



A-Level History

7042/2H France in Revolution, 1774 – 1815

Report on the examination

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General Comments

The majority of students were generally well prepared for the examination. 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. Just a few students wrote only a plan instead of a written essay which made it difficult to award higher than a level one. The use of historiography is not needed for the highest marks, although many students had clearly engaged in wider reading and this aided the deeper context and conceptual understanding of the topics

Question 01

The sources were generally understood by the students and although the focus of the question was a narrow one this year, namely the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in the years 1790 and 1791, the fact that it was based on such a crucial event in the development of the French Revolution added to the fact that Source A was an extract taken from the Civil Constitution of the Clergy itself, meant that all students were able to address the question.

It was pleasing to note that students were now addressing their comments on both the provenance as well as the source content. This meant that at least a level 2 was achieved. However, in order to be awarded the highest marks, a student needed to assimilate both the provenance and the content in order to demonstrate the source's value or limitation to the historian. For example, in Source A has value to the historian studying the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was that as an official decree by the National Assembly, its formal tone shows an historian the desire to spread its revolutionary and enlightened goals in a authorised and controlled manner 'there shall be but one way of choosing bishops and priests, namely that of election'.

There was no need to comment on the limitations as well as the value for both content and provenance in all three sources however, it is often in the purpose of the source that the limitation and value can be found. For example, in Source B the radical nature of the newspaper extract written in the same month as Source A might lead to a reduction in value because it exaggerates the failings of the church in order to support the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. And yet the very nature of the provenance would inform the historian of a contemporary reaction by the Parisian radicals to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Judicious use of contextual knowledge should aid the evaluation rather than be rewarded for factual information itself. Sometimes students included information that was not relevant to the source, for example a comment on the oath of allegiance is more relevant to source C than it was to Source A.

A summary paragraph comparing the sources was not needed and wasted time for the student.

Question 02

This was a straightforward question that needed to discuss both the Vendée and the Federalists uprisings. If the student only assessed the Vendée, or just the Federalists, the answer struggled to get out of level 2 because it was 'partial with some awareness of the question but failure to grasp its full demands'.

Many students were better in the counterargument with evidence that the monarchy was not the main cause of the uprisings. Both sides of the argument are needed for the higher levels. Generally, most students concluded, that on the surface, the view was correct, however there were different underlying motives, for example the levée in the Vendée and the expulsion of the Girondins in the Federalist uprisings.

Question 03

This was a 'How important' style questions which was well-answered and straightforward as long as the students knew how to link the French success with it was/ it wasn't down to Napoleon's leadership. As this is a topic open to disagreement between historians, examiners were asked to look closely at the argument presented in the introduction and to assess whether it was developed. Nearly all students were able to write such an introduction. There needed to be a close link to the dates of 1799 to 1808 with French victory. It wasn't enough to describe specific battles per se but, rather to link the military success e.g. Austerlitz with Napoleon's leadership (or not.).

Many students were able to identify some key reasons for French victory e.g. the weakness of the Coalitions or Napoleon's use of the corps system at Ulm in 1805. Successful answers were then able to use the evidence in support of their argument linking it to Napoleon's leadership. Less successful answers tended to write and answer their own question as to why the French were successful between 1799 and 1808. Therefore, care needs to be taken to ensure that the demands of the question have been fully understood.

Question 04

Like last year there were two questions on Napoleon. However, this year as they were both set from *Section 6: The impact of Napoleon's rule in Europe 1799-1815*, this last question was not as successfully answered as might be expected. Again, the importance of a well- presented argument in the introduction was crucial for this question.

Some students tried to answer a different question namely that based on *Section 5: The impact of Napoleon's rule in France 1799 – 1815* and, also, was Napoleon militarily successful between 1799 and 1812. These types of questions would lead to a level 2 as there is only 'some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands.'

Higher-level answers were able to address the 'To what extent ' stem of the question, often by differentiating between the start of the Grand Empire in 1804 and the later date of 1812; or by explaining the different parts of the Empire e.g. inner and outer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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