



History

Paper 2F (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 18/03/16

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 2F (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining why Louis XIV wanted to lessen the power of the nobility?

[25 marks]

Student response

Source A gives us the overall view of Louis XIV and his government in a positive light. This contrasts majorly to source B which portrays the way he runs his government in a negative light.

Source A is written by Primi Visconti who is Italian so this source is written by an outsiders perspective this could effect the reliaty of the source as he would not be use to the way the system of government is in France. However he was present at the courts of Versaille at the time of Louis reign, 1670s/1680s. Therefore its a recent and accurate account of how Louis government was run and how his presence affected the nobility as he was there. Where as source B is written by duc de Vaint-Simon, a noble of the sword, he was known as an old noble, Louis chose not to take advice from many older nobles due to him wanting to have an absolute rule on many nobles would have been use to the change so he didn't have as much control over them, so he preferred his middle class nobles. This impacted Saint-Simon opinion as he would have not been very admiring of Louis and his government making him a more unreliable resource. The source was also written a long time after source A and also after Louis death. It was written in the 1740's but was made of notes he had made in the early 1700's at the French court, this impacts the source and its opinion compared to source A as source B would have been Versaille declining as it was near the end of Louis reign where as Source A would have seen Louis nearer the start of his reign when he was younger.

In source A, it is more focused around the king and his control on the nobility and put Louis in a successful light of controlling his nobility as it says how he is a commander of detail and he installed fear in his ministers. It is shown how highly Louis is presented in the source, "he wants the government to function in perfect harmony" shows Louis aims and how Louis was a talented person himself with godly abilities "extraordinary memory". The king had over his nobles is shown with "a simple glance from the king that they are imprecise is a reproach that leaves the ministers devastated". This shows how Louis is lessening the powers of the nobility and he is being treated with total respect by the achieving his aim of an organised government. Louis knew that to have an organised government he needed to fix certain areas especially with his nobles as they were mainly the only people who could overthrow/threaten his throne as they had enough power, money and resources and therefore cause an up-rising against Louis it is shown the threat nobles can face when Louis was younger with the Fronde. Overall source A gives us a positive opinion of Louis and that he was in control of his nobility and government, the King was in control of everything and made his own decisions. However, there were bad sides of the King, powers who had a strong hold/influence over him. Powers such as his mistresses. Louis XIV mistresses would have had political influence over him especially his last mistress/wife Madame de Maintenon who has a massive impact over his decisions in French government at the end of his reign. As she was a very religious person so used

this to influence/control Louis decisions. Another major influence was the church as during the 17th/18th Century like the rest of Europe France was very religious, the church had just as much power in France as the Kings so he couldn't just overthrow the church. At the time France was mainly split into 2 religions – Catholic most of the country and Louis VIX, and also Huguenots Louis wanted to eradicate them as he viewed them as an insult to a catholic King. To get rid of them Louis tried to convert some but when that didn't work he next used a different approach. Louis launched "Chambres de L'Edit" this abolished courts that protected Huguenot interests. Then in 1680 all conversions were forbidden. Huguenot churches were demolished under little pretext like mixed marriages. Huguenots were also banned from public office and from medical, legal and publishing professions. Their children were also taken from them at the age of 7 to be educated as Catholics. Louis also quadrupled the tax on them with things like the taille. This contradicts the image of Louis presented in source A as it shows the action of an unfair King abusing his power. However, there is evidence that further supports source A with how Louis controlled the nobility and the other areas of his government such as the rituals such as the Lévée and the couché as it give the king a more important image and gave the nobles more of a focused on getting close to the king and receiving his approval then rebelling against him.

Although source B, gives the impression that Louis failed to control his government and his nobility. This is shown through the source, "King would have liked a great nobility" showing that he still had the same aims but did not quite achieve them. An example of the Kings failure to control and unify his government is also stated in the source, "preferred nobles of the robe, as his ministers" showing that the King made poor judgements and decisions when deciding what to do with his government, as he preferred showy/high class people to intelligent helpful people. Saint-Simon also states how the King had such little control/power over the nobility that his minister could to a certain degree have control over him and his decisions, "ministers.. intoxicated him with ideas of his authority and glory they corrupted him for their own gain". Source B, the writer is more critical as he is free to do so due to it being written after the Kings death. Louis was intoxicated with authority and controlled in some aspects by others as the nobles flattered Louis to influence him, ministers would also try to trick the King by overloading him with work to trick him into signing things without properly looking at them in detail. An example of this is his finical minister Colbert who tried to overthrow Louis and go past him with certain issues. Other influences that influenced his decision as they were close to the king at most times like Madame de Maintenon.

Overall source B is the most valuable in explaining why Louis XIV wanted to lessen the power of the nobility as it shows how the nobility had more control over the King and his decisions than they were meant to with his absolute rule.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer contains significant strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are the assessments made of the significance of the provenance of each source, effectively commenting on author and date in each case. The weaknesses lie in the evaluation of the content and argument of the sources, especially in relation to B where much of the comment is based on a misreading of the source. There are also lengthy descriptions of context which lack any obvious relevance (such as the description of Maintenon and religious policy). This, then, is a Level 3 answer.