



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2S

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2S

Unit 2S: Liberal Democracies: Power to the People?

General Comments

The knowledge, understanding and conceptual awareness of the candidates was impressive and responses, overall, were more competent, assured and specific than 2009. Terminology was used appropriately. There was an awareness of the nature of liberal democracy and very good knowledge of the events of 18th century America, pre-revolutionary France and Britain in the 1820s and 1830s. Responses to the questions were overwhelmingly relevant and focused on the demands of the questions. Purely descriptive answers were rare. The questions did lead to effective discrimination between the candidates on the basis of depth of knowledge and understanding, use of sources and conceptual awareness. Question 3 was more popular than Question 2. Within Question 2, 04 proved to be the more challenging, but Question 2 was still chosen by candidates whose overall performance was weaker and whose knowledge of 1777–1787 was limited

Question 1

- 01** Candidates produced a full range of answers and the vast majority were focused clearly on the demands of the question. Indeed, it was only in very rare circumstance that the thrust of the question was missed. Without exception, candidates placed the sources in the context of pre-revolution France. In stronger responses candidates were able to explain the contrast between rural and urban France. Answers were very secure particularly with regard to similarity with candidates acquitting themselves very well. Differences between the sources were also well drawn out, though consideration of provenance and discussion of the degree of difference might have produced responses at the very top of Level 4
- 02** A question that allowed candidates at all levels to demonstrate knowledge and an understanding of the growing tensions within France. Only a very small number failed to make use of the sources and the vast majority were able to add very good knowledge of the period to the issues raised by the sources. At the higher levels, integration of the sources was very impressive with the sources used to support knowledge and initiate ideas for discussion. It was also the case that the concept of 'privileges' proved to be an effective focal point with the question producing sound discussion of this. Responses were impressive and encouraging not only because it enabled candidates to use very sound knowledge, but also to discuss these issues with a sure grasp of concepts and issues relevant to France in 1789.

Question 2

- 03** Candidates generally produced responses that were based on the American attitudes to British rule over several years and gained credit for awareness of problems caused by taxation, coercion and growing political tensions. However, a significant number of candidates concentrated their answers on the crucial two years before the Declaration and pointed effectively, for example, to events in Boston and Lexington and to the impact of Paine. In general, responses were of a high order and better responses drew clearly on the connection between political and economic factors.

- 04** Candidates scored well on this question by demonstrating how states were able to prosper at the expense of federal government under the Articles of Confederation. However, the weaknesses of the Articles, both practical and constitutional, were not explained to real depth and candidates did not always fully appreciate the fact that a political revolution had taken place in the states, greatly influenced by the War of Independence. The debate over government 1783–1787 between those in favour of state sovereignty and those federalists in favour of stronger central government remains a significant element of the course.

Question 3

- 05** The majority of candidates focused their responses, quite rightly, on the parliamentary crisis itself, though a smaller number opted to explain the crisis by examining long-term factors. Knowledge of the crisis was very good at all levels. Weaker answers remained essentially narratives, but stronger responses dwelt on the attitudes of the major players and, then, linked this to events outside Parliament.
- 06** Knowledge and understanding of the outcomes of reform was very good, particularly with regard to the short-term impact. Whig motives and ambitions were well known and well understood. It was clear from the vast majority of responses that the Whigs' desire to shape reform to serve their main purpose was appreciated. Balance was achieved, but not always so effectively and frequently only briefly. This was the most significant factor for candidates not reaching higher levels, or higher marks with the higher levels. Here, consideration of the wider significance of the Act, for example, would have broadened discussion and analysis. Candidates were happy to base their discussion on the good and limited aspects of the Act

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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