



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2S

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2S

Unit 2S Liberal Democracies: Power to the People?

General Comments

An understanding of Liberal Democracy and how governments work was apparent in the work of the candidates. Political terminology, such as democracy, sovereignty and enlightenment, was used accurately, with assurance and to good effect with many references to the experiences and philosophers that shaped modern democracy. In addition, good knowledge of the three case studies that formed the basis of the questions was evident. Candidates showed a keen awareness and a good understanding of the various concepts. Descriptive answers were rare and answers were clearly focused on the demands of the questions. Where this was backed by relevant and appropriate support, answers were impressive, perceptive and cogent. In some cases, however, the range of knowledge was limited and the following comments on the individual questions addresses the crucial issue of marrying a strong conceptual grasp and knowledge to the precise requirement of the examination.

Question 1

- 01** Candidates produced a full range of responses. Answers focused well on views towards voting and targeted the question specifically, demonstrating that the objective of the question was clearly understood. Both similarities and differences, overt and subtle mainly related to the suffrage, were drawn from the sources and this was supported by own knowledge and secure contextual understanding. There were differences in the quality and depth of own contextual knowledge. In stronger answers, knowledge was used to explain the different points of view. There was a clear appreciation of the Whig and Radical perspectives post-1830 with the views of McCaulay and Place well-explained. In some answers summaries of the pre-1832 electoral system were offered as context. Weaker answers did not develop significantly from the sources. Not all candidates discussed the extent of difference explicitly in order to reach or consolidate at Level 4 and it is to be remembered that higher marks are to be achieved by a conclusion that considers extent and the degree of difference and similarity.
- 02** Not all candidates embraced the full ramifications of the question. The specification states: 'The impact of the 1832 Reform Act; what changed and what stayed the same'. However, far too many based their answer almost exclusively on pre-1831, with far too many candidates failing to refer to the terms of the act or discuss why it was either far-reaching or a limited piece of legislation. Instead, many, chiefly by using the sources, candidates discussed and analysed the Whig and other motives. Source analysis was, however, done particularly well and there was an appreciation that a range of factors did influence reform. A number of candidates deployed own knowledge that dwelt on the problems of the pre-1832 system rather than considering how well these issues were resolved. Better candidates did extend discussion to link Whig motives and the demands of the radicals to the terms of the act and its consequences, demonstrating that the act served the purpose of Grey and the Whigs through changes in voting and constituencies, but, at the same time, meeting, to some extent, the demands of the radicals. There was an understanding that for some the act went too far, but for others not far enough.

Question 2

- 03** Candidates produced a range of responses that demonstrated a good understanding of this significant aspect of the course and an understanding of the factors relevant to this particular question. Candidates rightly pointed to and stressed the importance of state sovereignty and the ways in which the Articles of Confederation worked in favour of the states as key factors for supporting the articles. Often, these arguments lacked detailed explanation. Responses might have been more precisely developed had candidates referred to the arguments put forward by the anti-federalists, arguing, for example, that concerns with the articles were mere hysteria and that revolutionary aims had been met by the democratic models in the states. Similarly, case studies individual states would serve to demonstrate the interests of property were served by the various state constitutions. For an award at Level 4, candidates are to be reminded that there must be links and connections made between the factors.
- 04** This was a popular question, with which candidates acquitted themselves well at all levels. Candidates demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of the democratic influences on the constitution and this was balanced by discussion of the desire for stronger central government, with stronger answers assessing the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and placing Philadelphia into the context of the events that preceded it. Better candidates were able to build upon this framework by adding consideration of factors such as Beard's conspiracy theory. Better candidates developed each argument and demonstrated a sense of balance and judgement between the various issues.

Question 3

- 05** Though some answers offered a narrative response, there was an understanding of causation, specifically, of the breakdown of relations at the Estates General. The dalliance of the king, the frustration of the Third Estate and the voting procedure were well-known but not always fully developed. Like Question 03, some answers lacked detailed support, while in order to reach the higher levels, it is to be remembered that candidates must give attention to links, prioritisation and hierarchy.
- 06** The response to this question was disappointing. Many answers were focused almost entirely on events prior to July 1789. Such answers to varying depth became fundamentally summaries of the causes of the revolution in France, often stopping at the meeting of the Estates General in May 1789. The details of 1789–1791 were not known well, yet there is ample to consider – the ideas of the Enlightenment, the reforms of 1789, religious freedom, a politicised mob, the actions of the king, economic distress. Few candidates were able to carry discussion to 1790 and beyond. Stronger knowledge of that area of the specification that refers to the 'transformation of the political system' and the 'reforms of the French Revolution' linked to the theme 'the extent to which France was democratic by 1793' was needed with regard to this question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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