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History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

International Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Depth Study with Interpretations

Option 1A: France in Revolution, 1774–99

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WHI01 1A : France in Revolution, 1774-99

The entry for this paper was relatively small. Candidates chose two questions from four, with the most popular being Question 1, followed by Question 2 and then Question 4. No candidate attempted Question 3, despite it being from an aspect that is clearly identified in the specification.

Question 1

Candidates who answered this question demonstrated a clear understanding of the events of the year 1789 and sought to consider if the storming of the Bastille was indeed the most significant event. Many argued that while it was significant, its significance was more symbolic when compared with other events. Many saw the Tennis Court Oath as more significant and analysed why this was. A small number of candidates saw this question as an opportunity to write about the many causes of the French Revolution; both long and short term. As a consequence, some of their answer was relevant to the interpretation presented in the question, while some was not.

Question 2

Candidates who answered this question demonstrated a clear understanding of the reasons why France became a Republic in 1792. Many saw the sans-culottes as mainly responsible, but argued that factors like Louis's attempted escape to Varennes and the war also were important. Also, many argued that Louis's whole approach to the new constitution and his use of the veto undermined his position and convinced many in France that a Republic was the best way forward. Weaker answers tended to describe events rather than considering their relative importance and how they related to the interpretation in the question.

Question 4

Candidates who answered this question demonstrated a clear understanding of the work of the Directory. The differentiating factor was how well this was applied in deciding if the Directory governed France successfully or not. Higher scoring answers considered both sides of the argument before reaching a judgement. Some decided that, despite some unsuccessful aspects in governing, e.g. some economic policies, the Directory provided a significant period of stability, removed some 'extremes' and operated a new constitution. Weaker answers narrated the events of the period with little attempt at analysis and judgement.

Points to consider:

- This is a 'Depth study with Interpretations' which means that knowledge on its own is not enough. Knowledge needs to be applied to the interpretation that is raised by the question and judgements made.
- The time allowed for this examination is sufficient to allow a small amount of planning time for each answer.

- When judgments are made they need to be supported with criteria – it is not sufficient to state that a factor is the most ‘important’ or ‘significant’ without explaining the basis upon which that judgment has been made.