



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2H (A-level)
Question 01 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2H (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the failure of constitutional monarchy.

[30 marks]

Student response

Source A is mostly very valuable regarding the failure of constitutional monarchy because it relates to one of the most important events leading to its fall: the Flight to Varennes in June 1791.

The source is valuable regarding its provenance. It is an extract from the proclamation Louis left behind in which he criticised the new constitutional arrangements as unworkable. As a personally written Proclamation - meant to be read when Louis was safely over the frontier - it is an accurate representation of Louis' personal opinion of the constitution. Louis, as 'King of the French', was the most significant individual within the constitutional monarchy and, as he is clearly very hostile to the proposed constitution, it is valuable in understanding its inherent instability and ultimate failure.

In the source Louis identifies many of his chief criticisms of developments since 1789. These include his sense of imprisonment ('loss of liberty') under the watch of radical Parisian sans-culottes since the 'October Days' in 1789. Similarly Louis' complains about the suspensive veto which he says leaves him powerless. On the other hand the source does not mention some of Louis' main criticisms relating to the nationalisation of Church land, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the loss of privilege by the First and Second Estates. Overall, however, the content is helpful because it helps us to understand Louis' own perception of the flaws in the constitution. Louis' hostility, however, is not objective. Louis was clearly hostile to the constitution and his Proclamation represents this opinion rather than any inherent flaws. Overall, therefore the content's value relates to Louis perception and the consequent likelihood of the constitution working rather than his precise criticisms.

The source is also valuable because it is clear that Louis is seeking to reach over the heads of the Assembly to what Louis considers to be the moderate majority of Frenchmen. He uses emotive phrases such as 'powerless' and 'the kingdom destroyed' and identifies the revolution as bringing anarchy – such as the attack on the Bastille, the Great Fear and October Days – as well as 'all property violated' through the August Decrees and the nationalisation of church lands. Louis clearly believed that millions of Frenchmen shared his belief that the revolution was dangerous and that radical revolutionaries were unrepresentative. In this way Louis was clearly seeking to attract popular support leading to a renegotiation of the Constitution. In some ways this is valuable because it suggests a gulf between Louis' perception of developments and reality. Bourgeois opinion was still generally positive about developments since 1789 while sans-culotte opinion in Paris, stirred by Marat and the Political Clubs, was already increasingly hostile. On the other hand Louis was not completely out of touch with, for example, Catholic opinion which shared his distaste for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. While the source does,

to some extent, suggest that Louis was out-of-touch this is not completely true. Significantly, however, the most hostile elements in France held most power through the Assembly and the clubs and streets of Paris and Louis' failure to understand the reality of power as shown by the source helps to explain the failure of the constitutional monarchy.

Overall, therefore, the source is very valuable because the Flight had such a negative impact on the constitutional monarchy. It was one of the most significant events in the downfall of the monarchy: Louis' flight was represented by radicals in the Jacobin and Cordeliers Clubs – as well as Marat in *L'Ami du Peuple* – as treason and the event, which led to demonstrations culminating in the Massacre of the Champs de Mars, was a negative turning point regarding Louis' popularity. Louis' perception of opinion and own condemnation of the revolution and its constitutional arrangements made it hard to see how he could have continued as king without tremendous difficulties especially in the context of radicalised Parisian opinion. This more than Louis' precise criticisms of the constitution make the source so valuable.

Source B is also valuable regarding the fall of the constitutional monarchy because it shows the hostility of radicals and sans-culottes towards Louis in the period just before the attack on the Tuileries on 10 August.

The content is particularly valuable because it identifies many of the major concerns of the Jacobin Club and their sans-culotte associates. Firstly, it refers to the impact of war on France and the feelings of fear and betrayal that French defeats had brought. Revolutionaries explained the early defeats with reference to emigre traitors - 'murdering Frenchmen' - and the so-called 'Austrian Committee' which was believed to be helping France's enemies. Louis' use of the suspensive power to veto laws against emigres and refractory priests - who were considered counter-revolutionaries - was seen as a betrayal and incompatible with Louis' role as king. This sense of royal betrayal was exacerbated by the Brunswick Manifesto where Paris was threatened with exemplary punishment if Louis were threatened: Louis was believed guilty of treason because he was supported by France's enemies. Finally the content is useful in explaining the failure of constitutional monarchy because it suggests the growing gap between the Jacobins and their sans-culotte allies and moderate opinion in the Assembly and the provinces. The extract, for example, extols Rousseau's 'sovereign will of the people' and demands new elections to a Convention in which passive as well as active citizens would vote. On the other hand the content does not directly identify another reason for the fall of the constitutional monarchy: that it had become central to the power-struggle between Jacobins and moderates including, by July 1792, Girondins, who belatedly wished to secure the monarchy to stop the slide towards Jacobin and sans-culotte rule. The source, inevitably focusses on the perceived wrongs of the monarchy rather than the Jacobins' political ambitions. Finally, again demonstrating its lack of objectivity, the extract glosses over the fact that Louis had a constitutional right to exercise his veto and the attack of 'invoking the constitution' suggests that by this stage radical revolutionaries considered it a nuisance. In that context, however, constitutional monarchy could have little future.

In some ways the provenance of the source has limitations in that it does not represent the opinion of the majority of the deputies elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1791. Conservative Catholic opinion as well as the Feuillants and, by this stage, even the Girondins, wished to maintain the constitutional monarchy. On the other hand, however, its provenance is clearly valuable because it is an extract from the Petition sent to the Assembly by 47 of the 48 Paris Sections on 3 August which called for a republic. The Petition represents the opinion of the elements which caused Louis' overthrow on 10 August: the Jacobins and the sans-culottes in

the Paris Sections. It was essentially their action which toppled the monarchy so their rationale is clearly valuable. The tone of the source clearly demonstrates the anger against Louis felt by sans-culottes and Jacobins. The purpose of the source is also valuable. It clearly aims to persuade its readers that France should become a republic but, though it was presented to the Assembly, it was more designed to persuade sans-culottes to take action than deputies to become republicans.

Ultimately the source is valuable because it represents the opinions and methods of the most powerful voices in France. Whereas conservative opinion was stronger outside Paris and moderates in the Assembly had escaped to the provinces, Parisian radical and sans-culotte opinion had grown even more powerful due to the war, the economy and the impact of the political clubs. Overall, therefore, the source is valuable because it represents these groups and links with the events a week later in which the constitutional monarchy was toppled.

The final source is also valuable in some ways regarding the failure of the constitutional monarchy.

There is value in its content because it shows the continuing resentment of revolutionaries against Louis going back to 1789 (if not before). The President refers to a number of events in the summer of 1789 including the declaration of a National Assembly, the lock-out on 20 June which led to the Tennis Court Oath and the Séance Royale on 23 June where Louis rejected the National Assembly and its demands. Finally the President refers to the troop build-up which was believed – probably rightly – to precursor the dissolution of the Estates-General and the imposition of military rule. In all of these events Louis was seen as obstructing the course of the revolution and, therefore, they became some of the many charges at his trial. On the other hand there are limitations regarding the value of this content in explaining the failure of the constitutional monarchy because over the next two or so years the Constituent Assembly led an optimistic consensus that such events could be put behind them. At times Louis was genuinely popular, for example at the Fête de la Fédération in 1790 where Louis swore loyalty to the constitution and last, perhaps, when he declared war on Austria in April 1791.

The source is also useful because it demonstrates the gulf that had developed between Louis and 'the people' – as represented in the Convention – by the time of his trial. In the extract Louis' actions in mid-1789 are stated to be tyrannical and all his actions from that date are stated as being harmful to liberty. Revolutionaries also had in mind subsequent events including Louis' opposition to the August Decrees, his hostility to the Civil Constitution, his vetoes and his purported responsibility for the bloodshed at the Tuileries on 10 August.

Louis' response is that the trial is contrary to the 1791 constitution which safeguarded him as head of state and also that he cannot be guilty of offences when he had established powers at the time (such as the build-up of troops in July 1789). These responses not only demonstrate the gulf between Louis and the Convention by December 1792 but also show how far France's representatives had come in that they reject the reject the constitutional protection afforded to Louis in the 1791 constitution.

Regarding the provenance the source is clearly useful in demonstrating the changes brought against Louis and his response and the anger felt by his opponents by late 1792. The tone of the accusations is very hostile and loaded phrases such as 'tyranny', 'destroying its liberty', 'attacked the sovereignty of the people', 'subversive to all freedom', 'shed the blood' of Parisians demonstrate the impossibility of Louis having any role in government. On the other

hand, by this time Louis had been suspended as monarch and republic declared so it is more reliable as evidence for the radical opinion in the Convention at that time and how republicans justified their actions than evidence for the failure of the monarchy.

Overall the sources are useful in explaining the failure of the constitutional monarchy. Source A demonstrates how Louis himself was hostile to its restrictions which made it inherently unstable while the events of Source A, the Flight to Varennes, had a massive negative impact on the sort of opinions represented in sources B and C. In some ways a limitation of the sources is that they do not represent moderate opinion but overall this is not so much a limitation as a reflection of reality. Between source A in 1791 and source C 1793 France became bitterly polarised and moderate constitutional opinion represented by the Feuillants and even the Girondins diminished in support and influence as radical republicanism and the sans-culottes' strength grew. The hostility of these latter groups are crucial to understand the failure of the constitutional monarchy meaning that the sources are all valuable.

Commentary – Level 5

This is an excellent answer. It is controlled, relevant and consistently evaluative and accurately and appropriately deploys knowledge of context to consider provenance, tone and content of each source. Answers need not be 'perfect' to be awarded top marks and this answer is clearly in the category of a very strong Level 5 mark.