



A-level  
**History**

7042/2H

Report on the Examination

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## 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. A few students preferred to leave Q1 till the end. The advice is to take 60 minutes on the Q1, and 45 minutes on each essay and overall, this advice was taken.

The questions were accessible and allowed for 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 still 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.

**01** A few students failed to focus on assessing the value of the source for the specific issue identified in question 01- Robespierre. This meant that they wasted time on more general, and often assertive comments about value. The question allowed for relevant and pertinent own knowledge. Most students have been well- prepared to comment on the provenance as well as content, although some made stock comments. For example, in source A the writer is a spy, writing in secret, so this is valuable to an historian.

It is better to discuss their 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. In the best answers, students assimilated provenance AND content rather than dealing with them entirely separately- those who did this tended to get the highest marks, as it is obviously evidence of much higher thinking. Some students only wrote about one aspect of the source’s content, for example, in source A on Robespierre’s belief in republicanism. A range of points, where relevant is needed for the higher levels. A few students wasted time on commenting on tone as a separate issue – it more effective for this to be integrated and linked to the core question of value. 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.

Evaluation by omission needs care – for example, it does not really aid a historian studying Robespierre to suggest source A lacks value as it does not tell them about Robespierre’s later role in the Terror.

## Source A

The date of the source was important to address as own knowledge that focused too much on 1793 and 1794 struggled to be relevant. However, if a student linked the fact to a good point being made, then its credit would be given.

Eg the speech that Robespierre made in 29<sup>th</sup> July 1792 in which he calls for the overthrow of the monarchy was good contextual knowledge to use (even if after the date of the provenance) if it was linked to showing that as early as 1791 Robespierre was ‘truly a republican’.

The limitations of the source to an historian were not particularly well addressed, with many comments on the fact that the writer was British therefore biased against Robespierre. This contradicts the issue of value that the writer was a spy and writing for the British government, so would have no reason to exaggerate what he witnessed. Better responses were mindful of the possible contradictions and sought to avoid them.

Source B was evaluated effectively by students who had some knowledge of Robespierre's role in the Terror. Most students could link source detail on Robespierre with something valid on the Terror and then said if it is valuable or not to the historian. Some slipped into writing lots of detail about the Machinery of Terror or the laws that were passed eg. Law of Suspects. In itself, such detail is less convincing unless it is linked to the point of value as to what the historian can find out about Robespierre's character or actions.

Source C proved more challenging for students. However, yet again it was possible to get into level 3 by showing some understanding of the source ( festival of the supreme Being) and provenance (Vilate on the revolutionary tribunal ) and context ( the height of Robespierre 's power before the Coup of Thermidore).To get into higher levels, and therefore demonstrate good understanding, students should have realised that Vilate was in prison and therefore would ultimately seek to distance himself from Robespierre's actions in order to protect himself. This ties in with the tone being negative and a possible limitation to the source.

**Q2** This question was answered well if the student differentiated between the urban worker and the peasants; the former being involved in the Storming of the Bastille and October Days whilst the latter were responsible for the Great Fear. Weaker answers slipped into description on the key events, or why they had taken place, and failed to demonstrate the link between their actions and specific political change. The Third Estate needed differentiation also as the bourgeoisie's actions could be used in balance, for example the writing of the cahiers. This was a causation question so that there needed to be a correlation between the action and the political change: Level 3 just asserted the link. Level 2 tended to describe the events or make some analysis with very limited information. The best answers focused on political change in detail and yet quite a few responses were attempts to bend pre-prepared answers on the causes of revolution in 1789.

**Q3** This was the most popular question which offered a wide choice of evidence and clear balance. Better answers set out the argument in the introduction and so planning was very important. This was a continuity and change style question and the key issue here is 'most people' which allows for balance. Popular factors included are: women, the military, censorship, religion the economy and legal reforms. Some students lost focus by regurgitating a previous answer on stability or control and the examiner was left to infer how people benefited/ didn't benefit. Most students were able to provide a balanced argument which, therefore, addressed the 'most people' issue – the better answers went further and offered a more nuanced approach, for example they differentiated between the bourgeoisie and working classes when discussing the economy. There was no shortage of examples to use so the students needed to choose carefully in order to present a convincing argument.

**Q4** This was a consequence style question and as such, answers that gave lots of detail on the Russian Campaign and discussed why it was a failure showed a misunderstanding of the demands of the question (level 2) .Better answers were able to link the failure in Russia with the collapse of the Empire. There were many different reasons why Napoleon's Empire collapsed in a balanced argument, yet students must be aware that in choosing to answer this question, developed analysis on the given factor (the Russian campaign) was needed. Some students chose to focus on Napoleon's Hundred Days which was acceptable as long as analysis rather than description was at the fore of their argument. The best answers showed a real understanding of the collapse of the Empire with reference to 1813-14/15.

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

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