



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1F

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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Unit HIS1F

Unit 1F: France in Revolution, 1774–1815

General Comments

Although students of the French revolutionary period find themselves immersed in a century quite unlike our own and encountering a potentially bewildering flurry of political change, to judge from the answers written in response to this summer's paper, most will not only rise to the challenge, but will acquire a depth of understanding of political and historical terminology which can only enrich any future study. The facility with which many candidates were able to use terms such as 'absolutism', 'enlightenment', 'liberalism', 'nationalism' and refer to different groups within 'the people' in a correct and meaningful way, suggested that, for the majority, the study of this unit had been an enriching experience. Even weaker students, some of whom wanted to describe events, often showed an impressive comprehension of the vocabulary of the period, although there were certainly those whose work would have been improved by a stronger chronological awareness.

Question 1

- 01** All but the very weakest candidates knew what the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was and most had a clear idea why it provoked opposition. A few tried to describe its passage and the opposition it faced from the King and Pope, but the majority offered explicit reasons for hostility with reference to Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, the court and ministers, the bishops, the priests and the peasants. References to the Pope needed to be linked to the opposition created within France and those who were able to refer to the papal condemnation as the final 'spark' which brought about widespread hostility and thus divided France, showed an understanding which often helped them to reach the highest level. Others showed connectivity by linking clerical opposition to that of the peasants whose lives were lived in the shadow of the Church and a good number were able to provide an effective 'linking' conclusion.
- 02** There were many well-balanced and comprehensive answers, which looked at a wide range of changes including administrative, economic, social, legal and religious reforms and evaluated each. A few candidates concentrated solely on social or governmental change, suggesting an imperfect reading of the question and a number of weaker students never got out of 1789, discussing only the August Decrees and Declaration of the Rights of Man, sometimes with a description of the October Days thrown in for good measure. Most concluded that the reforms were not completely successful but the more thoughtful candidates set success against aims and carefully avoided judging from a modern-day standpoint.

Question 2

- 03** There were some excellent detailed explanations of the September massacres which combined revolutionary developments within France to the progress of the war, the emergence of the sans-culottes and the appeal of revolutionary leaders such as Marat. As in 1(01), the best answers not only provided a range of reasons, but also took pains to link and comment on those reasons. Some stressed the importance of external factors, others the sans-culottes, but whatever view was adopted, it was the effective pulling together of reasons, often in a supported conclusion, that enabled the better candidates to reach the highest marks.
- 04** This was possibly the least well done overall of all the questions on this summer's paper. There were some candidates who had problems with the term 'counter-revolution' and virtually ignored the question, preferring to write about the instruments of the Terror with some quite assertive comments about success. Others saw 'counter-revolution' solely in terms of the aristocrats whose heads rolled or the enemies of Robespierre whose own position sometimes became the central focus of answers. The best candidates adopted a far broader approach and balanced the Terror's successes, for example in responding to the revolt in the Vendée, the federalist revolt and the threats from beyond France's borders against the continuation of counter-revolution beyond July 1794 or, as some very able candidates perceived, the failure of approaches methods which merely served to create more and more counter-revolutionaries.

Question 3

- 05** Many candidates explained the founding of the Consulate with references to the weaknesses of the Directory and the ambitions of Napoleon. Just one of these well done was sufficient for full marks, but candidates had to show a range of ideas with some specific supporting evidence as well as making the required links between factors to achieve a Level 4 mark. Political and economic circumstances, together with the war and the position of Sieyes and Ducos were often sufficient to provide a convincing response. Those who tried to give a Napoleon-centred response sometimes ran into the danger of writing a mini biography, or seeing Napoleon's whole career in terms of his ultimate rise to power. Nevertheless, some successfully adopted a long-term/short term approach, looking in detail at the short-term circumstances which allowed the coup de Brumaire to succeed.
- 06** There were some full answers which provided plentiful detail on the changes which Napoleon brought to French Government during his time as Consul and Emperor, together with some evaluation of the success of these reforms. What distinguished the better candidates from the less thoughtful was the degree to which the issue of 'stability' was taken into account in their answers. It was all too easy for essays to turn into a general appraisal of Napoleonic France, but the many candidates who made pertinent comments on whether, for example, Napoleon's methods of rule created true stability or merely the illusion of such are to be congratulated. A good number questioned the success of Napoleon's economic policies, for example, but only the better candidates highlighted the link between economic distress and underlying political instability. Surprisingly, some failed to relate Napoleon's fortunes in war to stability at home, but whatever their faults, the great majority of candidates made a valiant effort to show what they knew and their knowledge was mostly impressive.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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