



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS1F

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1F

Unit 1F: France in Revolution, 1774–1815

General Comments

Candidates showed a good understanding of the requirements of this paper and many were able to provide around 3 reasons in the 01/03 and 05 questions and a well-structured and balanced argument in the 02/04/06 mini-essays. They also divided their time appropriately between the questions and the majority were able to finish with appropriate length answers to each part. There were many candidates who had a good grasp of the factual knowledge and wrote well showing understanding of the causes of events for questions 01, 03 and 05 and who were able to make clear judgements for questions 02, 04 and 06.

Some candidates still fail to get the highest marks, however, due to lack of precise knowledge which prevents them from developing their points. Dates are often key to really understanding the questions and a lack of awareness of the significance of the events in 1792, for example, affected the responses for question 03. Keeping within the timeframe given was also an issue for question 02 where some students focused on events *after* May 1789. Indeed, a failure to read the question properly was a particular problem for weaker candidates.

Some candidates who clearly understood the requirements of the questions re structure, got side-tracked into talking about the views of historians and this did not always contribute to the quality of their answer. It must be stressed that historiography is not expected at this level, and indeed, when used in the examination, can detract when presented simply as factual description rather than as support for candidates' own views. Writing about the historiography can distract candidates from focusing on making the links between their causes in questions 01, 03 and 05, or developing their own judgement in questions 02, 04 and 06 – factors which are necessary for them to get into the top level.

Question 1

- 01** Most candidates understood who the philosophes were, but many lacked precise knowledge as to their specific ideas. There was confusion as to which philosopher said what and many candidates also made inaccurate generalisations, e.g. that the philosophes all wanted 'equality'. Some candidates did not read the question carefully, and wrote a description of the ideas of the philosophes without actually linking these to the Ancien Regime and why these ideas meant that the philosophes wanted to reform the Ancien Regime. The best answers however were able to come up with three or more clear reasons why the philosophes wanted to reform the Ancien Regime and to link these reasons by reference to the underlying principles which united the philosophes, e.g. reason.
- 02** Many candidates focused on the phrase 'discontent of the third estate' and saw this as an opportunity to write about the Ancien Regime and its faults in detail rather than focusing on the lead up to the actual crisis of 1789. Relatively few students were actually able to go beyond general descriptions of the discontent of the third estate in the Ancien Regime to give examples of how they expressed their discontent pre 1789 and so why it might have contributed to the crisis. The counter arguments – that the crisis was caused by the bankruptcy and failure of financial reform – were better dealt with by candidates, though

again there was a tendency to be descriptive, explaining the financial or economic problems without explaining why these caused a crisis. The best answers had a good understanding of the events of 1788–1789 and were able to argue that the Third Estate played a relatively small role in causing a crisis in comparison to the actions of the nobles or King Louis XVI.

Question 2

- 03** This question was the least well done. Candidates struggled to find reasons to explain the growth of power of the sans-culottes in 1792, relatively few recognising, for example, the importance of the war. Many students knew about the journees of 1789 and wrote about these instead, but had no knowledge of the two journees in 1792. More well known were the September massacres, but candidates often did not explain how this might have increased their influence. Candidates should be reminded that a good grasp of chronology with a specific knowledge of what happened in each year should be an essential part of their revision.
- 04** This question was generally well done – many candidates wrote well-focused paragraphs on the impact of counter-revolution as a reason for the Terror with a range of other factors to provide balance. Weaker answers lacked precision and wrote generally about the Vendée or Robespierre without linking to the question. However, there were many good answers which showed a firm understanding of the complex factors contributing to the Terror. Those that were able to sustain a convincing judgement on which factor was the most important reason were able to attain Level 5.

Question 3

- 05** Most candidates found this straightforward and were able to identify war and the continental blockade as important for preventing growth in the economy. However, there were a number who did not develop these two points fully and/or struggled to provide any range of factors. In fact, war had several effects on the economy, e.g. diversion of resources away from development of industry and communications, and also the impact on manpower; candidates who developed these points along with the impact of the Continental Blockade on trade were able to reach the higher levels. Some students focused too much on Napoleon's financial policies, rather than the broader issue of the development of the economy.
- 06** Again, candidates seemed to find this straightforward and many were able to give a range of factors both for and against the argument that Napoleon brought equality to France. Even so, some did not get to Level 4, because their arguments lacked the range of precise evidence necessary to support and develop their points. Weaker candidates wasted time trying to bring in all of Napoleon's policies – propaganda, censorship, prefects etc. and trying to link them into the equality argument. Candidates need to look carefully at questions on Napoleon and make sure they select the relevant points of his rule to answer the question rather than trying to include everything that he did. Level 5 answers for this question reached a clear judgement on Napoleon's commitment to equality, with the best usually commenting that this was definitely not his key aim in his reforms.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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