satirical pamphlet was a 'Mazarinade' and were able to comment on the exaggerated tone of the source, suggesting that this limited the value when considering Mazarin's role in the Fronde. Some students used this to dismiss the content which was a shame as stronger answers were able to engage with some of the accurate reasons for discontent outlined in the body of the source. For example, some students cited the crime of 'continuing the war with Spain' and argued that this was an accurate cause of discontent aimed at Mazarin before the outbreak of the Fronde. Some stronger students were able to consider the purpose of the source and suggest that the fact that Mazarinades were published and were popular provided a valuable insight into the extent of the distrust of Mazarin, regardless of whether the information was exaggerated or not.

When considering all three sources, stronger answers reached an overall judgement on the value of each source individually. Some students attempted to convey an overall judgement at the end of the answer, but this tended to be more of a comparison with the judgement centring around which source was the most valuable, which is not what the A Level source question requires.

Question 2

This question required students to consider whether dynastic ambition was the main reason Louis XIV invaded the Spanish Netherlands in 1667. Most students were able to engage appropriately with 'dynastic ambitions' in relation to the Spanish Netherlands specifically and referenced the marriage agreement made at the Treaty of Pyrenees and also mentioned the Law of Devolution. Some students considered Louis XIV's 1667 manifesto and used this to argue that 'dynastic ambitions' were the public reason given by the French court for the invasion. However, some students didn't specifically engage with the 'Spanish Netherlands' when considering 'dynastic ambitions' which suggested that the question had not been properly understood.

When considering the counter arguments, some students considered factors such as ‘Louis’ attachment to the idea of ‘glory’, defending the frontier, and opportunism all of which were credited if explained in detail with specific reference to the invasion of the Spanish Netherlands.

Question 3

This question required students to consider the influence of Louis XIV’s second wife, Madame de Maintenon, on his decision making. When suggesting that Maintenon did play an influential role students used policy decisions such as revoking the Edict of Nantes, setting up the school at St Cyr, the appointment of leading ministers (whom Madame de Maintenon favoured) and the legitimising of Louis XIV illegitimate sons towards the end of the reign. However, what really distinguished between students who appropriately engaged with the question and those who did not was how students explained why these decisions were attributable to Madame de Maintenon’s influence. Some students would state that she influenced these decisions without convincing substantiation. Stronger students would make this explicit links, for example by arguing that revoking the Edict of Nantes was influenced by Madame de Maintenon due to how she guided Louis XIV spiritually following their marriage, which only took place a few years prior to this religious policy decision, thus suggesting that this change in religious policy was greatly influenced by Louis XIV’s new wife.

When considering the counter argument, students tended to argue that Louis XIV would have made these decisions himself and therefore Madame de Maintenon’s influence should not be overstated. Strong students explained why it was in Louis’ interest to make these decisions when arguing their point. Some students did try to incorporate other influences on Louis XIV, such as Louvois, when considering the counter argument. If a student used the influence of Louvois to suggest that there were other influences on Louis XIV and therefore Madame de Maintenon’s influence should not be overstated, then this was credited. However, unfortunately some students suggested that Louvois had a ‘bigger influence’ which was not what the question was asking students to assess.

Question 4

This question required students to consider the consequences of the Treaty of Ryswick for France’s international position. When arguing that the Treaty strengthened France’s international position, students considered the terms of the Treaty and suggested that Louis XIV kept what was truly important to him; for example, retaining Strasbourg which had been a key foreign policy decision throughout his reign and which was important when it came to strengthening the north eastern frontier of France. Retaining Strasbourg was strategically important and was a clear victory at the peace negotiations, suggesting that Louis XIV was in a strong position. Students also considered the health of the King of Spain and suggested that Louis XIV approached the peace strategically with the aim of ensuring a favourable position for the Spanish inheritance.

When considering the counter arguments, students tended to use the significant loss of territory during the peace negotiations as evidence to suggest the international position of France had weakened. Students also commented on the dynastic consequences, such as Louis XIV sacrificing of his sister –in- law’s claim to the Palatinate and agreeing to acknowledge William of Orange as William III of England. Some students used the war to argue that Louis XIV’s international position

had weakened and used the cost of war as evidence. However, this was only valid if the student linked the point back to the Treaty. For example, the territorial gains made at Ryswick did not make up for the immense cost of the war. However, points that only focused on the war without linking back to the treaty suggested that the question had not been properly understood.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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