A-LEVEL

HISTORY

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

General

It was pleasing to see that most students coped well with the demands of the paper, with only a few having issues with timing. It was encouraging that most were balancing their time between the sources and the two essay questions, although there are still some students who spend too long on Q1 so run out of time during their last essay. The advice is to take 60 minutes on the Q1, and 45 minutes on each essay.

The questions allowed a wide range of evidence to be presented and were, on the whole, well understood. Students tried to offer a balanced argument, although there was a tendency to write far less on the given factor or hypothesis which prevented a 'well-balanced' answer from being presented. Effective planning is vital for the essays in order to avoid irrelevant evidence outside the time period, as well as to set out the argument in the introduction which is then not contradicted in the conclusion.

Some students still need to focus more on the core value of the source in the question and avoid irrelevant contextual knowledge. Better responses kept to the fore the question of value to an historian studying the execution of Louis XV1 in January 1793. Most students have been well-prepared to comment on the provenance as well as content, although some made stock comments. For example, if a writer is present then the source is valuable, or source C is from a newspaper so it is bound to be biased; It is better to discuss the purpose and how that might affect value. There is no need to look for an equal amount of limitation in each source as this will be assessed holistically across all three sources.

Some students only wrote about one aspect of the source's content, for example, in source A on Louis' crimes. This is not sufficient as two or three different points are needed for the higher levels. A few students wasted time on commenting on tone as a separate issue – it needs to be integrated and linked to the core question of value where appropriate. Also, students need to be reminded that contextual knowledge for its own sake is not rewarded above level 2 – it is far better to be concise and used to support the argument about the source's value.

Q1
Source A

On the whole, this source was understood and comments were made on both provenance and content. Whilst many students were able to comment on Robespierre's role in the Jacobin Club, better responses linked it to the question. It is important for students to realise that there can be value within the source's limitation. For instance, Robespierre being a radical Jacobin makes the source less valuable in providing a balanced view of Louis' crimes, but is still valuable in highlighting the debate over the king and the Jacobin rationale for the king's execution. Students must be aware to use contextual knowledge up to the given date, for example, a discussion on Robespierre's subsequent role in the Terror was largely irrelevant..

Source B was the least effectively answered. Again, there was irrelevant comment made by some students who described America's relationship to France and yet failed to explain and explicitly link their comments as to whether or not this aided or hindered the source's value. Stock comments such as, because the author was not there, the source is therefore unreliable, are not particularly valid. Better answers pointed out the link to Paris being a radical exception and how this might limit the source's value. The comments on content were better with most student able to evaluate at least one or more aspects of the source – Louis' alleged despotism, crimes and the émigrés armies- with better answers providing some pertinent contextual knowledge.

Source C

This source proved the most accessible to the majority of students with a relevant comment being made on provenance and content. Again, better students were able to make the link between the supposed weakness in the provenance relating to the value of the source. For example, going beyond stating that it was a newspaper and therefore biased, to assessing the value of the British pro-monarchy stance and what it could tell the historian about deteriorating relations between the two countries after Louis' execution. There was plenty of scope for students to express their own opinion as to the value of the content, and credit was given for relevant and pertinent contextual knowledge.

Q2

This proved to be the least popular question.. The question demanded specific and precise knowledge on the proposals for reforming French finances. It was not a question on the financial crisis per se, so a description of the poor harvest, for example, was irrelevant. It was important to include evidence within the given time period of 1777 to 1787 so, for example, a description of Turgot's proposals was also not relevant. Some students unfortunately mixed up Necker and Calonne, which obviously weakened the answer. Better answers displayed evidence on specific proposals and the extent to which they aided or hindered reform of French finances. Depending on the quality of the argument, credit was given to judgements on either Necker or Calonne as being the more significant reformer.

Q3

This was a popular question and most students were able to suggest at least one point about the Concordat and its role in Napoleon's consolidation of power. They were able to provide a range of linked evidence in the counter- argument, which meant a level 3 was achieved, as long as there was some evidence on the Concordat itself. Some students mistook 'consolidation' for 'establishing', and therefore wrote irrelevantly on the Coup of Brumaire or Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Again, the dates were important and the better answers were able to offer a range of evidence that went beyond 1799.
Some students mistook the Concordat for the Constitution and so could not progress beyond level 2, as it meant that there was only a partial understanding of the demands of the question.

Q4

This was answered reasonably well by most students who were able to comment on Russia and to use this to demonstrate evidence for and against the proposition. Whist the Russian Campaign was crucial to the eventual defeat of Napoleon, the demands of the question required a range of information from 1812 to 1814. Therefore, better answers offered a range of evidence, for example, the Peninsular war; the enemies' coalition and Battle of Nations at Leipzig, from which they evaluated Napoleon's responsibility for his defeat. Some students wrote irrelevantly about the setting up of the Continental Blockade and Waterloo – both of which fell outside the parameters of the dates. As in all the essays, the argument was marked on its own merits according to the quality of the supporting evidence, balance and substantiated judgment,

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.