

## **Chapter 6**

### **Area of Study 1 Past examination questions**

#### **Section A Part 1: Area of Study 1: Revolutionary Ideas, Leaders, Movements and Events.**

##### **Paragraph answers of twenty lines**

**YOU CHOOSE YOUR ‘FIRST’ REVOLUTION ON WHICH YOU WILL WRITE. (Once you have done this, all answers in Section A must refer to the revolution you have chosen.)**

In the current examination format, all of Section A must be entirely answered by reference to ONE of the revolutions you have studied. You can choose which revolution you prefer to do. Once you have chosen this, it is called ‘Revolution One’, but this does not mean that it has to be the first revolution you studied as part of your Unit 3 course.

Section A part 1 will test your knowledge of revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events. There are two questions to be answered, each worth ten marks. You must answer both questions on the same revolution. From the examples available so far, the questions tend to be short, and to have a clear focus on either a leader, a movement, an idea or a revolutionary event.

The examination paper allows you twenty lines in which to score your ten marks. You might, for example, divide your writing time of two hours into four equal parts, you might spend thirty minutes on this section, or fifteen minutes per question.

##### **Question 1**

How did the Assembly of Notables in February 1787 contribute to pressure for revolutionary change between 1787 and 1789?

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

##### **Question 2**

Explain the importance of revolutionary ideas in the development of the French Revolution between June and August 1789.

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

##### **Question 3**

How did the ideas of Abbé Sieyès contribute to the development of a revolutionary situation in France in 1789?

[VCAA 2005]

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### Question 4

Explain the importance of the storming of the Bastille in the development of the French Revolution between July and August 1789.

[VCAA, 2005]

### Question 5

Using three or four points, explain how Necker's *Compte rendu* in 1781 contributed to a revolutionary situation by May 1789. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2006]

### Question 6

Using three or four points, explain how political responses made by Louis XVI from May 1789 until August 1789 contributed to the development of the French Revolution. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2006]

### Question 7

Using three or four points, explain how the meeting of the Assembly of Notables in 1787 contributed to a revolutionary situation by May 1789. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2007]

### Question 8

Using three or four points, explain how the actions taken by urban workers and by peasants between July and August 1789 contributed to the development of the French Revolution. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2007]

### Question 9

Using three or four points, explain how the ideas expressed in the Cahiers de Doléances contributed to a revolutionary situation by 4 August 1789. **Provide evidence** to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2008]

### Question 10

Using three or four points, explain how social distinctions in the calling of the Estates General contributed to the French Revolution between 4 May and 23 June 1789. **Provide evidence** to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2008]

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### **Section B Part 1: Area of Study 1: Revolutionary Ideas, Leaders, Movements and Events.**

#### **Multiple questions related to a document, possibly a visual document.**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT CHOSEN TO WRITE ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN SECTION A, IT BECOMES YOUR 'SECOND' REVOLUTION, AND YOU MUST DO BOTH QUESTIONS IN SECTION B ON FRANCE. (Remember, once you have done this, all answers in Section B must refer to the revolution you have chosen, and this cannot be the same revolution as in Section A.)**

In the current examination format, Section B, part 1 will again test your knowledge of revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events.

There is one question to be answered for your 'second' revolution, worth a total of twenty marks. This question will be on a document, which could be in graphic form. This could be a revolutionary image, such as a cartoon or a painting, but it could just as well be a map or some other diagram that you will need to interpret.

From the examinations so far, there tends to be four questions. (This can, however, change from year to year, so don't be put off if you encounter a slightly different format).

Each of the first two questions (a, b) allows you two lines in which to score two marks. They tend to be about very specific and factual things in the document, and you should answer them mainly from what you see in the document.

The next question (c) is longer, allowing you twelve lines to score six marks. It contains the important instruction 'using your own knowledge'. You still have to talk about your document, but now you have to put it in the context of what you know about its place and its role in the revolution at the time it was published.

The last question (d), allows twenty lines to score ten marks. It asks more difficult questions, such as to explain how useful this document is in understanding some key concepts from the Study Design, such as the origins of the revolution, or the causes of tensions and conflicts.

**Question 11: France**

**‘We ’ave got to hope that this ain’t goin’ to last forever’. (May 1789).**

- a. What does the representation suggest about the roles of each Estate in 1789?  
(2 marks)
- b. What details in the representation suggest criticism of the traditional order?  
(2 marks)
- c. What revolutionary ideas and/or movements are expressed in this representation?  
(2 marks)
- d. Using your own knowledge, explain why this cartoon appeared around May 1789.  
(6 marks)
- e. To what extent is this representation useful in understanding the causes of tension and conflict that were generated in the traditional society? Give reasons for your answer.  
(8 marks)

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

**Question 12: France**

**The Tennis Court Oath, 20 June 1789.**

- a. Name two social groups depicted in this representation.  
(2 marks)
- b. What details in the representation show change from the traditional order?  
(2 marks)
- c. What revolutionary ideas are symbolised by the three figures embracing in the foreground and the figure seated at the table who is not joining in with the actions of the crowd?  
(2 marks)
- d. Using your own knowledge, explain the causes of the event of 20 June 1789.  
(6 marks)
- e. To what extent is this representation useful in understanding perceived inequalities that contributed to the revolution?  
(8 marks)

[VCAA 2005]

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### Question 13

#### I Just Knowed that we'd 'ave our turn (4 August 1789)

a. Identify two features in the representation that show revolutionary change in the relationship between social groups.

(2 marks)

b. Identify two other features (not listed in response a. above) in the representation that suggest that the needs of the peasants were met by the events of 4 August 1789.

(2 marks)

c. Using your own knowledge, explain why the words 'Long Live the King, Long live the Nation' and the revolutionary cockade worn by all three figures appear in this representation.

(6 marks)

d. Explain to what extent the representation presents a reliable view of the Revolution of 1789. In your response, refer to different views about the achievements of the Revolution of 1789.

(10 marks)

[VCAA 2006]

### Question 14

#### Image: Adieu Bastille (Goodbye Bastille) 1789. An anonymous French cartoon.

a. Identify two different groups of people symbolised by the figures in the representation.

(2 marks)

b. Identify two revolutionary actions depicted in the representation.

(2 marks)

c. Using your own knowledge and the representation, explain the significance of the event depicted in the representation.

(6 marks)

d. Explain to what extent the representation presents a reliable view of the events from May to July 1789. In your response, refer to different views of the Revolution of 1789.

(10 marks)

[VCAA 2007]

**Question 15**

**The image printed on the examination paper was ‘This time Justice stands with the strongest’ (4 August 1789)**

- a.** Identify the group symbolised by the figure seated next to Justice and one of the social groups symbolised by the figures elevated on the see-saw.  
(2 marks)
- b.** Identify two outcomes of the Revolution depicted in the representation.  
(2 marks)
- c.** Using your own knowledge and the representation, explain the significance of the social and political change depicted in the representation.  
(6 marks)
- d.** Explain to what extent the representation presents a reliable view of the events from 20 June to 4 August 1789. In your response refer to different views of the Revolution of 1789.

(10 marks)  
[VCAA 2008]

## Chapter 8

### Area of Study 2 Past examination questions

#### Section A Part 2: Area of Study 2: Creating a New Society

##### Multiple questions on a written document

**IF YOU HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN TO WRITE ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN SECTION A, IT HAS BECOME YOUR 'FIRST' REVOLUTION, AND SO YOU MUST GO ON TO DO THE SECOND QUESTION IN SECTION A ON FRANCE AS WELL. Remember, all answers in Section A must refer to the French Revolution once you have chosen to start with this revolution. This also means that you are committed to answering all the questions in Section B on the other revolution you have studied this year, for example, America, China or Russia.**

In the current examination format, Section A part 2 will test your knowledge of the creation of the new society.

There is just one question to be answered for your revolution, and it is expected that it will refer to a document, in written or pictorial form. From the examples available, this question will contain four parts, but it is possible that this will change from year to year.

This part of the examination usually starts with two short, factual questions, each allowing two lines to score two marks. These are usually followed by a broader, 'using your own knowledge' question, allowing twelve lines to score six marks. This is followed by a longer 'Explain' type question, allowing twenty lines to score ten marks.

##### **Question 16: Simon Schama on Revolutionary violence**

(Reference: Simon Schama, *Citizens, A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, pp. 610–615.)

'With the General out of the way, the last hope of arresting forces that were rapidly becoming polarized lay in the Legislative Assembly itself. But the events of June 20, far from stiffening its resolve, had shaken it. Deputies nervous for their own safety began to drift away from the debates, so that at the height of the insurrections of August there were probably no more than one quarter of the eight hundred sitting. The Girondin leadership was divided over whether to throw their lot in with the *section* militants to avoid forfeiting all influence to the Robespierrists, or whether to defend the legal

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order by force. On July 5 a declaration that the “*patrie est en danger*” [the homeland is in danger] was proclaimed. But the emergency powers obtained by such a suspension of normal legal procedure were a dangerous means of legitimizing the government’s policy. While they could justify, as Robespierre still feared, an attack on the clubs and *sections*, they could equally be used by those same elements to overthrow the government and the assembly ...

... But the carnage of the tenth of August was not an incidental moment in the history of the Revolution. It was, in fact, its logical consummation. From 1789, perhaps even before that, it had been the willingness of politicians to exploit either the threat or the fact of violence that had given them the power to challenge constituted authority. Bloodshed was not the unfortunate by-product of revolution, it was the source of its energy.’

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

- a. What weakness does Schama perceive [see] in the Girondin Government?  
(2 marks)
- b. What was the effect on the Legislative Assembly of the events of 20 June 1792, according to Schama?  
(2 marks)
- c. What does Schama see as the danger of the emergency powers declared on 5 July 1792?  
(2 marks)
- d. Using your own knowledge, explain why the events described by Schama as ‘the height of the insurrections of August’ occurred.  
(6 marks)
- e. Explain the usefulness of this extract in understanding the violent direction that was taken in forming the new society in France from 1792 until January 1793.  
(8 marks)

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

### Question 17: The Flight to Varennes

(Reference: William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, p. 152).

‘The Flight to Varennes was the revolution’s second great turning-point. Like the oath of the clergy, it forced Frenchmen to make choices that most would have preferred not to face. Even if it had succeeded, choices would have been unavoidable. Whether the king merely intended, as he claimed, to go to Montmédy and negotiate from that safe distance; or whether, as most suspected (and his brother, Provence, who at the same time did reach the



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Austrian Netherlands, put about), he intended to emigrate and return at the head of Austrian armies, the achievements of the Revolution up to that moment would have been fundamentally challenged. Diplomats thought war would have been precipitated there and then. The failure of the attempted escape postponed the danger – but demanded choices of a different order. The Monarch had renounced the Revolution, and had explained why in the proclamation he left behind. He complained of imprisonment in Paris, violation of property, and ‘complete anarchy in all parts of the empire’. He denounced betrayal of the wishes expressed in the *cahiers*, the lack of power accorded to the Crown in the new constitution, the tentacular power usurped by the Jacobin clubs, and, implicitly, the new religious order. How could such a man remain head of State? The blackest suspicions of the Parisian populace and radical leaders were confirmed. Republicans now came into the open. All over the capital symbols of royalty were attacked and defaced, and on 24 June the Cordeliers Club delivered a petition to the National Assembly to depose the king or consult the Nation on his fate in a referendum. A crowd of 30,000 escorted its presenters.’

- a. What two indications are given by Doyle that the king lost popularity after the flight to Varennes?  
(2 marks).
- b. What two reasons are given by Doyle for his claim that the achievements of the revolution were fundamentally challenged?  
(2 marks).
- c. What were the two indications, according to Doyle, that the king had renounced the revolution in the proclamation which he left behind?  
(2 marks).
- d. Using your own knowledge and the extract, explain
- why the Flight to Varennes occurred.
  - why the Flight to Varennes is described by Doyle as ‘the Revolution’s second great turning-point’.
- (3 + 3 = 6 marks).
- e. Explain the usefulness of this extract in understanding the nature of the threat to the new society and the direction taken by the revolution from June 1791 until January 1793.  
(8 marks).  
[VCAA 2005]

### Question 18: The Declaration of war on Austria, 20 April 1792.

The National Assembly, deliberating on the formal proposal of the king, considering that the court of Vienna, in contempt of treaties, has not ceased to offer open protection to French rebels, that it has initiated and formed a

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concert\* with several European powers against the independence and security of the French nation ...

That despite the proposal made to him [the Emperor] in the note of 11 March 1792 that both nations should reduce the troops on their frontiers to their peace-time effectives, he has continued and increased his warlike preparations. That he has formally infringed the sovereignty of the French nation in declaring his wish to uphold the claims of the German princes with possessions in France to whom the French nation has continually offered compensation.

That he has sought to divide French citizens and arm them against each other by offering the malcontents\*\* a place in the concert of powers ...

The National Assembly declares that the French nation, faithful to the principles enshrined in the Constitution 'not to undertake any war with the aim of making conquests and never employ its forces against the liberty of any people', only takes up arms to maintain its liberty and independence; that the war it is obliged to conduct is not a war of nation against nation, but the just defence of a free people against the unjust aggression of a king.

That the French will never confuse their brothers with their real enemies; that they will neglect nothing to alleviate the scourge of war, to spare and preserve property, and to visit all the misfortune inseparable from war on those alone who conspire against her liberty.

That the French nation adopts in advance all foreigners who, renouncing the cause of her enemies, come to range themselves under her banners and devote their efforts to the defence of her liberty; that it will even assist, by all means in its power, their establishment in France.

\*concert = group \*\*malcontents = rebels

**a.** Identify from the extract two French Government bodies that proposed war.

(2 marks)

**b.** Identify from the extract two claims made by the National Assembly against the court of Vienna.

(2 marks)

**c.** Using your own knowledge and the extract, identify what groups most likely supported the war initiative, and the reasons why they believed the war was in France's best interests.

(6 marks)

**d.** Explain the strengths and limitations of this extract as evidence to explain why France became involved in war in April 1792. In your response, refer to different views of the period.

(10 marks)

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##### Question 19: The interrogation of the King, 11 December 1792

*The President.* Louis, the French people accuse you of having committed a multitude of crimes to establish your tyranny by destroying its liberty. You have, on 20 June 1789, attacked the sovereignty of the people by suspending the assemblies of its representation and by expelling them while they were still sitting. The proof of this is in the report addressed to the Tennis Court at Versailles by the members of the Constituent Assembly. On 23 June you wished to dictate the nation's laws, you surrounded its representatives by troops, you presented to them two royal declarations subversive to all freedom, and you ordered them to disperse. Your declarations and the Assembly's reports prove these crimes. What do you say in reply?

*Louis.* There exists no law to impeach me.

*The President.* You dispatched an army against the citizens of Paris. Your minions spread the blood of several of them, and you did not remove this army until the taking of the Bastille and the general rising showed you that the people were victorious. The interviews which you had on 9, 12 and 14 July with various deputations make it clear that these were your intentions, and the massacres of the Tuileries testify against you. What have you to say in reply?

*Louis.* I was the master empowered to despatch troops at the time and to shed blood.

**a.** Identify two actions which King Louis was accused of in establishing 'tyranny'.

(2 marks)

**b.** Identify two responses (not listed in **part a.** above) to the Tennis Court Oath, of which King Louis was accused.

(2 marks)

**c.** Using your own knowledge and the extract, explain Louis' belief about the extent of his authority.

(6 marks)

**d.** Explain the strengths and limitations of this extract as evidence to explain why Louis was tried and executed. In your response, refer to different views of the reasons for Louis' trial and execution.

(10 marks)

[VCAA 2007]

**Question 20: The Reforms of the Constituent Assembly**

(Reference: Doyle, William, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd edition, p. 157.)

On 3 September the constitution was completed and presented to the king for acceptance. On the thirteenth, he signified his acceptance, amid scenes of rejoicing and a general amnesty. The Revolution, the Feuillants were determined to believe, was now complete, and ordinary constitutional life could begin; ushering in, so they hoped, calmer times. But much of the rejoicing was really at the approaching end of the Constituent Assembly, which came on 30 September. Its achievements had been enormous. In twenty-six months it had dismantled the *ancien regime*, the product of centuries of slow evolution. At the same time it had laid down the principles of a new order and established structures whose outlines were to endure down to our own day. When, later in the Revolution, or well into the next century, men spoke approvingly of the principles of 1789, they meant those accepted by Louis XVI in 1791, before the Revolution went to extremes. Yet the seeds of those later extremes had already been sown, and the Constituent Assembly was responsible for them, too. By forcing the clergy to choose between Church and State, it had split the country and given counter-revolutionaries a higher cause than self-interest. In its very last days the Assembly deepened this self-inflicted wound by unilaterally seizing papal territory. The religious schism\* made it impossible for millions to give the new order their wholehearted support — beginning with the king himself. Only those who dared not think anything else believed, by September 1791, that his acceptance of the constitution was sincere. He had already shown, and said, what he really thought at the time of what he now chose to call his ‘journey’ in June. But that created a further split, between [the] constitutional monarchists and a rapidly growing republican movement all the more alarming in that its mainstay was the turbulent populace of Paris.

\* division

**a.** Identify two achievements of the Constituent Assembly stated in the extract.

(2 marks)

**b.** Identify two actions of the Constituent Assembly (not listed in **part a.** above) which Doyle claims were responsible for the later extremes of the Revolution.

(2 marks)

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c. Using your own knowledge and the extract, explain the consequences of the Constituent Assembly's restructure of religious matters.

(6 marks)

d. Explain the strengths and limitations of the extract as evidence to explain the significance of the Constituent Assembly's work in the creation of the new society. In your response refer to different views of the period 1789 to September 1791.

(10 marks)

[VCAA 2008]

## Section B Part 2: Area of Study 2: Creating a New Society

### Extended response on a general topic

**IF YOU HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN TO WRITE ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN SECTION B, IT HAS BECOME YOUR 'SECOND' REVOLUTION, AND SO YOU MUST GO ON TO DO THE OTHER QUESTION IN SECTION B ON FRANCE AS WELL. Remember, all answers in Section B must refer to the French Revolution once you have chosen to start with this revolution. This also means that you are committed to answering all the questions in Section A on the other revolution you have studied this year, for example, America, China or Russia.**

In the current examination format, Section B part 2 will test your knowledge of the creation of the new society.

You have to write ONE extended response on your 'second' revolution, about the creation of the new society.

***\*\*\*\* Please note that, from 2009 onwards, you will have just one essay topic for each revolution. You will not be offered the choice of three general topics, as had occurred in 2005–2008.***

### Question 21: 'Changes to everyday life'

Discuss the extent to which the conditions of everyday life were changed by the revolutionary regime. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

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### **Question 22: 'Achievement of original ideals'**

Discuss the extent to which revolutionary governments achieve their original ideals. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

### **Question 23: 'The new society is authoritarian'**

Discuss to what extent the new society is inevitably rigid and authoritarian. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA SAMPLE 2005]

### **Question 24: 'Extent of political change'**

Discuss the extent to which the new order achieved political change. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2005]

### **Question 25: 'Significant change in the way people lived'**

Discuss the extent to which significant change occurred in the way people lived in the new society. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2005]

### **Question 26: 'Crises endangered the new order'**

Discuss the extent to which crises and compromise endangered the new order. Provide evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA, 2005]

### **Question 27: 'New society rigid and authoritarian'**

Discuss the extent to which the new society was rigid and authoritarian. Provide evidence for your answer.

[VCAA, 2006]

### **Question 28: 'Extent to which people benefited from the new society'**

Discuss the extent to which people really benefited in the new society. Provide evidence for your answer.

[VCAA, 2006]

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### **Question 29: 'Economic crisis distracts new order from its aims'.**

Discuss the extent to which the new order was distracted from its original aims by an economic crisis. Provide evidence for your answer.

[VCAA, 2006]

### **Question 30: 'Revolutionary leaders modified original ideas'.**

Discuss the extent to which revolutionary leaders may have modified their ideas in creating the new society.

[VCAA, 2007]

### **Question 31: 'Difficulties threatened the formation of the new society'.**

Discuss the extent to which difficulties threatened the formation of the new society.

[VCAA, 2007]

### **Question 32: 'Significant change in the lives of the people'.**

Discuss the extent to which there was significant change in the lives of the people following the revolution.

[VCAA, 2007]

### **Question 33: 'The extent to which the new society was able to resolve the grievances of the people'.**

Discuss the extent to which the new society was able to resolve the grievances of the people.

[VCAA, 2008]

### **Question 34: 'The extent to which the new society was successful in fulfilling the ideals of the Revolution.'**

Discuss the extent to which the new society was successful in fulfilling the ideals of the Revolution

[VCAA, 2008]

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**Question 35: ‘The extent to which the nature of political authority was changed by the Revolution.’**

Discuss the extent to which the nature of political authority was changed by the Revolution.

[VCAA, 2008]

**Question 36: ‘A tragedy of gigantic proportions’.**

Some historians argue that the Revolution was a tragedy of gigantic proportions. What is your view of the new society? Use evidence to support your answer.

[VCAA SAMPLE 2009]



## **Chapter 12**

### **The History – Revolutions 2009 examination**

N.B. Only questions relevant to the study of the French Revolution have been included.

#### **SECTION A – Revolution One**

##### **Part 1 – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events.**

###### **Question 1**

###### **b. France [1781–4 August 1789]**

Using three or four points, explain how the consequences of France's involvement in the American War of Independence contributed to the development of the Revolution from 1783 to 1789. **Provide evidence** to support your answer.

###### **Question 2**

###### **b. France [1781–4 August 1789]**

Using three or four points, explain how the action and the role of the Parlement of Paris contributed to a revolutionary situation in 1787 and 1789. **Provide evidence** to support your answer.

##### **Part 2 – Creating a new society.**

###### **Question 3**

For the following questions, please refer to:

**France [5 August 1789–1795 Dissolution of the Convention]**

**George Rudé, *The French Revolution*, Phoenix (Orion Publishing Group) 1994, pp. 100, 101, 103, 105.**

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- a. Identify two responsibilities of the Committee of General Security.  
(2 marks)
- b. Identify two powers of the Committee of Public Safety.  
(2 marks)
- c. Using your own knowledge and the extract, explain the circumstances which gave rise to the implementation of the system of government that was shaped by the law of 4 December 1793.  
(6 marks)
- d. Evaluate to what extent the extract presents a reliable view of the reasons the Jacobin government became unpopular from December 1793 until the fall of Robespierre.  
(10 marks)

### SECTION B – Revolution Two

#### Part 1 – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events.

##### Question 1

France [1781–4 August 1789]

Simon Schama, writing about the night of 4 August 1789, in *Citizens. A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, pp. 437, 441.

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It was a mixture of apprehension and demonstrative patriotism that swept up the noble and clerical deputies of the National Assembly of the night of the fourth of August. The seigneurial regime had long been eroding\* in France outside the bastions of feudalism like Burgundy, Brittany and the Franche-Comté. In much of the country it had been converted into a form of commercial business practice, and there was no reason why the business should not continue after the formal apparatus of seigneurial power had been done away with. Typically the citizen-nobles who rose to their feet in the session of the fourth to propose and then to demand the extinction of their own customary society were from the upper crust: men like the Duc de Châtelet and the Duc d'Aguillon, whose considerable wealth could easily withstand the subtraction of milling rights and labor levies. But those same aristocrats also had a consistent history of lending serious support to the cause of patriotic liberty that went back to their service to America in the 1770s. Thus one should not judge their famous intervention as a matter of feckless posturing or a cynical attempt to save something from the wreckage ... The French revolution, then, began with acts of giving as well as acts of taking. But its immediate future depended on what its first citizen, Louis XVI, could bring himself to offer up for *la patrie*.\* At one point when the needs of the Treasury were particularly pressing, and when taxes still required collection from his subjects, he sacrificed much of the royal able silver for the mint. Louis XIV had, after all, melted down the silver furniture in the Hall of Mirrors when the war chest\* called for it. But more was being asked of this King. The sacrifice he was called upon to make was of his prerogatives\* rather than his ingots\* and that seemed an altogether more painful dispossession.

- \* eroding - declining
- \* patrie - country
- \* war chest – war budget
- \* prerogatives – exclusive rights
- \* ingots – bars of precious metal

**a.** Identify two emotions felt by the noble and clerical deputies of the national Assembly on 4 August 1789.

(2 marks)

**b.** Identify two reasons that Schama provides for the nobles demanding that the apparatus of seigneurial power be dismantled.

(2 marks)

**c.** Using your own knowledge and the extract, explain how patriotic liberty was an influence in the Revolution of 1789.

(6 marks)

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d. Evaluate the usefulness of this extract in providing a reliable view of the reasons for the events of 4 August. In your response refer to different views of the Revolution in 1789.

(10 marks)

### **Part 2 – Creating a new society**

#### **Question 2**

*The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* stated “The source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation.” Was political power for all people achieved in practice during the Revolution? Use evidence to support your response.

(20 marks)

## Chapter 13

### Sample answers and commentaries

The answers provided below are only suggestions intended to help you work towards your own responses to examination questions. It is not possible to suggest definitive answers, and it is recommended that you do not try to replicate these texts. You should design your own answers, that are only as long as you can realistically write in the time allowed. The answers you give in the examination must be entirely your own material. Finally, although the author has quoted some comments published by the examiners, he cannot presume to be speaking on their behalf in any way.

#### **Chapter 6 suggested answers (these questions can be found from p. 30 onwards)**

##### **Question 1: The Assembly of Notables**

Finance Minister Calonne convened the Assembly of Notables to discuss ‘the ordering of the nation’s finances and the reform of abuses’. To meet France’s massive debt repayments (112 million pounds in 1786) he proposed a comprehensive plan to reform France’s taxation system, which would remove tax privileges and apply a direct tax on all owners of property, to be calculated proportionally according to the value of their land. He suggested that this would be calculated by local provincial assemblies, thus providing ‘representation in taxation’. Although the Notables (of whom most were nobles) accepted the new idea of a common tax in principle – without privilege or exception – they complained that a direct tax calculated on land would fall too heavily on people like themselves. The meeting dissolved into disagreement, fuelled by personal hatreds of Calonne and rumours about his honesty. Some information leaked out to the public, creating panicky controversy. Desperately, Calonne appealed to the public by publishing his plans and his concerns, publicising the fact that the monarchy could not resolve its financial crisis, and thus damaging public perception of the king’s competence. Fearing the opinion of foreign financiers – on whom he depended for loans – the King accordingly dismissed Calonne in April 1788; his successor, Brienne, closed the Assembly of Notables. The unsuccessful meeting had acknowledged the two important principles of equality before taxation and taxation by representation, but had not brought either into existence. In this way, it made the further progress of France’s financial crisis inevitable, leading to Brienne’s later battle with the *parlements*, his subsequent failure to secure their approval for reforms and, after the sudden bankruptcy of France (August 1788), the eventual calling of the Estates-General.

**Question 2: The influence of ideas**

*[Author's note: This question presents a problem because it only sets the final time frame as the month of August. Taken broadly, this could include the August Decrees (4–11 August 1789) and The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (27 August 1789), but please note that strictly speaking Area of Study 1 terminates at 4 August 1789.]*

The period between June and August 1789 saw the definition of a number of key revolutionary ideas that would be formalised in later documents such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (August 1789) and the Constitution of 1791.

The first key idea was that of **representation**. The meeting of the Third Estate at the Estates-General declared itself to be the National Assembly (17 June 1789). The Abbé Sieyès had previously proposed in *What is the Third Estate?* (January 1789) that the Third Estate was the vast majority of the nation, and that their elected delegates could therefore credibly represent the nation. The Third Estate delegates translated this belief into practice. The Tennis Court Oath (20 June 1789) asserted the need for a formal written constitution and for a representative body that met permanently rather than occasionally.

The second key revolutionary idea was **the sacredness of property**. The Great Fear (July–August 1789), an outbreak of peasant action directed at destroying records of feudal obligations, led the National Assembly to defend the rights of property. It condemned the peasants as brigands, against whom the National Guard were sent out to restore order. The August Decrees (4–11 August 1789) actually ordered that many taxes and dues continue to be paid until properly abolished or compensated. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (27 August 1789) devoted article 17 to the inalienable quality of property.

The third key revolutionary idea was that of **utility**, and of the triumph of personal merit over aristocratic birth. The August Decrees claimed to abolish feudalism, but also legally established (article 11) equality of opportunity in the pursuit of public office, thus ending noble domination of the top positions in government, church and army. This was repeated in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (article 6).

The fourth key revolutionary idea established in the August Decrees was **fiscal equality**, which legally destroyed all forms of privilege or exemption from taxation (article 9). This was repeated in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (article 13).

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### Question 3: The Abbé Sieyès' *What is the Third Estate?*

[Author's note: correct spelling of the writer's name is Abbé Sieyès, requiring different accents on two of the 'e's.]

When the Abbé Sieyès published his influential pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* in January 1789, he contributed to the development of a revolutionary situation in France because he propelled an existing political debate onto a completely new stage of thinking.

Ever since the financial crisis and impending bankruptcy of France had forced the king to call a meeting of the Estates-General as a representative body that could approve new taxes, there had been debate over how the assembly would vote. By the outdated forms of 1614, it would vote by order, meaning that the privileged First and Second Estates would always outnumber the Third Estate, especially on any matter related to the cessation of their legal, fiscal and honorific privileges.

Supporters of the Third Estate – such as the ‘patriots’ who gathered around the Committee of Thirty – argued that voting should be by head and, following the example of some radical provincial assemblies such as Vizille, that the numbers of the Third Estate should be doubled to reflect its proportional importance in the population.

Before the Estates-General opened, the king had decided to do the second of these (December 1788), but not the first, which solved nothing. This caused a flood of pamphlets arguing about voting methods. By January 1789, Abbé Sieyès was ready to cut through these debates, by arguing that the Third Estate was so important, numerically and in social utility, that its representatives could virtually claim to be representatives of the nation.

Between May and June 1789, there was continuing fierce controversy over the method of voting, until on 17 June 1789, Abbé Sieyès himself proposed that the Third Estate declare itself to be a national assembly, with the right to approve taxes. That he could do so, and that the deputies of the Third Estate could make this leap in political thinking, was largely due to the impact of his quite simple, but persuasive, pamphlet. Three days later, this momentous decision would be formalised in the more famous event of the Tennis Court Oath.

### Question 4: The significance of the capture of the Bastille

The capture of the Bastille by the Parisian crowd (14 July 1789) was a revolutionary event that has come to signify the beginning of the French Revolution. It was crucial to the development of the revolution on both a strategic and a symbolic, or psychological level.

First, the strategic significance of the event must be understood in terms of the developing conflict between the king and the newly-declared National Assembly (17 June and 20 June, 1789). When the king failed to force the Third Estate to abandon its position (23 June 1789), he began calling regiments of

troops to Paris, as if to close the assembly by force. By 11 July 1789 the king felt sufficiently confident of his forces to dismiss the finance minister Necker, who had supported the rebellion of the Third Estate. Yet by 12–13 July, as crowds gathered in centres of agitation such as the Palais-Royal, it became clear that some parts of the army had been won over to the ‘patriot’ cause. The crowd’s invasion of Les Invalides military hospital early on 14 July was crucial not only because they found and seized guns, but because they did so despite the presence of a royal regiment, which could not be trusted to take action to stop the crowd. Armed with 40,000 guns, the crowd now needed gunpowder and shot, and proceeded to the Bastille prison, where they demanded the surrender of ammunition stored there. The following struggle to capture the strong medieval fortress was successful largely because the crowd was assisted by sixty mutinying royal guards. As a result of this successful action, the Parisian crowd could feel even more sure of its collective power and could feel that it had saved the revolution.

Second, while the capture of the Bastille had the strategic effect of arming the revolutionary crowd, it also had a large psychological effect, because the prison – even though it was empty but for seven prisoners – still symbolised the arbitrary justice of the old regime, and still represented the royal determination to tame the rebellious suburbs of Paris, which were in the range of the Bastille’s battery of cannon.

Third, the first great revolutionary ‘day’ was an event which proved to the king that the crowd was a powerful force, whereas his own troops could not always be relied on. After considering its significance for two days, on 16 July he ordered the troops out of Paris, and on 17 July he appeared to give in to the changes made by the Third Estate in the form of a National Assembly and a National Guard. In this respect, the strategic action of the Parisian crowd had pushed the development of the revolution further, and had consolidated and defended the radical political innovations made by the middle-class deputies of the Third Estate on 17 June and 20 June 1789.

#### **Question 5: The *Compte rendu***

Necker’s *Compte rendu* (February 1781) constituted the beginning of a national financial crisis (that is, a crippling national debt whose interest payments would progressively consume 37.5% of state revenue), which then became a fiscal crisis (a debate over the whole nature of the taxation system), which by May 1789 became a political crisis (a debate over the issue of a representative body to approve new taxes).

First, the *compte rendu* misleadingly suggested that France’s national budget was in credit, with revenue exceeding expenditure by some 10 million French pounds. In reality, France’s largely fruitless involvement in four international wars, such as the American War of Independence (between 1778 and 1781) cost the state one billion pounds. Apart from being misleading, this financial



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document was published and sold, thus initiating new levels of interest in national affairs (the so-called ‘birth of public opinion’).

Second, the *Compte rendu* did not contain plans for fiscal reform, and subsequent treasurers such as Joly de Fleury and Calonne were forced to make further heavy borrowings, creating a debt of 112 million French pounds by 1786. By August 1786, Calonne had conceptualised a fundamental reform of France’s taxation system, involving a single, uniform land-tax to be applied without exception, but proportionally, to all landowners. By February 1787, he presented the plan for approval to the Assembly of Notables, a narrowly representative body made up overwhelmingly of members of the two privileged estates. When this assembly refused some aspects of the reform, and Calonne published an appeal to the general public, public opinion became aware of a serious failed attempt at reform. Because the 1781 *Compte rendu* had created the impression that the nation’s finances were in good order, the problem now caused dismay. Because the *Compte rendu* had hidden the costs of the previous wars, the public was unaware of the true cause of the deficit, and hence attributed it instead to the legendary wastefulness of Marie-Antoinette, who was now dubbed Madame Deficit.

Third, the *Compte rendu* helped create, by its inaccuracy, an eventual attitude of suspicion towards the absolute monarchy’s conduct of its financial affairs. This would in turn lead directly to two of the most radical concepts of the revolutionary situation: the Assembly of Notables, and subsequently the Paris *parlement*, would demand the right to scrutinise the royal accounts (principle of royal accountability) and the need to refer any new taxes to a more fully representative body such as the Estates-General (principle of representation). When the Paris *parlement* also resisted fiscal reform without full representative consultation (May 1788) and crowds began to protest in support of all the *parlements* (June 1788), a revolutionary situation was well under way. The final bankruptcy of the state (August 1788) forced the calling of the Estates-General, but the formation of groups such as the Society of Thirty (November 1788) had already ensured that this meeting would become a deeply political struggle over both taxation and representation. By the time the deputies walked into the Estates-General in May 1789, the ingredients of a revolutionary situation already existed, many of them derived from the consequences of Necker’s misleading *Compte rendu* of 1781.

### **Question 6: The responses of the king to the crisis**

By May 1789, Louis XVI had seen the financial crisis of his regime (that is, heavy debt repayments threatening predictable bankruptcy) escalate into a fiscal crisis (that is, a debate about the nature of the entire taxation system) and then into a political crisis (that is, the debate about the manner of voting in the Estates-General).

**First**, the essence of this political crisis lies in Louis XVI's *failure* to make a political decision. The calling of the Estates-General (August 1788) led to a controversy (September 1788) over the voting procedure of the future Estates-General, resulting in the formation of a political club dedicated to the idea of properly representative government (The Society of Thirty, November 1788). The King's decision (December 1788) to double the number of deputies for the Third Estate was useless because he failed to concede the idea of voting by head rather than by order. This failure only served to spur the 'patriots' of the Society of Thirty on to the more radical demand that the deputies of the Third Estate virtually were representatives of the entire nation, and should constitute themselves as such, an idea eloquently expressed in January 1789 by one of their members, the Abbé Sieyès in *What is the Third Estate?* When, therefore, the deputies of the three estates arrived at Versailles on 1 May, Louis had in fact worsened this political crisis by failing to make a political decision: he had not told the deputies whether they would vote according to the 1614 precedent, by order (which would favour the two privileged estates over the Third Estate) or by head (which would give more power to the enlarged Third Estate). By June 1789, while the King's focus on the rapidly-evolving political situation was distracted by the illness and death of his seven-year-old son, the Third Estate proceeded to identify themselves as representatives of the nation (12 June 1789), then to adopt the name of the national assembly (17 June 1789) and then, when joined by some clergy (19 June 1789) to swear an oath not to disband until there was a constitution (20 June 1789). The King only responded reactively to this swift assumption of sovereignty, attempting in Royal Session (23 June 1789) to order the estates to meet separately, then capitulating and ordering them to meet in common (27 June 1789).

The King's **second political decision** was to use military force where traditional royal authority had failed. By early July, he had moved 30,000 troops into Paris, the only possible reason being to close the National Assembly by force. This contributed to the development of the French Revolution because both leaders (such as Camille Desmoulins) and the Parisian crowd concluded that they would have to use collective force to protect the assembly, demonstrated in the attacks on customs houses (12 July 1789) and the attacks on Les Invalides and on the Bastille (14 July 1789). As a result of this, the revolutionary crowd fully realised its power.

The King's **third political decision** was to renounce the use of armed force and to give the impression that he had accepted the revolution. He acceded to revolutionary demands such as the election of Bailly as Mayor of Paris (17 July 1789), and adopted the trappings of a constitutional monarch. This contributed to the development of the French Revolution because people now concluded that the revolution had succeeded in replacing absolutism with constitutional monarchy. The National Assembly now proceeded to the great political, legal and administrative reforms that the predominantly middle-class deputies of the

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Third Estate deemed important. By August 1789, the development of the revolution was spurred further by protest actions of peasants (The Great Fear), forcing the National Assembly to begin to consider how the feudal regime might be abolished.

### Question 7: The Assembly of Notables

The Assembly of Notables (February–May 1787) was an event that served to magnify many of the tensions and conflicts inherent in the old regime. By rejecting “the last great reform project of the Bourbon monarchy” (historian V. Gruder), it suggested that the elites of France were making an inadequate response to structural change. When this linked up with the relatively new phenomenon of ‘the birth of public opinion’, it caused an erosion of public confidence in the existing order and left the monarchy with few other options short of convening the Estates-General.

**First**, the Assembly of Notables (a traditional advisory body of the old regime, made up of 144 royal princes, high clergy, senior military commanders and high government officials) did not actually reject all of Calonne’s proposed reforms. Historians no longer see the Assembly as trying to defend the privilege of fiscal exemption for the First and Second Estates: by 1787, most members had accepted that this privilege could not last. They did, however, reject Calonne’s proposal for a new land tax, levied in proportion to wealth and adjusted according to the year’s income, to be applied equally to all property owners, and to be collected by a system of existing or new provincial assemblies. They agreed to fiscal equality in principle, but rejected the idea of basing the tax on land, which they felt was already too heavily taxed.

**Secondly**, the notables shifted the structural debate about the tax system into a political debate about *accountability*. Relying on public alarm about the national debt, they introduced radical new ideas that there should be some public control over the way the government spent the nation’s money, demanding that the budget be made public each year and that audits (checks) of spending be conducted. This in turn led them to the radical principle of *representation*: that taxpayers should rightfully have some say in approving the taxes that would be applied to them.

**Thirdly**, the traditionally private proceedings of such advisory meetings were transformed when they became the subject of intense public rumour, much of it inaccurate. This was intensified by a storm of pamphlets, many taking up the notables’ criticisms of Calonne. The Count of Mirabeau also printed rumours that the minister was financially dishonest. Finally, Calonne himself appealed to public opinion by publishing his proposals and criticising the motives of those who opposed them (31 March 1787). In this competition for public opinion, Calonne lost, and the notables won.

**Fourthly**, the deadlock in the Assembly now reduced Louis XVI’s strategic options to deal with the crisis. The King dissolved the Assembly (25 May

1787). This crisis “marked the beginning of a political crisis that could only be resolved by revolution.” (Revisionist historian William Doyle). In due course, another minister, Brienne, would fail to achieve negotiated reform through the *parlements*, and by August 1788 there would be no other option but to convene the last remaining advisory body of monarchical France, the Estates-General.

**Question 8: Actions by urban workers and peasants**

While the crisis of the old regime that unfolded in France between 1787–July 1789 was the result of a financial, fiscal and political controversy over principles of accountability and representation, this only became properly a revolution once these constitutional principles were backed by the action of the revolutionary movement of the crowd in July and August 1789.

**First**, urban crowds in Paris and many French provincial cities were important because they protested about early issues such as the debate over voting at the Estates-General and the dismissal of Necker. Restless crowds had long been gathering at Versailles and in Paris, especially in the Palais-Royal, animated by accounts of the power struggle in the Estates-General (eg. Mirabeau’s *Letters to his Constituents*). By 12 July, when news of Minister Necker’s dismissal reached Paris, the crowd began a series of revolutionary actions, including a clash with the Prince de Lambesc’s cavalry (12 July), the destruction of toll houses and tax walls (12 July), and attacks on the Abbaye of Saint-Lazare (13 July). The size and determination of the crowd intimidated military officers and convinced the Paris Committee of Electors that a national guard would be needed to keep order.

**Second**, the militant action of Parisian crowd, in conjunction with plummeting morale in the French Guards, was crucial to the outcome of the earlier constitutional conflict between the self-declared national assembly (17 and 20 June 1789) and the King. By 1 July, the Parisian crowd was aware that the mustering of 20,000 troops in Paris could only be for the forcible closure of the National Assembly. On 14 July, this crowd attacked Les Invalides (a military hospital) in search of weapons, and were not resisted by the royal troops on guard there. The crowd then captured the Bastille, a significant military strongpoint with even greater symbolic royal power. This action forced the king to assure the National Assembly that he would withdraw troops (15 July), and would accept Bailly as mayor of Paris and Lafayette as head of the National Guard (17 July).

**Third**, rural crowds, which had their own traditions of collective thought and action, also began to take action on the material grievances that had been previously expressed, but generally not included, in the Books of Grievances. Frightened by rumours that the King and nobles would take revenge for the revolution in Paris and for acts of petty disobedience in the countryside (the ‘Famine Pact’, by which nobles would hire brigands to destroy their crops and starve them) peasant communities in many provinces targeted noble castles to

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destroy feudal dues ('the Great Fear', July–August 1789). This action was important because it took place largely independently of Parisian leaders and ideas, and proved that peasants had political 'agency' (the ability to think and act politically by themselves).

**Fourth**, this rural rebellion was in turn important to the development of the revolution because it forced the material grievances of rural people back into public view, and compelled the National Assembly to quickly address the issue. Although there was already a small group in the assembly that believed that feudal dues should be abolished (the Breton Club), the flood of reports of rural rebellion terrified the deputies who, in the Night of Patriotic Delirium (4–5 August 1789) initially abolished the feudal system in its entirety. While this was subsequently modified (the August Decrees, 4–11 August 1789), rural action had forced an attack on the last great pillar of the old regime.

### **Question 9: How the ideas expressed in the Cahiers de Doléances contributed to a revolutionary situation by 4 August 1789.**

The Books of Grievances were not intended to create a revolutionary situation, but rather to *prevent* discontent by allowing the king's subjects to respectfully make him aware of problems so that he might consider ways of solving them. They were also, in practical terms, a set of instructions to elected representatives to any meeting of the Estates-General as to how they should vote on given issues. They were therefore a part of the authority structure of the monarchical regime in France, not an attack upon it. The set of books drawn up in February–April 1789, however, contained demands that clearly showed that a revolutionary situation had developed in France by 1789.

**First**, the Cahiers de Doléances contained many of the political and constitutional demands of the Third Estate, such as voting by head at the Estates-General, equality of responsibility for taxation, no taxation without representation, equality of opportunity in careers and the guarantee of civic rights.

**Second**, historian George Taylor has discovered that the Cahiers de Doléances clearly showed that many members of the nobility and of the clergy *also* supported radical ideas: many nobles admitted that the existing system had to change, that fiscal privileges could not be maintained, that the principle of appointment by merit rather than noble birth was fair, and some even accepted the idea of voting by head rather than by order. Indeed, historians have found, on careful examination, that the books of the nobles were generally even more radical in their suggestions than those of the Third Estate. Evidence for this is that while 57% of books of the Third Estate demanded a constitution before taxes could be collected, a total of 64% of noble books insisted on this same principle.

**Third**, the Cahiers de Doléances also helped create a revolutionary situation by 4 August 1789 by what they *did not* say. The three stages of drafting of the books of the Third Estate ensured that many peasants *stated* their grievances, including their demand to end the feudal system, and such abuses as the heavy labour dues, ‘banalities’ (the lord’s monopoly on mills and oil presses), the right of hunting and others. However, the second and third stages of drafting often led to the elimination of these local grievances in favour of constitutional matters. As historian D. Sutherland comments, the process of drafting these documents gave people the expectation that their problems would be solved for them by the government. When this did not occur, the resultant disappointment added to a sense that the government was despotic, and that change would have to occur by force. For example, it was the inactivity of the National Assembly on rural concerns that led deputies to launch the demand for the abolition of the feudal system on the night of August 1789, resulting in the Night of Patriotic Delirium (4–5 August 1789) in which extensive changes were made to the feudal system.

**Fourth**, the ideas expressed in the Cahiers de Doléances did contain a large degree of consensus between the three orders on certain political matters. They agreed that the king should rule by a written constitution, that the Estates-General would provide a representative body to decide on taxation, that fiscal equality should exist, that individual rights would be encoded in law and that the Church should be reformed. These books may not have intended to cause a revolution, but they were revolutionary in their implications for the absolute, divine right monarchy.

While the Cahiers de Doléances had suggested a number of key reforms, such as the reform of the Church, they alone did not guide the unfolding of the revolutionary situation. Between May–August 1789, the ‘patriots’ went far beyond the suggestions of the Cahiers de Doléances by the abolition of corporate privileges, the nationalisation of Church land, the abolition of venal offices and the abolition of noble titles.

**Question 10: How the social distinctions in the calling of the Estates-General contributed to the development of the revolution between 4 May and 23 June 1789.**

The traditional division of French society into three social orders was not merely a *social* distinction, visible in the differentiated ceremonial costume worn by the deputies to the Estates-General, but a *political* and *legal* distinction as well.

**First**, the social distinctions between the orders had been the basis of the traditional political procedures of the Estates-General, which had last met in 1614. The three estates met and voted by order, meaning that the two privileged estates would normally outvote the Third Estate. When the Estates-General

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convened on 5 May 1789, the Second Estate (nobles) voted to deliberate as the noble estate, and the clergy narrowly voted to keep the same arrangement. It was the deputies of the Third Estate who demanded common verification of credentials (10 June 1789).

**Second**, the social distinctions between the orders were also an integral part of the *social* system of the old regime, which was a culture of deference. Socially and psychologically, people had been brought up to express deference (respect) for their social ‘betters’. By 1789, however, there was a strong belief in the Third Estate that their deputies should be treated with equal respect to the deputies of the two privileged estates. Evidence for this is the demand of the Third Estate of Dourdan, who demanded to come before their ‘father’ (the king) “without any distinctions which might dishonour them.”

**Third**, Louis XVI deliberately arranged the ceremonial of the Estates-General to re-emphasise both these traditional political and social divisions between the three estates. The deputies of the Third Estate were humiliated that they had to wear plain black costumes, like poor priests, while the privileged estates wore colourful ceremonial costumes. They were also angered when the king greeted first the clergy and then the nobility in the splendid Hall of Mirrors, but greeted the deputies of the Third Estate in a more humble room.

**Fourth**, this insistence on political distinctions (in the order of voting) and on social distinctions (in the ceremonial part of the meeting) so angered the deputies of the Third Estate that they first challenged the very basis of the political procedures of the meeting, finally asserting in theory that they virtually constituted a national assembly (17 June 1789), then constituting themselves under oath not to disperse until they had a constitution (20 June 1789). This had such effect that the deputies voted, after the Royal Session of 23 June 1789, to defy the King’s instruction to disperse and to meet in their separate orders. When this occurred, the rebellion against royal absolute power was, constitutionally, complete. In this sense, the social and political distinctions of the Estates-General had been a major strategic and psychological force driving the development of the revolution.

### Question 11: Image of the Third Estate ‘carrying’ the privileged estates

- a. The Third Estate is shown in its traditional role of being a peasant who does all the hard manual labour in the French nation. The First Estate (clergy) and the Second Estate (nobles) are ‘carried’ by the Third Estate as a metaphor for the fact that the peasant’s work in growing the food allows them to live.
- b. The metaphor of the piggyback suggests that the burden placed on the Third Estate is literally crushing. The peasant is poor and elderly, while the two privileged estates are well-fed and luxuriously dressed. The rabbits and birds refer to the problem that peasants could not protect their crops against being eaten by the lord’s animals.

c. The first revolutionary idea is to do with the social utility of the Third Estate, whose members – from peasants through to merchants – are some of the most useful members of society because they grow food and generate wealth.

The second revolutionary idea is a criticism of the many burdensome aspects of the feudal system, whose various taxes, dues and tithes are listed on the pieces of paper, and whose problems are also represented by the lord's rabbits eating the peasant's crops.

d. This cartoon might have appeared around May 1789 because its overall message is about the importance and social utility of the Third Estate generally, not just the problems of the peasants. As such, it would have been very relevant to the debate that raged before and after the opening of the Estates-General in May 1789. The issue of voting by order (which would give the two privileged estates a likely majority over the Third Estate on most issues) or voting by head (which might favour the Third Estate, especially if its numbers were doubled) had led to many statements of the numerical importance and the usefulness of the Third Estate, as opposed to the two privileged estates, which were felt to be failing to fulfil their original responsibilities as the spiritual (clergy) and military (nobility) protectors of the nation. The most powerful statement of the social utility of the Third Estate had been made by Abbé Sieyès in *What is the Third Estate?* (January 1789), and between May–June 1789 the sense of division between the Third Estate and the privileged orders became so strong as to prompt the momentous decision to constitute the representatives of the Third Estate as a national assembly (17 June 1789).

e. This contemporary cartoon is very useful in understanding the causes of tension and conflict in the traditional society because the metaphor of the piggyback is so powerful, and allows us to see how people tried to visualise the unfairness of the society in which they lived.

The many references to heavy taxes establish the fact that all of the Third Estate – not just peasants – was heavily taxed in France, and in that sense was 'carrying' the more lightly taxed privileged orders. It is therefore unfair that they should be most heavily burdened with tax, while the privileged estates contribute very little to society. It was felt that the two privileged orders were no longer fulfilling their original role in society. While the noble should be defending the nation, and the priest should be praying for the nation, they are both represented as totally passive. The priest looks contented and well fed, and his pockets are stuffed with documents concerning his multiple benefices (positions) and his pensions and tithes. The noble seems proud, unaware of the poor peasant beneath him and ridiculously over-dressed. Although he carries a sword, this is now only an honorific privilege, for he no longer fulfils his original role as the country's warrior. His pockets, too, are stuffed with documents about the many rights and dues he enjoys. Both are receiving a great deal for doing very little.



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This image also refers specifically to the problems faced by peasants under the feudal system. These problems had been mentioned by peasants in the meetings held to draft the Books of Grievances, but many of these local, specific and material grievances were filtered out of the successive drafts of the lists of grievances sent to the Estates-General at Versailles. The peasants therefore felt that they had explained their problems and naturally expected that they would be solved, and hence were angry when the Estates-General and then the National Assembly did not do very much to alleviate them. This caused tensions in early 1789, and these would erupt into open conflict in the rural rebellion of July–August 1789.

### Question 12: The image of the Tennis Court Oath

*[Author's note: This question was based on an image, which was the central section of Jacques-Louis David's painting of The Tennis Court Oath. He painted this in 1790, one year after the actual event, which occurred on 20 June 1789. Note that the reproduction of the image has been reversed. This should not have altered the meaning that students might have gained from the image.]*

**a.** The overwhelming majority of the participants were members of the Third Estate, primarily middle class people such as lawyers and public servants.

The second group shown were members of the First Estate, so-called liberal clergy who supported the 'patriot' cause.

**b.** Politically, the deputies of the Third Estate have asserted the principle of representation by demanding a constitution to formalise the National Assembly they had created on 17 June 1789, thus challenging absolute monarchy.

Socially, the deputies have created a society of equal citizens, who take their oath standing up, as free men, thus destroying the old regime culture of deference and the corporate society based on privilege.

**c.** The first principle is that of enlightened religious tolerance. The three figures are two representatives of the Catholic Church, who now embrace, and accept, a member of the Protestant Church, which had been repressed under the old regime.

The figure shown sitting at the table and holding his hat has been firmly identified as Sieyès by J.M. Thompson and by Philippe Bordes. It was Sieyès who had proposed the formation of the National Assembly on 17 June 1789, and so between May and June 1789 his role had been important as the 'thinker of the revolution'. Philippe Bordes states that Sieyès does not take part in the surge of enthusiasm by raising his hand, yet seems somehow to play a determining role in the momentous event. There has been no explanation as to why he did not raise his arm, but it certainly cannot have been because he wanted to express opposition to it. Sieyès represents the culmination of the political and social ideal of the importance of the Third Estate, which he had expressed so eloquently in *What is the Third Estate?*, and which must have

helped the deputies make the quantum leap of thought to declare themselves the representatives of the nation on 17 June 1789.

*[Author's note: Some people have asked whether it is possible that the examiners might have been thinking of another revolutionary principle, that of tolerance and freedom of opinion and expression. This idea is in David's painting, but it is expressed by another set of figures, not actually shown in this central part of the image. To the right, the so-called 'Martin d'Auch group' shows a deputy who refused to take the oath. Another deputy urges him to join the majority, but another deputy asserts that d'Auch has a right to abstain. However, to the author's best knowledge, Sieyès, who is shown in the central part of the image, was not exercising any right of abstention, but was simply writing down the motion.]*

**d.** The events of 20 June 1789 were the culmination of an accelerating crisis of the old regime, which began as a financial crisis, escalated into a fiscal crisis and then developed into a political crisis.

First, the financial crisis of the old regime had been created by excessive spending on four major but fruitless wars, of which the French contribution to the American War of Independence was the most recent, costing 1,066 million pounds in loans. This caused a massive national debt with interest payments that would inevitably exceed the government's revenues.

Second, the fiscal crisis of the old regime was caused by the fact that taxation was heavy (indirect taxes on food were as high as they could go), inefficient (the practice of tax farming caused a loss of revenue) and unfair (falling most heavily on the Third Estate, and less heavily on the privileged First and Second estates).

Third, the debate over the reform of the taxation system raised the radical new idea that there should be no privileged exemption from paying a new uniform tax, first proposed by Minister Calonne. This new fiscal idea then linked up with a new political idea, that of representation, and the belief that no new tax could be approved without some debate by representatives of the nation. When both the Assembly of Notables and the *parlements* refused to offer such approval, demands were made for the calling of the only body that resembled a representative institution, the Estates-General. When bankruptcy forced Louis XVI to call this body to meet, the political problem became a crisis, because of the controversy over voting by order (which would have given the First and Second Estates superiority over the Third) or by voting by head (which would have favoured the Third Estate, especially if its number was doubled to reflect its numerical importance). When the king failed to concede on this point, the deputies, acting on the principles stated by Sieyès and others, declared that they were the representatives of the nation, and declared themselves a National Assembly on 17 June 1789. On 20 June, further apparent

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resistance from the king led them to take an oath not to disband until they had a constitution.

e. This representation is very useful in depicting the central event of the stage of the revolution known as the ‘bourgeois revolution’ (May–June 1789), because it celebrates a key revolutionary event which asserted the principle of representation over absolutism. It is also useful because it was commissioned by the people whom it depicts – the male, predominantly middle-class deputies of the Third Estate – who wanted to celebrate their own role in the constitutional element of the revolution. It was also painted by an artist, Jacques-Louis David, who was sympathetic to their cause, and so could be relied upon to faithfully represent their ideas and their spirit.

The first inequality it depicts was the political inequality, by which members of the Third Estate were denied top positions in government, the Church and the armed forces by the principle of birth over merit. In addition, the Third Estate was denied political action by the outdated political forms of the old regime; the archaic Estates-General included representatives of their estate, but under conditions that rendered them politically powerless. They were forced to meet as ‘orders’, and to vote as such, thus giving numerical superiority to the two privileged orders. By declaring themselves the representatives of the nation (17 June) and by demanding a constitution (20 June), they were asserting their right to political participation in genuine constitutional government.

The second inequality depicted here is social, cultural and psychological. The old regime was a corporate society (made up of different groups each with its own conditions of life and rights), based upon privilege (special or private laws for each group) and backed by a culture of deference (a belief that certain people are your social ‘betters’). These deputies have now refused to meet in their orders, they have been joined by some members of the First and Second Estates, making them properly a ‘national’ assembly, and they are taking their oath standing, as free and equal citizens.

This representation cannot, however, show two other social groups, working people and women, because they were not deputies in this assembly. They are shown observing from the margins of the action. They too suffered inequalities, which would lead them to take action in the next stage of the revolution, the so-called ‘popular revolution’ of July–August 1789.

### Question 13: The Third Estate ‘rides’ the clergy and the nobility

a.

- i. First, the Third Estate is riding triumphantly on the back of the previously privileged Second Estate (nobility), a reversal of the previous ‘piggy-back image’ which showed the Third estate carrying the privileged orders on its back.
- ii. The Second Estate is now carrying some of the load, and fulfils the useful role of protecting the nation with its sword.

**b.**

**i.** First, the dead birds and the dead rabbit refer to the end of the hated system whereby peasants could not defend their crops against attacks by the lord's animals.

**ii.** The reference to 'relief for the people' and the common land tax refer to an (alleged) end to the crushing array of feudal dues which affected the peasants.

**c.** First, this image contains the phrase 'Long Live the King' because many people believed that Louis XVI had genuinely accepted the revolution and hence his place in the constitutional monarchy. After his agreement on 17 July 1789 to withdraw troops from Paris, to recognise Bailly as mayor of Paris and Lafayette as commander of the National Guard, he had made an appearance of being a constitutional monarch and even a patriot, appearing in public wearing a revolutionary cockade.

Secondly, the phrase "Long live the Nation" refers to the recent political revolution, started on 17 June 1789, when the Third Estate declared itself a national assembly, compounded on 20 June 1789 when it swore the Tennis Court Oath, whereby the origins of sovereignty were completely reversed. Under the old regime, power came 'from above', from God, through the King to his obedient 'subjects'. Henceforth, sovereignty came 'from below', from the 24 million people who made up an entity known as 'the Nation', expressed through their elected representatives.

Thirdly, the revolutionary cockade is shown as being worn by all three figures. The cockade, which was originally green, began as a symbol of the 'patriot' movement before 1789, and its later blue, white and red form was worn to symbolise adherence to the revolution after July 1789. The fact that it is worn by all three figures suggests that people believed that the three orders or estates of French society were now unified in common adherence to the principles of 1789, an idea expressed by the phrase 'Peace and Concord'.

**d.** This visual representation provides a reliable view of the Revolution of 1789 in so far as it expresses some of the triumph felt by members of the Third Estate after the successful capture of the Bastille in July 1789, and some of the exhilaration felt after the alleged 'abolition' of feudalism in the Night of Patriotic Delirium of 4–5 August 1789.

In general terms, this image shows the Third Estate now in a dominant position, and proudly saying that it knew it would get its turn (to be in control). As in the cartoon *The Awakening of the Third Estate*, there is a note of triumph and an awareness of the new political power and agency of people previously referred to as 'commoners'.

In specific terms, the image does show how the Night of Patriotic Delirium resulted in the abolition of some vexatious feudal rights, such as the noble right to keep dovecotes and to ride over peasant lands for hunting purposes.

In addition, the Night of Patriotic Delirium, and the subsequent August Decrees (5–11 August 1789), allowed for the first statement of key principles

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that would later be fully expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (August 1789), whence the reference to Liberty and Equality.

Maximalist historians, who tend to be Marxists (Soboul, Rudé, Lefebvre) see this event as a victory in a class war, in which the labouring classes represented here by the peasant won a great victory over the feudal system. It is true that peasant protest action ('The Great Fear', July–August 1789) helped precipitate the Night of Patriotic Delirium, but this is to forget that a number of liberal nobles (e.g. the members of the Society of Thirty) and liberal clergy also started the voluntary abandonment of feudal rights on 4 August 1789. Minimalist historians, who often tend to be Revisionists (Doyle, Schama, Furet), admit that the Third Estate, and especially the revolutionary crowd, now felt its enormous power. For Schama, however, power unleashed violence, which he believed was the motor of the revolution.

This hopeful image is not a reliable representation of the Revolution of 1789 in so far as it does not reveal that the deputies subsequently revised their total abolition of the feudal system by making certain feudal dues redeemable, which means that peasants had to buy their way out of their obligations, often being asked to pay an impossible twenty years' worth of dues. Ultimately, the feudal system was abolished not because of this action by the Constituent Assembly, but because the peasants themselves simply ceased paying feudal dues, until the system fell into disuse.

### Question 14: Image – Goodbye Bastille

**a.**

**i.** The two privileged orders (clergy at left, nobility at right) being made to dance on a string.

**ii.** The Third Estate, or the 'commoners' represented by a man playing country-style bagpipes.

**b.**

**i.** In the background, at the right, is the Bastille which, after its capture (July 1789), was totally demolished.

**ii.** In the background, on the left, is a building in flames, which probably refers to the burning of noble chateaux during the Great Fear (July–August 1789) *or* which may refer to the crowd's action in burning the tax barriers in Paris in July 1789.

**c.** The main event depicted in this representation is that the Third Estate began to feel that it was now more in control of the nation's affairs after the successful urban revolution of July 1789 and the rural revolution of August 1789. Compared with earlier images which showed the Third Estate crushed by the weight and power of the privileged orders, this image suggests that the Third Estate is now standing and free, and is 'calling the tune', in the literal sense of playing bagpipes, and in the symbolic sense of making the two privileged orders dance like helpless puppets on a string, which the piper agitates by

moving his leg. The Third Estate has the simple dignity of an ordinary man playing a popular instrument; the fat clergyman and the daintily dressed nobleman look both helpless and undignified. The lion, a symbol of the monarchy, is now chained and submissive to the Third Estate, a reference to the fact that the King had had to abandon his evident intention to use troops to close the National Assembly. This new sense of strength and control amongst members of the Third Estate came from the fact that the Parisian crowd had demonstrated its strength by capturing the Bastille, an event which effectively changed the King's mind about mustering troops in the capital, and therefore saved the recently formed National Assembly (17–20 June 1789) from forcible closure. The subsequent demolition of the prison, which is shown here, became a spectacle in itself and served to illustrate how symbols of the old regime could simply be removed from the city. Similarly, the burning of buildings such as customs houses or noble chateaux, also demonstrated the destructive force of the crowd, and its ability to force change on material matters that most affected ordinary people.

**d. This representation is reliable** in so far as it traces the new confidence of the Third Estate to the fact that the action of ordinary working people in the revolutionary crowd was crucial to both the ongoing development and the consolidation of the revolution: the capture of the Bastille not only forced Louis XVI to withdraw the troops he was amassing in Paris, but to accept Bailly as Mayor of Paris and Lafayette as Commander of the National Guard. Working people could feel that they had 'saved' the revolution as represented by the National Assembly. The representation is also reliable in its expression of a sense of triumph at the time, expressed in numerous other images such as 'The Awakening of the Third Estate'.

This emphasis on the role of the common man would agree well with the school of **Marxist historians** such as Lefebvre, Rudé and Soboul, who emphasised the role of the Third Estate, and especially the urban working classes, in accomplishing the revolution. These historians also wrote pioneering histories that analysed the nature and motives of the urban crowd and dispelled forever the myth of the 'mob' or the 'starving rabble'.

By contrast, the later school of **Revisionist historians**, led by the pioneering Alfred Cobban (*A Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*) and followed by historians such as William Doyle, Simon Schama and François Furet, challenged the idea that the French Revolution was simply a class struggle between an ambitious Third Estate and the privileged orders of an outdated feudal regime, as this image would seem to suggest. Alfred Cobban denied that there was an emerging modern bourgeoisie in France. William Doyle dismissed the Marxist idea of the 'pattern' of history and argued instead for historical 'accident', meaning a crisis that simply got out of control and unexpectedly caused the fall of the monarchy. François Furet argued that the revolution was driven as much by a political debate about accountability and representation,

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and that the logic of the language used in this argument carried people forward into revolutionary action. They would certainly agree that the revolutionary movement was not a simple two-part conflict, because many liberal clergy (such as the Abbé Sieyès) and liberal nobles (such as the Marquis de Lafayette and the Comte de Mirabeau) also supported early revolutionary ideas through clubs such as the Society of Thirty. Indeed, recent scholarship has revealed that the Books of the Grievances of the clergy and the nobility in 1788–1789 often made even more radical demands for revolutionary change than those of the Third Estate. It was often members of the privileged orders who triggered significant stages in the ongoing development of the revolution: the Abbé Sieyès' *What is the Third Estate?* for example propelled the constitutional debate of early 1789 forward to the point that the deputies of the Third Estate could define themselves as a national assembly (17 June 1789), while the altruistic renunciation of feudal privileges by the Viscount de Noailles and the members of the Breton Club triggered the emotional actions of the Night of Patriotic Delirium (4–5 August 1789). For this reason, this simple two-part image is finally inadequate to represent the true nature of the 'patriot' forces in the early stages of the French Revolution.

### Question 15: Image – Justice stands with the strongest

**a.**

- i.** The seated figure on the right wearing a cockade represents the 'patriot' Third Estate.
- ii.** The seated figure on the far left represents the nobles who formed the Second Estate.

**b.**

- i.** The Third Estate has a new sense of its own power after the capture of the Bastille.
- ii.** The privileged First and Second Estates, which had been used to having power, now felt that the Third Estate was in control.

**c.** The revolutionaries believed that, after the successful urban revolt of July 1789 (capture of Les Invalides, capture of the Bastille) and the rural revolt of July–August 1789, there had been a significant shift in the political and social patterns of power in France. This image uses the familiar image of the child's see-saw to express the idea of a complete reversal of the existing pattern of power: the Third Estate had suddenly assumed more weight and importance, and the once-powerful privileged estates are now very much at the mercy of this new force. The metaphor is extended by the addition of the symbolic figure of Justice, who not only signifies that this change of power relationships is right, but helps to create it by placing her foot on the see-saw.

The significance of the image is that it shows how the Third Estate's sense of its own power had evolved since the meeting of the Estates-General. Their first victory was their campaign for voting by head rather than by order, which resulted in the important constitutional landmarks of the declaration of a national assembly (17 June), the oath not to disband (20 June 1790), the refusal of royal orders to disperse (23 June) and the uniting of the orders (27 June 1789). The image also mentions strength and shows the Third Estate holding a rifle. This refers to the second victory of the Third Estate, when the urban crowd in Paris demonstrated its physical and numerical strength by capturing the royal prison of the Bastille, effectively persuading the King not to use troops to close the national assembly. He agreed to withdraw the troops, recognise Bailly as mayor of Paris and to form a national guard commanded by Lafayette. As a result, the revolutionary crowd in Paris felt that it had saved the constitutional revolution started by the bourgeois deputies in the Estates-General/National Assembly, and now felt they had some ownership of the victory. The artist who engraved this image would also have been aware of the rural revolt and of the subsequent Great Fear that had swept some provinces of France, where popular action by rural crowds also toppled the power of local nobles. On the day his image was created, this rural revolt would culminate in the Night of Patriotic Delirium, in which the National Assembly initially claimed to abolish the feudal system "in its entirety".

**d.** This image presents a reliable view of the events from 20 June to 4 August 1789 because it expresses the spirit of triumph that members of the Third Estate must have felt as they successfully overturned the absolute monarchy, a structure of power that had existed for centuries. Specifically, it recognises the sense of moral right (asserted by the allegorical figure of Justice) backed by the use of sheer armed force.

The image does not, however, give a completely reliable view of these events, because it suggests that they were a simple confrontation between the Third Estate and the privileged First and Second Estates. In reality, many members of the privileged orders already agreed with 'patriot' ideas, and supported the Third Estate on key issues.

For example, 'liberal' nobles such as the Duc d'Orléans and the Marquis de Lafayette formed clubs (eg. the Society of Thirty) to propose a constitutional monarchy along British lines. Many nobles who wrote the Books of Grievances were even more radical in their suggestions than those of the Third Estate. Evidence for this is that while 57% of books of the Third Estate demanded a constitution before taxes could be collected, a total of 64% of noble books insisted on this same principle.

Similarly, many clergy supported the political agenda of the Third Estate. Evidence of this is that it was one such 'liberal' clergy, the Abbé Sieyès, who wrote *What is the Third Estate?*, a pamphlet which defined the importance of



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the Third Estate as being most of the nation. He subsequently guided the debates of the Third Estate at Versailles (June 1789) as it moved towards a constitutional definition of its role as the elected representatives of nearly all the nation, resulting in the initial declaration of the idea of a national assembly on 17 June 1789.

Historiographically, this image comes closest to the French Marxist viewpoint of historians such as Soboul and Lefebvre. These writers accepted Karl Marx's viewpoint that all of history can be seen in terms of a class struggle, and that the French Revolution was the greatest of all revolutions. To prove that French history fits this pattern, they argued that the French Revolution was that stage in history when an ambitious bourgeoisie challenges the rule of the king and his nobles. In this perspective, history could seem like a simple see-saw in which the bourgeoisie 'won' and the nobles 'lost'. The Revisionist historians, however, argued that this interpretation was too simple, and did not fit the facts. Historians such as Cobban, Taylor and Doyle pointed out that there was not an industrial bourgeoisie, and that the bourgeoisie that did exist wanted nothing better than to become nobles by means of venal office. Taylor has proven that the nobles and rich bourgeoisie formed a ruling class with strong common interests. The 'patriots' of 1789 were therefore made up of members of the Third Estate, the clergy and the nobility who believed that fiscal and constitutional reform were necessary. Since the Revisionists have established this point, historians have worked towards a consensus that the revolution was not caused by a class struggle of the Marxist type at all, but by a fiscal crisis which became associated with new political ideas about representation, sharpened by an economic crisis. In this respect, this two-part image is not adequate to represent the complexity of the causes of the crisis of the old regime in France.

### **Chapter 8 suggested answers (these questions can be found from p.41 onwards)**

#### **Question 16: Revolutionary violence**

- a. Schama sees the Girondin government as being unsure of how to deal with the rapid radicalisation of the popular movement in Paris and with the rising influence of Robespierre and his followers, and as being divided within its own ranks.
- b. The effect of the first attack on the royal palace was to make deputies of the Legislative Assembly aware of the power of the popular movement, and hence 'nervous for their own safety'. When 75 per cent of deputies stayed away from debates, this further reduced the government's capacity to deal with the challenge of popular radicalism.
- c. Schama believes that although the emergency powers granted on 5 July 1792 were valuable because they gave the Legislative Assembly more freedom to

deal with the crisis, they were dangerous because they set a precedent of suspending normal legal procedure, and radical groups could use this as an excuse for taking action against the assembly.

**d.** The events described as ‘the height of the insurrections of August’ are related to a long struggle between the national assembly to save the constitutional monarchy, and the radical popular movement to depose the king. To explain these events, we need to understand the development of the struggle over the period 1791–1792. After the Flight to Varennes (June 1791), the Constituent Assembly had struggled to defeat the perception that the king had betrayed the revolution and undermined the very basis of a constitutional monarchy. The Massacre of the Champ de Mars (July 1791) revealed that the radicalising popular movement in Paris would continue to push for the deposition of the king. When Lafayette’s national guards opened fire on the crowd, it was clear that the revolution had split into two opposing camps: those who hoped to stop the revolution at a constitutional monarchy, and those who wanted to take it further. During 1792, the popular movement was further radicalised by political controversies (such as the king’s dismissal of Roland and other ministers), political developments (such as the radicalisation of the 48 Paris ‘section’ meetings, and the growth of their popular societies), military developments (such as successive defeats in the international war) and economic pressures (such as rising food prices). Fearing that the king’s obstructive use of his power of suspensive veto might mean that he was planning a coup, the radical Cordeliers Club coordinated a demonstration to intimidate the king. The first invasion of the Tuileries Palace (20 June 1792) did not topple the monarchy, but proved that this could easily be done by a militant crowd of 10,000 people. By July, militant national guards from provincial centres such as Marseilles had flooded into Paris, and the radical Jacobins forged links with them. The section assemblies were now meeting permanently, and allowing passive citizens to participate, and this radicalised their debates. These meetings openly called for the violent deposition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic, a demand finally backed by Robespierre and the Jacobin Club. Finally, when the Duke of Brunswick’s threatening manifesto reached Paris (28 July 1792), popular radicalism was intensified by both anger and fear and by the menace that Paris would be attacked if the royal family were harmed. By 9 August, the section meetings had formed a central committee, which then declared itself to be an insurrectionary commune, which began to prepare an uprising. On 10 August, they rang the bell to call out their supporters. The resulting uprising was as much an attack on the royal family as it was on the national assembly (which had tried to discourage this revolutionary activity). The uprising resulted in the definitive overthrow of the monarchy, although the republic was not proclaimed until the new assembly, the National Convention, met (September 1791).

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e. This extract is certainly useful in understanding the violent direction taken by the new society, to the degree that it warns us that most revolutions do involve the use of violence as an instrument for achieving their aims. It is limited, however, by Simon Schama's particular place in the historiographic debate about the French Revolution. Simon Schama is a revisionist historian, to the extent that he has questioned the extent to which the revolution did change people's lives for the better. Writing in the British tradition of history, he has a profound dislike of the violence of the French revolutionary tradition. He repeatedly writes that violence and bloodshed were driving forces of the revolution. Despite his dislike of revolutionary violence, however, he uses it to make a colourful and dramatic 'chronicle' of people's lives during the revolution.

Schama's beliefs about revolution show some lack of understanding of the revolutionary experience. His writing fails to mention the important principle admitted by his colleague William Doyle, who stated that it is resistance that makes revolutions become violent. While some acts of violence occurred early in the revolution – such as the capture of the Bastille (14 July 1789) – the worst examples of violence can be explained by forms of resistance. For example, the resistance of the king to the revolution in the Flight to Varennes (20 June 1791) was the eventual cause of the revolutionary 'days' of 20 June 1792 and of 10 August 1792, which finally toppled the monarchy.

The period 1792–1793 was, specifically, a special form of violence; this was Terror, the official and legal use of violence and coercion by a government to dissuade its enemies and opponents. The revolutionary government used Terror to deal effectively with an interlocking set of problems, including the resistance of peasants in the Vendée region, the resistance of other European powers in a series of military coalitions against France and the resistance of 'Federalist' cities such as Lyon.

Schama elsewhere describes another form of violence, the brutal mob action of the September Massacres, which saw the immoral and pointless murder of some 1200 harmless people then locked up in jails (September 1792). This sort of violence was not, however, caused by what he calls 'the willingness of politicians to exploit either the threat or the fact of violence'. It was instead an expression of the genuine fear and anger created amongst the Parisian people by the deprivations of war, by the approach of foreign armies, and by quite clear threats of punishment such as the Duke of Brunswick Manifesto.

While Schama is quite correct in seeing violence as being repulsive from a modern point of view, this extract fails to recognise the full complexity of violence in a revolutionary situation.

**Question 17: The Flight to Varennes**

**a.**

**i.** The Paris crowd vandalised symbols of the monarchy.

**ii.** The radical Cordeliers Club published a petition to depose the king or at least to consult the nation about his future position.

**b.**

**i.** The king's attempt to enrol help from another power would ultimately challenge the revolution by putting it in conflict with another powerful country such as Austria.

**ii.** The relative unity of the project of revolutionary change so far was now divided, as people had to choose for or against the king who was a necessary part of a constitutional monarchy.

**c.**

**i.** The king challenged the revolution by renouncing it, that is, by making it clear that he could not work within the new political system, in a letter he left behind.

**ii.** The king denounced the revolution by condemning such things as the breakdown of law and order, attacks on property and the radicalism of the clubs.

**d.**

**i.** Louis XVI's decision to flee France was caused primarily by his growing concern, as protector of the Catholic faith, about the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, especially after the Pope's belated condemnation of the reforms. He was also influenced by other factors such as the physical danger to his family (eg when the crowd prevented his carriage from leaving for St. Cloud, April 1791), by the urgings of Marie-Antoinette and her supporters, by the urgings of some of his generals, and by the loss of the support of his spy, Mirabeau.

**ii.** During the first, relatively peaceful, moderate and constructive phase of the revolution (1789–1790), the National Constituent Assembly had successfully pursued its three part project of complete reform: politically, to create a constitutional monarchy, civically, to abolish privilege and establish equal rights, and administratively, to rationalise the jumble of political and ecclesiastical structures from the old regime. They addressed many of the goals of the Books of Grievances, but went far beyond them, enjoying the support of revolutionary leaders and the revolutionary crowd and, apparently, of the king. Many people thought the revolution was 'over' by 1790. The controversy caused by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, however, was a first turning point that would divide and radicalise the revolution, because it divided the clergy, and then the whole population of France, over the matter of supposedly 'administrative' reform of the Church. Specifically, the matter of the oath of loyalty to the constitution and the National Assembly – required of all employees of the government – became a spiritual issue because it clashed with the higher oath that the clergy took to the Pope as their spiritual leader. In

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alienating some 50% (later 60%) of priests, who refused the oath and thus became 'refractories', the revolution also created its own first substantial group of 'enemies'. The flight to Varennes was a consequent second turning point, because in shaking the leaders' and the revolutionary movement's belief in the compliance of the king, it made the system of constitutional monarchy impossible, and therefore guaranteed that a new and more radical political system would have to be found.

e. As a revisionist historian working in the British tradition, Doyle is prepared to both question whether the revolution achieved all that it claimed to do, and to condemn the rapid descent into violence in the form of state coercion and crowd action in the period 1792–1794. He does, however, admit that the key principle is resistance that makes revolutions become violent, a point that became obvious after June 1791. This extract is useful because it highlights that the flight to Varennes was, subsequent upon the divisive issue of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the key event which triggered the two forces which served to radicalise the revolution. The first of these was the radicalisation of the popular revolutionary movement, which now went beyond the moderate plans of the middle-class deputies of the National Assembly and demanded the deposition of the king in the Champ de Mars petition (July 1791). The historical 'accident' of the Champ de Mars Massacre was also a crucial turning point because it highlighted another division within the revolution: this was the first time the Third Estate had fired upon the Third Estate, thus creating a distinction between middle-class National Guards and the people of the Parisian revolutionary crowd. The second force, arising from the first, was the increasing concern of foreign monarchies about the safety of the French royal family, resulting in increased foreign interest and, finally, warnings and threats about their safety. When the growing movement for deposition of the king caused the first invasion of the Tuileries Palace on 20 June 1792, and then the bloody overthrow of the monarchy on 10 August 1792, the radicalisation of the popular movement had set the revolution on a course of conflict with foreign powers. The resultant conflict (1792) with Austria, Prussia and later other European powers would itself cause the further radicalisation of the revolution, in particular by making the use of military Terror, economic Terror and political Terror necessary. In this respect, Doyle's argument is demonstrably correct: the king's total resistance to the revolution unleashed a chain of consequences that would explain the radicalisation, coercion and violence of the second phase of the French Revolution, from 1792 until Thermidor 1794.

**Question 18 – Declaration of War**

**a.**

- i.** The National Assembly urged Louis XVI to make a declaration of war upon Austria.
- ii.** The King, as head of the executive government and commander-in-chief of the army, was willing to start the diplomatic process leading to war.

**b.**

- i.** The National Assembly accused Austria of encouraging ‘French rebels’, that is, emigrated French nobles.
- ii.** It also accused Austria of establishing an alliance of several nations against France.

**c.** The great tragedy of the declaration of war on Austria in 1792 is that almost all groups on the French political spectrum supported the war initiative, but for their own political purposes. There was a number of different views of the period regarding the real reasons for the war, but almost all of them tended in favour of armed conflict. One contemporary view came from the radical left-wing of the Legislative Assembly – a loose coalition of several groups such as the Rolandists and the Brissotins, later to be referred to generically as the ‘Girondins’ in the National Convention – who believed that foreign war could resolve the disunities that had appeared in the course of 1791, force people within France to declare themselves for or against the revolution, and force external enemies to acknowledge the revolution. Another view came from Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and the Austrian Committee, who were willing to play the game of aggressive diplomacy, because they hoped for a war that the ill-prepared French revolutionary armies would lose, allowing the Austrian army to invade France and restore an absolute monarchy. Even amongst the more moderate constitutional monarchists who formed the right wing of the Legislative Assembly (the Feuillants) some, such as Lafayette, also hoped for a war for more personal reasons, to boost their declining popularity with new military exploits. A rare dissenting contemporary view came from some perceptive Jacobins – such as Robespierre and Danton – who opposed the initiative, pointing out that a victory would strengthen the power of military men, while a defeat would allow foreign armies to restore the monarchy. In their view, too, even a victory would fail in the stated aim – mentioned in the document currently under study – of spreading revolutionary freedoms to other nations, since they are rarely welcomed when carried on the barrel of a gun. Indeed, Robespierre argued, it was far more important to deal with the very real enemies within France first, a point of view which brings the focus back on the sources of division and resistance that had emerged in the course of the year 1791.

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d. The strength of this document is that it is an official diplomatic statement by the National Assembly explaining its reason for the declaration of war. In essence, the specific accusations are correct. Emigrated nobles had indeed fled to Austria or to some of the German states, and they were forming clandestine groups in places such as Koblenz with a view to overthrowing the revolution and restoring the monarchy in France. The Legislative Assembly, frustrated in its draconian laws against emigrated nobles by the King's use of his suspensive veto, demanded instead that German principalities such as Trier and Mainz expel the emigrated nobles or risk war (29 November 1791). In the event, these German states gave in to the demand, and the excuse for war seemed lost. The Austrian Emperor, however, provided another excuse in his Declaration (21 December 1791), promising Austrian support for the German states if threatened. The Legislative Assembly responded by declaring an alliance treaty of 1756 to be void. It is also true to say that the Austrians were making alliances with other powers: they had signed a formal defence pact with Prussia (7 February 1792). On the face of it, this declaration lists all the formal, diplomatic reasons for a declaration of war. It also gives expression to the revolutionary spirit of France in 1792, which asserted first that the new regime had a right to defend itself against explicit threats by its enemies, and second that it had a mission to carry revolutionary freedoms to other countries in Europe.

The limitation of this document is that it does not reveal the internal political pressures that made the war necessary, even after the nominal, external cause – the German states' support for emigrated nobles – had been addressed. The explanation lies in the nature of the Legislative Assembly, which assumed power on 1 October 1791. This group of legislators, who were new to national politics but who had had experience of revolutionary politics in the provinces, assumed their places determined to engage with the profound divisions that had fragmented the revolutionary consensus in 1791, notably the resistance of refractory priests subsequent to the reforms of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and of emigrated nobles who had fled France in increasing numbers ever since 1789. Their attempt to use draconian laws to punish and deter both forms of resistance was frustrated by the king's strategic use of his suspensive veto to delay laws until they were unworkable. They questioned the genuineness of the King's acceptance of the Constitution of 1791 (September 1791), and feared that his resistance to their laws might signify that he was planning to seize power with the aid of a military man such as Lafayette. They were also obliged to navigate the internal political dynamics of the Legislative Assembly, where the Feuillants represented the idea of stopping the revolution at a constitutional monarchy, and where the large unaligned group of the Plain seemed to be awaiting some major issue to win their support. While the diplomatic and military issues mentioned in the document were largely true, they merely provided the excuse for the war; it was internal political divisions that provided the real motive for the conflict.

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### Question 19 - The Interrogation of the King, 11 December 1792

**a.**

- i.** the suspension of an assembly representing the sovereign people.
- ii.** the closure of the assembly hall, which provoked the Tennis Court Oath (20 June 1789)

**b.**

- i.** surrounded the national assembly with troops
- ii.** made two royal declarations ordering them to disperse

**c.**

Louis XVI's understanding of his own power consisted first of the recent redefinition of royal power contained in the Constitution of 1791, which made him a constitutional monarch, but one who retained significant powers as supreme head of the executive arm of government. Behind this lay, however, remnants of his early education and formation during the old regime that had previously taught him to believe completely in the political theory of absolute monarchy, a largely unwritten and traditional set of understandings about the nature of his political power.

The development of the revolution and the creation of a new society between 5 August 1789 and his execution in January 1793 gave him the opportunity to use his new constitutional powers, notably the right of suspensive veto, and thus demonstrate that he could still exert authority – specifically to defend refractory priests and emigrated nobles from the harsh, punitive laws of the legislative Assembly – in defiance of the power of the national assembly. Similarly, his comment that “there exists no law to impeach me” reveals his clear awareness of the constitutional implications of Chapter 2, Section 1, which states that “the *person* of the King is inviolable and sacred”, meaning that he cannot be personally punished for his crime.

By the time of his trial, however, Louis still believed that he did not require any form of representation: the King might hear advice from representative bodies such as the provincial estates, but he was not obliged to act upon it. Theorists of royal power, such as Bossuet, had previously written that the King does not need representation from his subjects: as ‘head’ of state, he simply knows what the ‘body’ of his people needed, just as the human head understands and controls the human body. This basic belief guided and directed his actions during the rapidly unfolding political crisis of 1789. This document reveals that, when confronted with accusations, he defended his actions pointing out that he had executive power as ‘the master’ who was ‘empowered’ to use force to command obedience.

In responding to accusations about his actions in 1789, he reminded the Convention that he had the right, at that point in time to suspend a



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representative body that he had not approved (confrontation at Versailles, 20 June 1789, leading to the Tennis Court Oath). Moreover, the earlier decision (17 June 1789) to make a national assembly and to declare all taxes provisional until adequate representation occurred was a direct challenge to royal power itself. His decision to lock the doors of the meeting rooms and to guard them with soldiers was reasonable because he could not maintain his own authority if he did not formally block the Third Estate's assumption of sovereignty. The King would not agree with the deputies that this was an "act of despotism" (royal power that had become corrupt). Necker himself disagreed with the Third Estate's assumption of sovereignty, and urged the king to hold a Royal Session in which he could assert his authority but promise reforms (scheduled for 23 June 1789, then postponed for one day).

Similarly, the document's accusation that he had "wished to dictate the Nation's laws" referred to the Royal Session (23 June 1789), where Louis had used a traditional form of royal power and control that he considered to be still in existence. Historian William Doyle admits that Louis did behave as if in a traditional *lit de justice*, simply rejecting the important political and constitutional principles that had been decided by the Third Estate on 17 June. Doyle points out, however, that the traditional understanding of royal power that Louis had inherited also allowed him to make concessions of his own free will, which he did in a second statement announcing thirty-five important reforms, including the approval of *future* taxes and loans by the Estates-General.

Once the popular revolution of July 1789 had broken out, Louis would also have considered it his right, *at that time*, to move troops into Paris to disperse an illegal assembly in July 1789, as mentioned in the document, and would not hesitate to do so again when threatened by insurrection on 10 August 1792. His decision to withdraw those troops from Paris (15 July) occurred not because of any change to his sense of power, but to the strategic consideration that the loyalty of the troops themselves had been wavering, as demonstrated by the presence of French Guards amongst the crowd at the capture of the Bastille (14 July).

This document, being only an extract, does not adequately show that the King's understanding of the extent of his authority had actually changed in response to the new conditions created by the revolution. In accepting the Constitution of 1791 (September 1791), Louis finally consented to a redefinition of his authority. When, during his trial, he was accused of vetoing laws against emigrated nobles and refractory priests, he correctly pointed out that the constitution empowered him to do so. It was the makers of the constitution who had failed to predict that the compromise measure of a 'suspensive' veto would prove to be as powerful as an absolute veto, because of its ability to delay legislation for so long. This suggests that he was clearly

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aware of the nature of the new powers that had been given to him by the revolution itself.

**d.** The revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre wrote: “The period of the condemnation of Louis was without doubt the most dangerous of our whole revolution.” His comment reminds us that, when the new National Convention first met (21 September 1792), it was clear that there would be a power struggle between the initial majority of Girondins and the initially smaller group of Jacobins, both of whom had to compete for the votes of the undecided deputies referred to as ‘the Plain’. This, then, was a political struggle, but it was made dangerous because this battle between political factions took place in the context of a rapidly radicalising popular revolutionary movement that, since the insurrection of 10 August, had practiced the theory of ‘direct democracy’ (by which the revolutionary crowd physically entered the assembly building and threatened the deputies if improvements to material conditions were not made).

The main strength of this document is that it is an extract revealing the National Convention’s stated reasons for trying and punishing the King. Its main limitation is that a public statement by the Convention is not, by its nature, likely to reveal the very powerful political forces that were bearing on the assembly, making the outcome of the King’s trial heavy with political implications.

The different views of the reasons for the King’s trial and execution date to the political context of the event itself. There could be little disagreement as to the King’s actual guilt – the Flight to Varennes was seen as an act of treason - which had been confirmed by the discovery of a secret chest containing incriminating documents (November 1792). The vote on the King’s guilt was unanimous: 693 in favour, none against (15 January 1793). Nor was there much doubt that he would have to be deposed. The real conflict of views occurred in relation to what fate he should suffer.

In this respect, the question of the King’s punishment was enmeshed in the fundamental struggle for power in the recently-convened National Convention between the left wing of ‘the Mountain’ and the right wing of the Girondins. Brissot and the groups known together as the Girondins believed that they should simply keep the king under guard and not proceed to any further punishment. They might have believed that he could be useful in any bargaining with foreign powers; their enemies claimed that it was because they were plotting to restore him to the throne.

The Jacobins and other members of the ‘Mountain’ (a bloc of radical deputies in the Convention including members of the Jacobins and Cordeliers Clubs) were much more determined. Saint-Just argued that the King need not be tried at all because the people had already tried him by the insurrection that toppled the monarchy (10 August 1792). Robespierre’s view was that the king should not be tried because this implied there was some doubt about his guilt,

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which implied putting the revolution on trial. Others, such as Pétion, hesitated to abandon legal procedure, and the compromise was that the trial would be carried out by the Convention, which represented the will of the sovereign people. In the context of this political power struggle, the execution of the King became almost inevitable.

A third group exerting considerable pressure was the Paris Commune, which represented the radical working-class meetings of the sections of Paris. It made the claim that some deputies in the National Assembly had been in the pay of the king, an accusation that proved to be true in the case of Mirabeau.

Once the trial started (11 December 1792), it became clear that the political confrontation between Girondins and Jacobins would be played out on the question of the King's fate. There was also a belief that, if the Convention disregarded the popular movement's desire for revenge and punishment, there might be a murderous uprising against the national assembly by the *sans-culottes*. Behind this lay the other possibility that, if the provinces rose against the more radical decisions of Paris, there could be a civil war that would divide and weaken the revolution. When the Girondins tried to have the matter put to the nation via a referendum, the vote revealed deep divisions: 283 in favour, 424 against. This left a final vote on life or death: 361 in favour, 288 against, and 72 for a suspended death sentence.

Later views of the trial and execution of the King are similarly divided.

For **Marxist historians** such as George Rudé, the execution was merely a function of the political divisions within the Convention, and hence a Jacobin victory in the matter was a crucial part of winning ascendancy in the assembly, of placating the powerful *sans-culottes* movement and of avoiding civil war.

For **Revisionist historians** such as William Doyle, the execution was the logical culmination of a radical, militant and violent republican movement whose goal was to remove all vestiges of the old regime and create a clear point of 'no return'. Revisionist historian Simon Schama sees the trial and execution as yet another expression of the violence that he believes was the real motor driving the revolution.

**Recent historians** such as David Jordan have reminded us that the men of 1793 "grappled with the enormous questions of sovereignty, regicide and revolution." In this debate, new leaders emerged, such as Saint-Just, and existing leaders, such as Robespierre, reconsidered their earlier political principles. The fact that they had to do so against a backdrop of *sans-culottes* radicalism and militancy explains why their legal and constitutional considerations made this, in Robespierre's phrase, one of the most dangerous moments in the revolution.

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### Question 20: Document – William Doyle on the reforms of the Constituent Assembly.

**a.**

- i.** It had dismantled the old regime that had existed for centuries.
- ii.** It had created the organisational framework for a new society.

**b.**

- i.** It had made religious reforms and imposed the civil oath of the clergy and turned many against the revolution
- ii.** It had seized lands belonging to the Papacy.

**c.** The Constituent Assembly's restructure of religious matters, in the form of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (July 1790), was intended to be strictly a reform of Church organisation and administration, without any interference in spiritual matters. As such, the Constituent Assembly believed that it had the sovereign right to make such changes without consulting the Pope (since the changes did not affect theology or liturgy) and without scrupling to make administrative changes without consulting the French Catholic Church.

In both respects they were wrong, and the first consequence of their error was to cause thirty bishops who were deputies to publish a protest that they could not support the reforms unless the Church had been consulted, either in the form of the Pope or a Church Council. The National Assembly replied with a decree demanding a clerical oath of loyalty (27 November 1790). Some 50% of priests refused to take the clerical oath, a figure that jumped to 60% on average across France when the Pope later condemned the reforms (13 April 1791).

The second consequence was therefore to divide the clergy, many of whom had been strong supporters of the revolution, into two camps, 'juring' and 'non-juring' priests, a bitter division which soon divided communities across France. Evidence of this is the strong reaction in the Vendée region, where some areas saw a 90% refusal rate, resulting in gathering community resentment of the revolution that would catalyse into counter-revolutionary activity by 1793.

The third consequence was that the King, who had reluctantly approved the reforms under advice from a body of French bishops (22 July 1790), now felt that he had betrayed his responsibility as defender of the Catholic Church. This moral and spiritual concern, combined with worries about his personal safety, led him to accept a plan to escape from revolutionary France by heading north to frontiers where Austrian troops were stationed.

The fourth consequence of the Church reforms was that the resistance they provoked forced the assembly to become more rigid and authoritarian in order to secure compliance. For the Constituent Assembly, this involved not only demanding that people choose where their loyalties lay by taking the clerical

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oath, but by stating punitive measures, such as the loss of their position and their salary. A later consequence would be that the Legislative Assembly, meeting from October 1791, would also frame harsh laws against refractory priests, which had the added consequence of causing conflict with the King when he used his power of suspensive veto to block these decrees. In attempting to deal with resistance to Church reform, this assembly would introduce the first examples of official coercion, or Terror. Evidence of this is Danton's introduction of 'domiciliary visits' (police raids) to arrest suspect persons.

d. The strength of this extract is that it is a secondary source written by a reputable academic historian, whose aim is to impartially evaluate the impact of the reforms made by the Constituent Assembly.

The weakness of this extract is that it is written by a Revisionist historian, that is, one whose aim was to 'revise' or challenge the existing Marxist orthodoxy of historians such as Lefebvre and Soboul, who had previously tended to maximise the achievements of the French Revolution.

As a Revisionist historian, William Doyle could not deny that the period 1789–September 1791 was a period of massive achievement by the Constituent Assembly. First, he correctly asserts that it "dismantled the ancien regime". Few historians would deny that foundation documents such as the *August Decrees* (4–11 August 1789) and *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (27 August 1789) effectively replaced privilege with fiscal and legal equality, destroyed the social and psychological foundations of the system of birth over merit and the culture of deference and created a legal basis for individual civic rights. Second, he admits that this period saw the creation of the administrative structures that remain the organisational basis of modern France to this day. Few could deny that the system of 83 (later 86) departments, rationally subdivided into regular districts and cantons, created a better administrative grid for government, justice and the Church. Finally, by September 1791, the assembly had completed the new constitution, which would transform France from an absolute (and divine right) monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. In this sense, it is indisputable that the Constituent Assembly had laid the political, civic and administrative foundations of a completely new society.

As a revisionist historian, however, Doyle is profoundly uneasy with the phenomenon of revolutionary violence, which he here refers to as "extremes". Linked with this is his fear of the radicalism and the popular violence of the militant crowd, which he describes as "the turbulent population of Paris." These in turn are related to his key belief (*Oxford History of the French Revolution*) that "it is resistance that makes revolutions become violent."

Doyle's view that this was to be "the Constituent Assembly's most serious mistake" (*Oxford History of the French Revolution*) and a "self-inflicted wound" would be echoed by many historians, such as André Latreille, who calls it "a tragic error". It is true that after the preliminary emigration of some nobles,

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the first main resistance to the revolution was, tragically, created by the revolution itself, when it first made unilateral reforms without consulting the Church, and then demanded an oath of loyalty that approximately 50% of clergymen felt that they could not take, due to their existing loyalty to the Pope. Doyle is also correct in arguing that this mistake would create a chain of consequences, including the King's decision to attempt to flee revolutionary France in the so-called Flight to Varennes (June 1791), a betrayal that would further radicalise the militant popular movement in Paris, and create thereby a powerful new factor driving the development of the revolution.

In this extract, however, Doyle does not mention a number of important mitigating circumstances, which have been pointed out by historian John McManners, a specialist in church history during the revolution. First, the Constituent Assembly could not have afforded to *not* reform the Church: it was a part of the old regime, had its own privileges and extreme inequalities, and it could not have remained as a contradiction in the new society. Second, the assembly had a very considerable mandate for structural and administrative reform of the Church in the form of the Books of Grievances. When it went beyond this mandate, for example by nationalising Church lands, it did so at the suggestion of clergymen such as Grégoire and Talleyrand. Third, the assembly was perhaps misled by the long silence from the Pope, who did not publicly condemn the Civil Constitution of the Clergy until 13 April 1791. Finally, McManners argues that even though the clerical oath was where the revolution "went wrong", it did have a certain logic, because it was the type of oath required by all other government functionaries. Doyle is technically correct in arguing that the Constituent Assembly was "responsible" for the divisive issue of the clergy, simply because it was responsible for the decrees creating the reforms, but it can have had little idea, before the event, that the much-needed reforms could create such division.

### Question 21: Changes to everyday life

Between 1789–1795, the French Revolution plunged France into a series of fundamental and productive reforms (1789–1791), into a period of international and civil war (1792–1793) resulting in the use of Terror, before concluding with the establishment of a more moderate, conservative republic (1795). This amounts to a momentous series of political changes, which took France rapidly from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy and then to a republic, and saw the emergence of new theories such as direct democracy, and early forms of both socialism and feminism. The historiography of the revolution tends not to dispute these political changes, but it divides sharply over the question of the social and economic outcomes, and the degree to which everyday life was changed for most French people. For Marxist historians such as Soboul and Lefebvre, the revolution was an epochal event that must have created

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fundamental change for the better. For Revisionist historians, such as William Doyle and Roger Price, the revolution did not necessarily change everything and, when it did, it was not always for the better. Both historians have stated that they believe that for the average citizen, in terms of their everyday material life, the French revolution was not 'worth it'.

In political terms, every person's life was changed by being transformed from 'subjects', who obey the king, to 'citizens', who are part of the Nation, from which sovereignty emanates. This inclusion was matched by exclusions: the Constitution of 1791 excluded both women and some working people from political life, although these groups would demand, and then seize, the right to political involvement during the emergency of 1792–1793.

In legal and civic terms, people's lives were fundamentally changed by *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (August 1789), which achieved the abolition of privilege, the careful definition of personal liberty, and the crucial principle of equality, both in equality of opportunity in employment (merit over noble birth) and in equality of responsibility to pay taxation.

In social terms, the revolution achieved fundamental changes which affected all people in their everyday lives. The destruction of the old culture of deference and of honorific ranks confirmed the new self-respect of the Third Estate, expressed first by the political ambition and assurance of the deputies of the Third Estate at the Estates-General. Then, as the revolution as a lived experience unfolded and drew more people into the political life, the working classes articulated their own version of identity and egalitarianism (the *sans-culottes* ideology) and women articulated early versions of women's rights.

In economic terms, the revolution also made important improvements to everyday life. The French Revolution, unlike the Russian Revolution, never promised to create socio-economic equality. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* specifically states that there will still be distinctions between people, but that these will now be based on social utility and personal merit, rather than on noble birth. These economic benefits did, however, vary. The bourgeoisie gained equality of opportunity in employment, and also gained most from the sale of the lands of the church and emigrated nobles. Some peasants, especially wealthier ones, also gained from the sale of land, and all peasants were ultimately freed of the old feudal dues. The poor, by contrast, suffered real loss, because the revolution abolished the existing systems of poor relief, but never had enough money to implement its plan for a systemic form of poor relief.

In organisational terms, one of the most important changes to everyday life was made by the early work of the Constituent Assembly to reform the entire administrative framework of France, creating the structures that have survived to the present day. Using an organisational grid of 83 departments, subdivided into cantons, the revolutionaries reformed and improved local government, the legal system and the administration of the church, ensuring that all French

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people, however remote, had equal access to government, legal and religious institutions. Inequalities such as the differing legal systems for nobles, priests and commoners were abolished. Injustices such as the multiple benefices of the higher clergy were removed. Police action was defined carefully by law, and punishments made more proportionate and humane.

In conclusion, the extent to which the French Revolution changed everyday life between 1789 and 1795 was considerable, but not complete, and was beneficial to some social groups (such as the bourgeoisie) and detrimental to others (such as the poor, the clergy and the nobility).

### **Question 22: Extent to which revolutionary governments achieve their original ideals**

Refer to question 30 on page 117 for a response on a similar topic.

### **Question 23: Extent to which the new society is inevitably rigid and authoritarian**

Refer to question 27 page 114 for a response on a similar topic.

### **Question 24: France – Achievement of political change**

When the deputies of the National Convention accepted the Constitution of the Year III in August 1795, France had seen three national assemblies and three constitutions in the six years since the fall of the old regime in 1789. There had been many short-term changes, but historians argue whether they amounted to a fundamental break with the old regime. For Marxist historians, such as Albert Soboul and George Lefebvre, who tend to be ‘maximalist’ in their evaluation of the revolution, this was an epochal change whose outcomes must have been both definitive and beneficial. For their historiographic opponents, the Revisionists, such as William Doyle, who tend to be more ‘minimalist’ in their evaluation, the revolution did not necessarily change everything, nor for the better.

Politically, the French Revolution began in its first, ‘moderate’ phase (1789–1791) as a quite specific project, to put an end to absolute monarchy, by which authority comes from above, from the sole figure of the monarch, who was deemed to be an autocrat and to rule by divine right. The men of 1789 who constituted themselves as a national assembly (17 June 1789), who took the oath to demand a constitution (20 June 1789) and who then formed the Constituent Assembly, believed in the new political principle of representation, by which the king would rule in conjunction with an elected body that would have the power to make laws on behalf of the entity known as the Nation. The actual political structures of this system were defined in the Constitution of



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1791, which created a constitutional monarchy. Political participation was limited by a property qualification based on the active/passive citizen division. While the men of 1789 had created the new political system, however, they had not yet achieved political change, because the continuing resistance of the king, his refusal to accept the constitution and his ultimate Flight to Varennes (20 June 1791) made the new political system impracticable.

The political attempt to create a moderate parliamentary democracy also foundered on another, stronger, political force, the popular revolutionary movement, which found its expression in the powerful Parisian crowd, which had its own traditional forms of collective protest, as well as new forms of organisation, such as the radical Paris 'section' meetings. The radicalisation of this popular movement, largely as a result of the king's treason, resulted in growing demands for his deposition, first at the Champ de Mars (July 1791), then at the Tuileries (20 June 1792), then in the overthrow of the monarchy (10 August 1792). This second revolution signalled an end not only of the monarchy but, for the time, of a constitutional monarchy. Finally, the violent overthrow and the new power of the popular movement – expressed in ideas such as 'the right to insurrection' – meant that the very idea of parliamentary democracy was under threat. During the second, more radical phase of the French Revolution (1792–1794), the political life of France was transformed under the pressure of international war, civil war (the Vendée revolt, 1793) and rebellion (the Federalist Revolt, 1793). The Constitution of 1793, which created the new political system of a republic, was radical in its provisions, especially in clauses saying that insurrection against an unjust government was a right, and a duty. Under the pressure of multiple and interlocking crises, the National Convention proceeded to a new form of political organisation, the creation of committees with special powers to deal with the emergency, such as the Committee of Public Safety (April 1793). The emergency also produced another new political theory, that of 'revolutionary government' (December 1793), meaning that certain constitutional rights would have to be suspended while the government dealt with the emergency. Finally, this phase of the revolution saw the advent of the political use of Terror. The so-called 'factional Terror' consisted of the elimination of all those who opposed Robespierre and the Jacobins, including the Girondins, then the left-wing Hébertistes, then the moderate 'Indulgents' who had argued that the Terror should be suspended once the military emergency was over.

While these new political theories evidently worked in the short-term context of a crisis – the revolution was 'safe' by late 1793 – they had not provided a durable form of political life for France. By their very nature, they could not last.

First, the popular revolutionary movement was becoming intensely radical, leading the *sans-culottes* movement to create the even more radical 'Enraged Ones', who were ferocious in their hatred of all wealthy people.

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Secondly, ‘revolutionary government’, and the use of Terror, had a logic of fear and paranoia that would result in Robespierre’s overthrow (Thermidor, 1794).

The third and final phase of the revolution (1794–1795) saw the political ‘settlement’ of the long process. Led by men such as Boissy d’Anglas, who recognised that a constitutional monarchy was still impossible, the men of 1795 opted for a republican form of government guaranteed to be moderate by stringent limits on political participation. The bicameral parliament, in which the Council of the Ancients acted as a brake upon the Council of Five Hundred, was made up of men deemed to be ‘of the better sort’ – more conservative, and less prone to radicalism – because they were older and, by owning property, had a vested interest in the status quo. For men such as Boissy d’Anglas, the Constitution of 1795 was to be a way of making the political changes of the French Revolution – the destruction of absolute monarchy, the concept of representation – workable in the long term. They felt that the principles of 1789 had been saved, while the dangerous radicalism of 1793 had been eliminated. For historians Martyn Lyons and Peter McPhee, too, the ‘settlement’ of 1795 was a way of consolidating the changes introduced in 1789, and making them viable in the longer term.

### **Question 25: The extent to which the new society created significant change in the way people lived**

The extent to which the new society in France changed the way in which most people lived is the most intensely debated historiographic issue of the French Revolution. Led by the pioneer Alfred Cobban, the Revisionist school of history not only rebutted the Marxist explanation for the occurrence of the revolution as a transition from feudal to capitalist society, but also questioned whether the revolution really created any significant and beneficial changes for ordinary people. Revisionist historian William Doyle asserts that, for most people, the French Revolution was not ‘worth it’; economic historian Roger Price similarly argues that most citizens did not benefit materially from the revolution. While the Revisionists were correct to challenge the assumption that a revolution must be a total change, they have neglected the fact that it did create considerable and beneficial changes to the way people lived. The new society, as finally codified in the political arrangement of the Constitution of 1795, had changed life in France extensively.

Politically, all people were now included in the body politic, although participation in the form of voting and political office was restricted by gender (men only), age and wealth. Nonetheless, those groups who were excluded from participation, such as women and working people, had had the experience of political participation, especially in the radical clubs and the Paris section meetings, during the radical phase of the revolution (1792–1794). They had

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been changed by this experience, and would resume their political activity in later decades.

Socially, the majority of ordinary people had experienced a fundamental change, because the culture of deference of the old regime had been replaced by a culture of citizenship, in which people of all social types felt that they had an equal social status. This was supported by the civic and legal revolution created by *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (August 1789), which removed the legal basis of privilege, and hence destroyed the fiscal, legal and honorific inequalities which had differentiated the two privileged orders from the ordinary people hitherto referred to as the commoners, or the Third Estate. The revolutionary principle of Equality, referred to in key documents and described in images such as *The Three Estates, with their symbols, placed under the level*, did not aim to create a socio-economic equality of the sort promised in Russia by communist theory, but promised equality before the law, equality before the taxes, and equality in social terms. The social forms of the old culture of deference were legislated out of existence. It is true that this new social ethos of self-worth and equality evolved considerably during the course of the revolution. During the first, moderate phase of the revolution (1789–1791), the statement of a new social self-conception was genuinely enthusiastic, as seen in positive, self-confident images such as *I are of the Third Estate*. During the second, more radical phase of the revolution (1792–1794), the new social culture of self-worth assumed more violently egalitarian form in the aggressive culture of the *sans-culottes* and particularly in the anti-wealth attitudes of the Enraged Ones. By 1794, the Jacobins were starting to repress the vigorous democracy of the working-class revolutionary movement and the women's movement. After the fall of Robespierre (Thermidor 1794), during the third phase of the French revolution (1794–1795), the 'men of 1795' continued the task of repressing popular radicalism, and sought actively to place power back in the hands of people whom they defined as 'the better sort'. While the Constitution of 1795 placed power solidly in the hands of men who enjoyed a certain age and level of wealth, it did so in the context of a society whose fundamental social values had been changed forever. This was not simply a rebirth of the old regime's culture of deference. As the men of 1789 had suggested in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, there would still be social distinctions, but they would now rest not on the arbitrary (and almost unobtainable) criterion of nobility, but on the principle of social utility. In a new society in which equality of opportunity, employment and promotion were by law open to everybody according to their merit, it was theoretically (and sometimes practically) possible for anybody to climb the social ladder by virtue of their talent and hard work.

Economically, the new society that had emerged by 1795 brought considerable, but unequal, change to different classes. The greatest beneficiaries of the revolution were the bourgeoisie, who had secured the crucial principle of

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merit over birth, thus allowing them employment and promotion in government, church and army, without the limitation of nobles dominating the highest positions. They also benefited from the sale of Church land and noble land, having had the ready wealth to purchase this land when it was offered on the open market. The peasants, by contrast, did not generally benefit so much from the release of land from the ownership of the privileged estates, although a small number of wealthier peasants were able to afford to buy some parcels of land. The urban working classes, by contrast, enjoyed fewer benefits. The Le Chapelier Law of 1791 regulated industrial relations in favour of the employer, reintroducing the repressive system of the worker passport, which put the worker at the mercy of the employer. After 1795, the tax barriers would be replaced around Paris, subjecting urban workers again to heavy indirect taxes on food.

In conclusion, it is possible to agree that the French Revolution had changed life in France fundamentally. It is also impossible to agree with the Revisionist historians that the revolution cannot have benefited ordinary people. It did not bring wealth to all classes in society, because its leaders had never promised that it would do so. The revolution did, however, create a new society in which the old obstacles to social improvement were removed, and in which one's social standing would depend on one's merit and social utility.

### **Question 26: Extent to which crises and compromises endangered the new order**

Refer to question 30 on page 117 for a response on a similar topic.

### **Question 27: The extent to which the new society was rigid and authoritarian**

The creation of a new society in France between 5 August 1789 and 1795 was predicated on a desire to create new political and social structures that would avoid the authoritarian political system of absolutism under the old regime. It also aimed to replace the rigid social system of a corporate society based upon privilege (that is, legal and fiscal inequality enshrined by law) and a culture of deference (that is, a compulsory show of respect to one's social 'betters'). Implicitly, this would mean a more democratic political system, and a more open social system. As historian William Doyle states, however, it is resistance that makes revolutions become violent. When faced with multiple and widespread resistance in the period 1792–1794, the revolutionaries responded with a political system that was more rigid, because it did not allow opposition from any quarter, and more authoritarian, because it used government by committee, draconian laws and military and police actions to overcome the threat. However, these were temporary emergency responses to an extreme

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situation and the revolutionary ‘settlement’ of 1795 illustrates the moderate democracy that most French revolutionaries had always had in mind,

During the first, constructive and relatively peaceful phase of the French Revolution (1789–1791), the Constituent Assembly successfully implemented a breathtaking array of reforms, successfully designing a new political system (a constitutional monarchy, enshrining the democratic concept of representation over the autocratic authoritarianism of the old regime). This system was ultimately formalised in the Constitution of 1791. Secondly, the Constituent Assembly transformed the social structure of France by abolishing the former rigid social system of three estates, of which two enjoyed fiscal, legal and honorific privilege. In the *August Decrees* (5–11 August 1789) and *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (27 August 1789), the National Assembly abolished the legal bases of privilege and the tradition of birth over merit, and created a new, fluid society in which social distinctions would be based solely on merit and social utility. Finally, the administrative reform of the legal, bureaucratic and religious systems of France created institutions that were more equitable and accountable than those of the old regime. Many of the key principles underpinning this reform were implicitly opposed to authoritarianism: the revolutionary principle of representation destroyed the political system of autocracy, while the revolutionary principle of Liberty, so carefully defined in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, delimited the only conditions under which a person could legally be deprived of their personal freedom, a reaction against the old regime’s arbitrary justice and the use of *lettres de cachet*. The revolutionary principle of Equality meant essentially equality of opportunity, and created a more fluid social structure in which social advancement would depend not on the arbitrary and unchangeable fact of noble birth, but upon personal merit and social utility.

During the second, more radical phase of the revolution, the new society felt that it was obliged to become more rigid and authoritarian, but only in order to enact the exceptional emergency measures that would allow it to meet a period of crisis. The outbreak of international war (1792), compounded by a murderous civil war in the Vendée (1793) and the Federalist Revolt against the radicalism of Paris by cities such as Bordeaux and Lyon (1793) created a sense that the new society’s very existence was under threat. The government now became more rigid in the sense that democratic participation was limited: although the National Convention was never shut down, it progressively handed over increasing executive power to the emergency committees, notably the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security. It became more authoritarian in the sense that new laws were passed to allow the new regime to deal with opposition: the Legislative Assembly began the process with laws against refractory priests and emigrated nobles, while the Convention passed even more stringent laws (such as the Law of Suspects) to allow the efficient arrest and trial of enemies of the revolution. Ultimately, however, these

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authoritarian measures, designed to allow the regime to deal with an emergency, exceeded the needs of the critical period of 1792–1793. After late 1793, when the military emergency was clearly under control, the ‘factional Terror’ (the elimination of revolutionary political groups simply because they disagreed with Robespierre and his government) increased in intensity, resulting in the execution of the ultra-radical Hébertistes and the moderate Indulgents (a group around Danton and Desmoulins advocating an end to the Terror). In the case of the latter trial, the new regime reached its highest point of authoritarianism, because it used a closed trial and the intimidated judge Fouquier-Tinville to force a guilty verdict in a manner anticipating Stalin’s show trials.

Paradoxically, this period of emergency, which saw the use of the coercive measures of ‘revolutionary government’, also saw a considerable democratisation of French politics. Robespierre and his supporters in the ‘Mountain’ (the left-wing group of the Convention, made up mainly of Jacobins and Cordeliers) sought to appease the all-powerful and rapidly radicalising Parisian revolutionary movement in order to win their support to fight the war. The ultra-democratic Constitution of 1793, with its radical clauses defending the right to insurrection, is one expression of this democratisation that took place within the context of the authoritarianism of the period.

By mid-1794, it seemed clear that authoritarian measures, once introduced, assumed a momentum of their own. Although the authoritarian measures of the Terror were intended to be temporary, it seemed that they would continue unchecked. Paradoxically, it was the authoritarian measures themselves, especially the Law of Prairial, that allowed a small group of conspirators to overthrow Robespierre and his associates in the events of Thermidor (July 1794).

The final settlement of the French Revolution in the form of the Constitution of 1795 demonstrated that the ‘revolutionary project’ of 1789 would re-emerge after the crisis of 1792–1794. Politically, democracy was now enshrined in the framework of a republic, but one in which the radicalism of 1792–1794 was carefully contained, avoiding both the direct democracy of the *sans-culottes* movement and the challenge of the radical women’s movement. Although democratic, the new system ensured that men of property, seniority and respectability would dominate formal political life. Nonetheless, the creation of a new society based upon merit, rather than birth, meant that French society would henceforth be less rigid than that of the old regime, which had been based upon immutable legal agreements predicated on the idea of privilege, and on social distinctions based upon arbitrary considerations of noble birth.

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### Question 28: Extent to which people benefited from the new society

Refer to question 21 on page 108 for a response on a similar topic.

### Question 29: Extent to which the new order was distracted from its original goals by an economic crisis.

Refer to question 30 on page 117 for a response on a similar topic.

### Question 30: The extent to which the revolutionaries modified their original ideals.

First, the original ideals of the French Revolution were codified very early and very clearly in two fundamental statements of principle. The first was the *August Decrees* (5–11 August 1789) which, while initially devoted to the alleged ‘abolition’ of the feudal regime, rapidly turned to a preliminary statement of the political principles that were so important to the bourgeois members of the Third Estate. These included equality before taxation, the abolition of all forms of privilege and equal access to employment based on merit rather than birth. The second was *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (20–26 August 1789), which defined the principle of Liberty as having personal freedom which can only be taken away by the means allowed by the law. Since the Declaration redefined the nature of Sovereignty as coming from below, from the ‘nation’, and since it was the preamble to the Constitution of 1791, it was also linked with the idea of democratic participation in the affairs of the nation.

During the second, more radical phase of the revolution (1792–1794), leaders were forced to modify their original ideals in order to deal with the complex, interlocking series of crises which threatened the very existence of the revolution, including war and foreign intervention, civil war, factionalism and radicalisation of the popular movement. The suspension of the democratic Constitution of 1793, with its exceptional clauses legitimising the right to insurrection, also meant the suspension of its prologue, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, and specifically of its careful definition of personal liberty and the guarantee of freedom of opinion.

The first great ‘patriot’ idea to be compromised was that of **personal liberty**. To deal effectively with international war and civil war, the revolutionaries were forced to embrace progressively arbitrary forms of justice.

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This occurred in statements of general principle, such as the adoption of government by terror (5 September 1793) and the declaration of the theory of revolutionary government (10 October 1793). These were followed by specific laws that made allowance for prompt, but unregulated, arrest, trial and execution of opponents or suspects. The Law of Suspects (17 September 1793), the Law Constituting Revolutionary Government (or the Law of Frimaire, 4 December 1793) and the Law of 22 Prairial (10 June 1794) all removed the careful precautions to protect personal freedom allowed by the Declaration. Robespierre's speeches addressed the obvious issue of violating the principles of 1789: he argued that the freedoms of 1789 could not be maintained in the critical conditions of 1793, and hence they had to be suspended until the revolution had destroyed its enemies and was safe. Then the freedoms of 1789 could be reinstated.

The second important 'patriot' ideal to be compromised was **the tolerance of divergent opinions**, be they political, social or religious beliefs. In the Declaration, articles 10 and 11 guaranteed the freedom to hold one's own opinions and to speak and write freely. Evidence for this fundamental principle is visible in David's later painting of *The Tennis Court Oath*, where one deputy is seen defending the right of Martin d'Auch to refuse the vote. By late 1791, however, this principle was under pressure, first from the crisis of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. For the first time, the national assembly used coercive laws and force to try to oblige non-juring priests to take the oath of loyalty (3 January 1791), even though it violated their religious beliefs. By 1792–1793, as the emergency period of the revolution deepened, and as Terror was used to discourage opposition, the Factional Terror developed. There was a successive elimination of individual and groups who held different political opinions to those of Robespierre and the 'Mountain' (a parliamentary coalition of the Jacobins and the Cordeliers clubs). This included the rival political bloc of the Girondins (tried and executed in October 1793), followed by the radical left-wing group of the Hébertistes (March 1794) and then, most arbitrary of all, the trial and execution of Danton, Desmoulins and the so-called 'Indulgents', simply because they had suggested that the terror could be wound down (April 1794). By this stage, the closed trial conducted by Fouquier-Tinville, with a pre-determined verdict of guilt, was a travesty of justice and a violation of the great legal principles of 1789.

The third important revolutionary principle to be modified was the **commitment to economic liberalism and free trade**. The 'patriots' of 1789 first took this to mean the removal of vexatious internal customs barriers in France to create a vigorous national market. They also removed controls on the trade of grain. They abolished the tax barriers around Paris. The d'Allarde Law (April 1790) abolished guilds. The Le Chapelier Law (14 June 1791) later abolished the right of the labour movement to organise and to take strike action. For the 'patriots', freedom meant the ability to engage in economic activity



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without restraint, thus in a *laissez-faire* (unregulated) economy. By the time of the emergency of 1792–1794, however, the Jacobins understood that, to fight a war on multiple fronts, they would need the support of the working people of France. The popular revolutionary movement, now calling itself the *sans-culottes*, aided by the radical women's movement, was now more vocal and more militant in demanding that the government address their economic grievances by means of deliberate and effective government intervention in the economy. The international war was soon compounded by a violent civil war in the Vendée (beginning March 1793) and the Federalist Revolt in sixty of France's eighty-three departments (beginning April 1793). By May 1793, the Jacobins had responded to popular demands with the First Law of the Maximum, putting a cap on the prices of basic foods. They also decreed the death penalty for hoarding grain (26 July 1793), a General Law of the Maximum (29 September 1793) and, finally, wage fixing in Paris (the Law of the Minimum). In this way, the Jacobins won the radical Parisian revolutionary movement to their cause, but in doing so had compromised their core values of economic liberalism.

During the third and final phase of the revolution, from the Thermidorian Reaction (starting July 1794) to the introduction of the Constitution of 1795 (voted 22 August; proclaimed 23 September 1795), the revolutionaries consciously tried to create a new and more stable form of government that would allow them to return to the great principles of 1789, but without the dangerous radicalism of the emergency period of 1792–1794.

Foremost amongst their goals was the return to a constitutional government, and hence the steady abolition of the machinery of 'revolutionary government'. First, the Convention decreed that the membership of the powerful committees would be renewed by one quarter each month, to avoid letting people become entrenched in their power. It then atomised the two powerful committees, splitting them up into sixteen, each with a much smaller array of tasks and powers. The Committee of Public Safety was stripped of its control of local government and left only with foreign affairs and the army, and all other committees were made more closely accountable to the Convention. Further popular pressure led to the dismantling of the Committees of Vigilance, and the release of many people imprisoned by them. Hundreds of victims of the Law of Suspects were released. This was followed by the abolition of the draconian Law of 22 Prairial (1 August 1794). The Revolutionary Tribunal itself was reorganised (August 1794) and ultimately abolished (May 1795). Finally, the original civil liberties that had been proclaimed in 1789 in the Declaration were now recognised and reinstated. In this sense, the original principles of the revolution were explicitly restored.

The new political order they designed may be described as a conservative republic, in the sense that the high property qualification for the members of the college that chose for deputies to the bi-cameral legislature (the Council of Five

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Hundred and the Council of the Ancients) placed power in the hands of older, wealthier and more established men. This was a new ‘ideology of property’, as reflected in the words of Boissy d’Anglas: “Absolute equality is an illusion. If it existed, one would have to assume a complete equality in intelligence, virtue, physical strength, education and fortune in all men...We must be ruled by the best citizens. The best are the most learned and the most concerned in the maintenance of law and order. Now, with very few exceptions, you will find such men only among those who own some property, and are thus attached to the land within which it lies, to the laws which protect it and to the public order which maintains it. You must therefore guarantee political rights for the well-to-do and deny undeserved political rights to men without property.” While it was a change from the radicalism and egalitarian spirit of the period 1792–1794, it was a return to the basic premise of the Declaration of 1789. Article 1 of the Declaration asserted human equality only in rights, not in social distinction; social distinctions would still exist, but on a different basis, that of a person’s social usefulness rather than their noble birth. Thus the men of 1795 returned to both the political and the social principles of 1789, combining them in a new way to create what they hoped would be a durable republican system.

### **Question 31: Extent to which difficulties threatened the formation of the new society**

Refer to question 30 on page 117 for a response on a similar topic.

### **Question 32: Extent to which there was significant change in the lives of the people**

Refer to question 21 on page 108 for a response on a similar topic.

### **Question 33: The extent to which the new society was able to resolve the grievances of the people.**

Refer to questions 21 on page 108 and 25 on page 112 for responses on a similar topic.

### **Question 34: The extent to which the new society was successful in fulfilling the ideals of the Revolution.**

When Boissy d’Anglas and the Committee of Eleven completed the Constitution of 1795 (22 August 1795), they believed that they had finally created a political structure that would allow the original revolutionary ideals of

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1789–1791 to be brought into practice, whilst protecting them from the radicalism that had distorted those ideals during the period from August 1792 to July 1794.

In fact, the achievements of 1795 are the subject of strong historiographic debate. Some left-wing historians, such as Guerin, argue that the Constitution of 1795 was just the propertied classes reasserting their power. But historian Martyn Lyons argues, to the contrary, that the Jacobin Republic and the Terror had really suffocated democracy, and that the return to some form of viable constitutional government at least allowed true democratic political life to resume. Historian Peter McPhee also argues that 1795 was an important corrective to the course of the revolution: the war emergency and the popular radicalism of 1792–1793 had in a sense thrown the revolution off its original course, which was really only a bourgeois revolution, and this extreme radicalism could not last. For McPhee, the Constitution of 1795 pulled the revolution back into its original aims and ideals, trimming it back to the sort of revolution the bourgeoisie could comfortably live with. He notes that even Karl Marx saw this as no more than a bourgeois revolution, for which the subsequent stages of socialism and communism would proceed in due course. For historian D. Wright, there is no denying that 1795 represents a political ‘reaction’ to what had gone before, but he warns us that the Constitution of 1795 can also be read the opposite way, as evidence of “the permanent political gains of the Revolution.”

**First, in political terms,** the constitution that established the government known as the Directory was a conscious attempt to rewrite the original ideals of the revolution of 1789 into a viable form as a moderate republic, based upon a declaration of civic rights, and restricting political participation on criteria of age, wealth and sex. For historian Peter McPhee, “this Constitution was a return to the provision of the Constitution of 1791: France was again to be governed by representative, parliamentary government based on property qualifications and the safeguarding of economic and civil liberties.” (*The French Revolution, 1789–1799*). The first important political difference was that the political system was not a constitutional monarchy. While Boissy d’Anglas himself was sufficiently conservative to have welcomed a restoration of a constitutional king ruling in conjunction with the Directory, he understood that the death of the Dauphin in 1795 made such a solution impossible. He concluded that if France were to be a republic, then it would have to be a moderate republic, with multiple checks and balances to avoid radicalism of any sort. The second important political difference from 1789 was that the legislature was now bicameral (made up of two houses), the upper house being designed, as in the English system, to act as a brake upon the lower house. This precaution had in fact been discussed in 1789, but had been rejected as being unnecessary. Like the Declaration of 1789 and the Constitution of 1791, this document also

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asserted the right of every citizen to share, *directly or indirectly*, in the making of laws and the election of representatives.

Unlike the Constitution of 1791, however, this document went much further. The Constitution of 1795 did offer the basic right to vote to all adult males who paid tax. It rigidly restricted the possibility of entering an electoral college to choose deputies, however, to about 30,000 people by insisting on sex/age qualifications (male, 25 years) and property qualifications (ownership or rental of property). According to McPhee, this was 50% of the number allowed by the Constitution of 1791. According to Anderson, the property qualification alone excluded many bourgeois, and most peasants and urban workers. To actually serve as a deputy in the upper house, or ‘Council of Ancients’, men had to be 40 years of age or more and married (or once married). To serve in the lower house or ‘Council of the Five Hundred’ men had to be 30 years of age or more. This legislature was accompanied by a carefully controlled executive made up of five directors and seven ministers.

**Second, in social terms**, the Constitution of 1795 created the basis for a new social system by repeating the basic principles of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* in the section called ‘Rights’, where articles 1–22 reiterate the basic understandings of the origin of sovereignty, of the law as the expression of the general will, of basic rights such as liberty, equality, security and property and of the separation of powers. It is this section that assures what Wright called the permanent political gains of the Revolution. The clue to the nature of the new society lies in the words that have been subtly changed or removed altogether. In 1789, ‘Equality’ had meant a general sense of innate rights; in 1793, it had had a more radical political and social meaning; by 1795, it had been pruned down to an assurance that everybody was equal before the law. The key word that was totally absent in 1795 was ‘Fraternity’. This term literally means simply ‘brotherhood’, but after its introduction into revolutionary language in 1792 it rapidly came to mean a more radical and dangerous form of egalitarianism, designed by the Jacobins to appeal to the democratic spirit of the *sans-culottes*. The most radical *sans-culottes*, especially the ‘Enraged Ones’ led by Roux and Varlet, soon made this into an aggressive hatred of all rich people of any sort, and even progressed to the dangerous idea of taking some property from the rich to redistribute to the poor. For the men of 1795, Fraternity in this sense was a word that should not even be spoken; it was even removed from public buildings. The same applied to the idea of the right to insurrection and, for that matter, the whole radical Constitution of 1793. In its place, they put the idea of ‘duty’, which in their minds referred to obedience, legality and property. Article 3 defined the obligation of each member of society as being “submitting to its laws and submitting to its agents.” For Boissy d’Anglas, who had witnessed the invasion of the Convention on the day of 1 Prairial, there would be no more direct intimidation of elected representatives. His idea of a “good man” was of somebody who would

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“religiously observe the law.” In this, he was no different to the men and women of 1789, who were intensely legalistic; simply, he had seen radical breaches of legality that they had not. Similarly, he emphasised the sacred nature of private property as the basis of all society (Article 8), an idea that had been stated three times in the Declaration of 1789.

**Third, in cultural terms**, the men of 1795 were keen to put an end to what McPhee has called “the cultural revolution of 1792”. Under the Jacobin Republic, the all-powerful *sans-culottes* had developed both a political ideology and a distinctive culture based upon a pride in their ordinary clothing and their egalitarian manners. Very few people – except Robespierre – dared to dress well or to wear costumes of the old regime style, for fear of becoming a target of popular hatred. Now, in 1795, under the leadership of Boissy d’Anglas, this revolutionary puritanism was overthrown, symbols of Jacobin culture – such as busts of Marat – were destroyed, and stylish clothing reintroduced. Following Boissy d’Anglas’ political emphasis upon wealth as a new criterion for reliability, people now dressed in ostentatiously wealthy ways. Society now turned to luxurious festivities such as balls, and to the ostentatious clothing worn by young men known as ‘muscadins’ and young women known as ‘merveilleuses’. By stating that politics should be led by “the best amongst us”, Boissy d’Anglas had returned to the basic principle of 1789, which was that there would still be social distinctions, but they would henceforth be based upon real talent and merit, which by 1795 was measured by the ability to become wealthy.

**In conclusion**, the new society in France was in urgent need of consolidation into a political form that the bourgeoisie could accept. The new society had been endangered and radicalised by a war emergency, which had pushed the revolutionary *sans-culottes* movement towards radical theories of government (such as the right to insurrection) and authoritarian measures (such as the Terror). While these emergency measures worked to deal with the emergency of 1792–1793, they could not provide the basis for an ongoing political system. The Constitution of 1795 was an instrument to curb the radicalism of 1793, and to make a second attempt at the government envisioned in 1789–1791.

**Question 35: The extent to which the nature of political authority was changed by the Revolution.**

Refer to question 24 on page 110 for a response on a similar topic.

\*\*\* Please note: As of 2009, there is only one essay topic for the revolution you are writing about in Section B of the examination.

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**Question 36: Some historians argue that the Revolution was a tragedy of gigantic proportions. What is your view of the new society? Use evidence to support your answer.**

If we define ‘tragedy’ simply as a catastrophic event causing a loss of human life and extensive human suffering, then the French Revolution must inevitably be seen as tragic. We cannot dismiss the human cost of revolution as lightly as Mao Tse Tung did, when he stated that “a revolution is not a tea party”, and dismissed it as an unfortunate aspect of making change by violent action. In the case of France, the international war and civil war alone cost a total 2 million lives between 1792 and 1815. In addition, the Terror caused 30,000 official executions, while the civil war in the Vendée cost another 400,000 lives. For historians, however, the debate is not *whether* the revolution caused human suffering, but whether the outcomes were sufficient to justify the risk of remaking society entirely. While Marxist historians such as Albert Soboul would tend to maximize the transforming impact of the revolution as a transition from a feudal to a bourgeois society, Revisionist historians such as William Doyle would question whether it really changed the lives of ordinary people very much. This historiographic debate is fundamental to all evaluations of the French Revolution.

The argument that the Revolution was a ‘tragedy’ corresponds closely to the point of view of historians whom Peter McPhee has characterised as ‘minimalists’, in the sense that they challenge the assumption that the revolution changed everything for the better. Specifically, the minimalist point of view does not actually deny the achievements of the revolution altogether: it is impossible to deny the changes to the political system, the administrative reorganisation of France and the redefinition of human rights. The minimalists would, however, argue, that in terms of the material issues of everyday life – landowning, food, employment, income etc – ordinary people would not have noticed very much change. In some cases, such as the position of women, conditions might actually have got worse. For example, Revisionist historian, Roger Price (*Economic History of Modern France*, 1975) does not deny the enormous change to political structures and to civic rights, but asserts that no changes occurred for most ordinary people: “In political and ideological terms the Revolution was no doubt of crucial importance, but humanity itself was not transformed thereby. Most of the population continued to be subject to the age-old constraints of their environment. At the end of all the political upheavals of the Revolution and the Empire, little had changed in the lives of most Frenchmen.”

First, historians question what changes and continuities the revolution brought about in the structure of government. As the revisionist historians would readily concede, these were definitive and significant, because the

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absolute monarchy was first replaced by a constitutional monarchy (Constitution of 1791, with elections based on a property qualification distinguishing between 'active' and 'passive' citizens), then by a republican government (the Constitution of 1793, based upon broad, democratic suffrage and recognising the right to insurrection) and finally by a moderate republic (the Constitution of 1795, which used various property qualifications and age qualifications to restrict access to political life to men of wealth and experience). While the final political settlement of the French Revolution may seem very moderate in nature, it did create a political system which France's bourgeoisie were comfortable with. Evidence for this is the ideology of men like Boissy d'Anglas who argued that the government of the nation is far better entrusted to the 'better sort of people', by which he meant rich ones. "Absolute equality is an illusion. If it existed, one would have to assume a complete equality in intelligence, virtue, physical strength, education and fortune in all men... We must be ruled by the best citizens. The best are the most learned and the most concerned in the maintenance of law and order. Now, with very few exceptions, you will find such men only among those who own some property, and are thus attached to the land within which it lies, to the laws which protect it and to the public order which maintains it. You must therefore guarantee political rights for the well-to-do and deny undeserved political rights to men without property."

Secondly, the French Revolution also fundamentally changed the organisation of society, and its values. The most important change was the legal abolition of the corporate society (in which different groups in the old regime had 'special agreements' with the King, especially regarding law and taxation), the abolition of 'privilege' and the removal of a 'culture of deference' (by which noble birth conferred honorific superiority over 'commoners'). As early as August 1789, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had stated that there would still be social distinctions, but that they would be based now upon personal merit and social utility, not upon the honorific bases of noble lineage. By the time of the Constitution of 1795, all privileges had been abolished, but the aim was still not socio-economic equality. There would always be inequalities of fortune between people, due to inequalities of their talents and merits, but henceforth social distinctions would be based on social usefulness, not the accident of being born a noble.

The French Revolution did effectively reduce, but not eliminate, the power of the former two privileged classes, the clergy and the nobility. While priests and nobles were allowed to return to France in 1795, they came back to a society that had been totally changed. The Catholic Church, for example, survived the revolution, but with significant loss of power and wealth. Politically, it was no longer a mainstay of an absolute monarchy or involved in 'rule by divine right'. Economically, it suffered a massive loss of lands and

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buildings, which could not legally be reversed. More seriously, it lost 50% of personnel to death or emigration. Evidence for this is that approximately 3,000 priests were killed, of whom 920 were executed publicly and officially. Another 40,000 emigrated.

Similarly, the nobles did survive to return to France in 1794–5, but privilege was now illegal, feudal dues no longer existed, and land that had been lost could not be regained. Numerically, they were not decimated by the Terror: of 400,000 nobles, only 1,150 had been killed, while 16,400 (15% of all nobles) had emigrated, many to return later. However, their status in society would never again be the same as under the old regime. The minimalist historians would still point out, however, that the nobles retained much of their economic power. Land remained the main source of wealth in France, and nobles were the great majority of landowners. They simply joined wealthy bourgeois during the nineteenth century to form a new class of ‘notables’. Evidence for this is that by 1804, when Napoleon Bonaparte chose his ‘Prefects’ as governors of the departments, 41% were nobles.

Thirdly, to effectively answer the revisionist argument it also necessary to examine the distribution of wealth and the conditions of everyday life. For working people in town and country, life had indeed been changed. In general terms, one of the most important changes to everyday life was made by the Constituent Assembly to reform the entire administrative framework of France, creating the structures that have survived to the present day. Using an organisational grid of 83 (later 86) departments, subdivided into cantons, the revolutionaries reformed local government, the legal system and the administration of the church, ensuring that all French people, however remote, had equal access to government, legal and religious institutions. Inequalities such as the differing legal systems for nobles, priests and commoners were abolished. Injustices such as the multiple benefices of the higher clergy were removed.

For the largest group of working people, the peasants, there had been some gains and some losses. While the majority of peasants were disappointed in their hopes of buying church land, they still made three significant gains. First, the final abolition of feudalism occurred in 1793. Feudal dues had taken up 20–25% of peasant income, which was now available for their own use. Secondly, some rich peasants did buy church land. Evidence for this is that 15%–20% of French land was sold, and doubled the number of landowners; later generations also got access to more land. Peasant landholdings did increase by between 33% and 40% as a result of land sales across France as a whole. Peter McPhee cites the example of the Thomassin family, who in 1786 owned merely 3.86 acres and then had to rent 180 more hectares from their local lord. During the revolution, they bought church lands, and by 1822 they owned over 150 hectares. (*The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, pp. 191–192.) Thirdly, the end of



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feudal courts gave peasants access to more impartial justice, which was especially important in land disputes.

For urban working people, by contrast, the Revolution brought fewer gains. It seems likely that their very ascendancy during the period of emergency (1792–1794) and their close allegiance with the Jacobins might have worked against them in the long-term. As the men of 1795 gave final definition to the new society, their main aim was to discourage popular radicalism and political participation. Evidence of this is their smashing of the 48 ‘Sections’ of Paris and their replacement by the new system of ‘arrondissements’. They were also anxious to avoid any recurrence of the Jacobin technique of ‘Economic Terror’, such as the price controls of the Law of the Maximum. Finally, workplace legislation continued the spirit of the Le Chapelier Law of 1791, which tipped the legal provisions heavily in favour of the employer over the employee. After 1795, the tax barriers would also be replaced around Paris, subjecting urban workers again to heavy indirect taxes on food. McPhee concludes: “Among the initial supporters of the revolution, perhaps urban working people had sacrificed the most and gained the least. The sans-culottes of Paris, Marseilles and other cities had been the backbone of the Revolution, but they gained few tangible benefits.”

In conclusion, it is clear that the Revolution cannot be seen simplistically as ‘a tragedy of gigantic proportions’, because this is to ignore that there were equally significant sectional gains and sectional losses. Most importantly, it must be seen as a triumph for the range of social groups, termed ‘the bourgeoisie’, who originated from the revolution. Even Karl Marx recognized the true nature of the revolutionary achievement by 1795: although he declared the French Revolution “the greatest revolution in the history of the world”, he conceded that it was, finally, only a bourgeois-style revolution. Peter McPhee similarly argues that the revolution represented a triumph of the things the bourgeoisie believed in: “For them, the revolution represented the changes to political structures and dominant social values necessary to recognise their importance in the life of the nation. The Revolution was their triumph. The cultural values of post-revolutionary France were to be characterised by an amalgam of bourgeois and aristocratic values in a culture of ‘notables’.” (*The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, p. 196).

## The History – Revolutions Examination 2009: Sample answers

Please note: Only the questions pertaining to France on the examination have been included.

In the answers below, and for this chapter only, the words used to ‘flag’ the various parts of the response have been printed in bold (**First, ...Secondly, ...**). This technique was suggested by the Chief Examiner as a convenient way of helping the examiner see your three or four main points.

### SECTION A: REVOLUTION ONE

#### Part One: Revolutionary Ideas, Leaders, Movements and Events

##### Question 1

**b. France [1781–4 August 1789] – How France’s involvement in the American War of Independence contributed to the development of the Revolution from 1783 to 1789.**

The first impact of France’s involvement in the American War of Independence was political in nature, because French officers, such as the Marquis de Lafayette and the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, and the eight thousand troops who served in America, all returned with inspiring stories of a struggle between liberty and royal despotism over the issue of taxation without representation. Their testimonies gave rise to ‘the American Spirit’, which was an admiration, amongst liberal circles in Paris, for the colonists’ struggle for the principle of liberty. Their struggle for personal freedom and constitutional liberty was successfully completed with their victory in the war in 1783, but their influence in France did not end there. A number of American ‘patriots’ came to live in Paris. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was America’s first Minister to France from 1785. Jefferson was a firm supporter of republicanism for America, but he advised the French that they should consider constitutional monarchy, and recommended that they should study the English system. His advice confirmed the political ideas of the Society of Thirty, who by late 1788 were advocating a constitutional monarchy for France.

The second impact of France’s involvement in the American War of Independence was financial. France had participated in four major wars during the eighteenth century, but the American War of Independence would prove to be ruinous. Historian Judy Anderson states that by 1783 this war had cost France one billion French pounds; by 1786, the state was spending 37.5% of its

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revenue paying interest on the debt, without reducing the sum owed. In that year, the state spent 112 million French pounds more than it earned in revenue, a situation that must inevitably lead to bankruptcy. It was the mathematical nature of the national debt that forced Minister of Finance Calonne to plan a major reform of the taxation system that would remove fiscal privilege from the members of the clergy, the nobility and some sections of the bourgeoisie who enjoyed tax exemptions. Thus, a financial crisis, of the sort the monarchy had had in previous centuries, escalated into a fiscal crisis, or a debate about France's taxation system, and thence to a political crisis, or debate about the principle of representation. Historian David Garrioch suggests that the crisis of 1787–1789 was essentially a severe financial crisis that intersected with new political ideas of representation and accountability, creating the sequence of hostile confrontations between the monarchy and the Assembly of Notables (February–May 1787), then the *parlements* (May–June 1788) then the Estates-General (May–June 1789).

Third, France's involvement in America affected public perception of the Bourbon monarchy. While the nature of the national debt became a matter of public concern, and linked up with the 'birth of public opinion' in eighteenth century France, the actual cause of the debt was less clear. Public opinion, driven by rumours started by Marie-Antoinette's enemies at court, blamed the Queen for excessive spending on luxuries, reflected in her nickname as 'Madame Deficit'. The misunderstanding of the American debt, and the belief in her alleged overspending, compounded her earlier unpopularity as 'the Austrian bitch', and in turn gave added authority to scandals such as The Diamond Necklace Affair (1785), in which the Queen was innocent of any wrongdoing, but was condemned by public opinion.

Between 1783 and 1789, a real and severe financial crisis forced the French monarchy to undertake reforms that it was ill-equipped to complete, particularly because the new political belief that taxes must be approved by a representative body obliged the King to deal with the only three political bodies that had any claim to being representative. The successive failure of each attempt created the perception that the monarchy was unable or unwilling to complete necessary reforms, and eroded confidence in the competence of the king to conduct the nation's affairs. Out of this crisis of public confidence would emerge the new confidence of the Third Estate, which would claim a new constitutional role in theory (17 June 1789) and in practice (20 June 1789).

Question 2

**France [1781–4 August 1789] – How the actions and role of the Paris *parlement* contributed to a revolutionary situation in 1787 and 1788.**

First, the Paris *parlement*, supported by a network of thirteen provincial *parlements*, exemplified the new political idea of representation by aspiring to go beyond its legal role as a high court, which merely registered laws, to a body that could approve or disapprove laws. Resuming a campaign previously waged by the *parlements* during the reign of Louis XV, they confronted Louis XVI with their ambition to play a political role as a representative body between the king and his people. They did so by using the bureaucratic memo known as a ‘remonstrance’ to express opposition to royal laws on taxation.

Second, after the closure of the Assembly of Notables (May 1787), the Paris *parlement* and its provincial satellites started a constitutional rebellion against royal power. They asserted new political ideas of representation (ie that people must have a say in the determination of the taxes they pay) and accountability (ie the King must be willing to show the nation’s accounts to representatives of the whole nation). In July 1787, when Finance Minister Brienne took a modified form of Calonne’s tax reforms to the Paris *parlement*, it refused, using its legal authority to assert “that taxes should be consented to by those who had to bear them”, and arguing that new taxes could only be approved by the nation’s representatives assembled in the Estates-General. The King responded with the traditional royal order to register the new laws (August 1787), then he closed the *parlement* and exiled it to the provinces (August 1787). By May 1788, the reconvened *parlement* had codified its constitutional thinking in *The Fundamental Laws of the Kingdom*, arguing that there were fundamental laws of the realm that had the status of a constitution, and that the King had no right to change them. Arbitrary royal power, in the form of *lettres de cachet*, was also criticised.

Third, the Paris *parlement* and its satellites were the first to take on the role of revolutionary leaders, presenting themselves as the champions of ordinary French people against royal despotism, and enjoying the support of the popular movement in Paris and provincial cities. After the suspension of the Paris *parlement* and the provincial *parlements* (May 1788), crowds in Paris and cities like Grenoble rioted in defence of the judges, in some cases attacking royal troops and even expelling the royal administration from the town (The Day of the Tiles, Grenoble, June 1788). Their protests were political in nature, but were sharpened by the economic problems caused by bad harvests. These incidents proved that royal authority was no match for popular protest, especially when royal troops expressed unwillingness to fire on the crowds. Royal authority could not stop the flood of hostile political pamphlets proclaiming the principle of representation, as well as more radical ideas drawn from Rousseau’s *The*

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*Social Contract*, such as the sovereignty of the people. Thus, by 1788 the *parlements* had asserted radical new constitutional ideals, and had shown how popular support could be used to enforce them against royal authority.

### SECTION A: REVOLUTION ONE

#### Part Two: Creating a new society

#### Question 3

**a.**

- i.** The Committee of General Security was made responsible for police
- ii.** The Committee was responsible for internal security, via the Revolutionary Tribunal and local vigilance committees.

**b.**

- i.** The Committee of Public Safety could control ministers and appoint generals.
- ii.** The Committee could direct foreign policy and control local government.

**c.**

The Law of Frimaire (December 1793) is known as the Constitution of the Terror because it codified, rationalised and amended a number of earlier laws that had been passed during 1793 in response to challenges and crises faced by the new society. Its purpose was agreed by “both the Plain and the Mountain” to provide “strong government to destroy the Revolution’s enemies and to win the war”. It therefore created a unified legal and bureaucratic system for the use of Terror to overcome resistance and thus consolidate the new society.

The circumstances which gave rise to the implementation of what Robespierre had called ‘Revolutionary Government’ (October 1793) were the multiple, interlocking crises that had developed progressively since the declaration of war on Austria (April 1792), leading to a war of foreign intervention and invasion by September 1792, thus radicalising the popular movement (September Massacres, 1792), consequently necessitating conscription, which in turn became one of the catalysts for the Civil War in the Vendée region (March–August 1793). The new society was further endangered and radicalised by escalating international war: by February 1793, France was fighting on multiple fronts against major powers such as Spain and Britain, in addition to Austria and Prussia. Finally, the new society was endangered by political dissent (the ‘Federalist Revolt’ of moderate revolutionaries in 60 out of 83 departments, protesting against the radicalism of Paris).

The idea of creating a special government to deal effectively with the war emergency was actually introduced first by the Girondins when they initially controlled the Convention. For example, the Committee of General Security was their response to popular radicalism, and the Committee of Public Safety, in its early form, was their idea. Once the Jacobins controlled the Convention

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(June 1793), they built upon these structures, remodelling the Committee of Public Safety (July 1793), endowing it with “full executive powers”, using military Terror to crush the Vendée revolt and the Federalist revolts, and creating ‘Revolutionary Armies’ to secure food supplies (September 1793). The subsequent Declaration of Revolutionary Government (October 1793) gave legal basis for the suspension of the Constitution of 1793 and the creation of an emergency executive government which, for Stewart, “was not, strictly speaking, a constitutional government.” The Law of Frimaire (December 1793) confirmed the legality of Terror, but also brought some agents under closer control (for example, the Committee of Public Safety brought the Representatives on Mission more closely under its authority). Thus, by December 1793, Robespierre and the members of The Mountain had created the formal structures of special, temporary emergency government based on the use of terror, which is defined as the legal use of coercion by a government to deal effectively with its opponents.

### **d. The unpopularity of the Jacobin government between December 1793 and July 1794.**

During the critical year of 1793, when the new society faced so many threats that its survival might have seemed in doubt, Robespierre, insisted that the Jacobin government must ally itself with the *sans-culottes*. To win their support, it was important to give in to their political demands for the type of popular democracy represented by the radical Paris ‘section’ meetings, and to their economic demands represented by their demands for government regulation of food prices. By 1794, the Jacobin government was itself moving, politically, towards more centralised, authoritarian government and, economically, towards the idea of free trade without government regulation. These two developments would alienate the government from the popular revolutionary movement in Paris by July 1794.

Politically, the Jacobins had suspended the Constitution of 1793, which had enshrined the key *sans-culottes* political ideal of the right to insurrection. Rude reminds us that the whole idea of a centralised war emergency government during 1793 went against the whole previous trend of the revolution, which had seen the development of radical clubs, then of the Paris ‘section’ meetings, then the Paris Revolutionary Commune (9 August 1792). For Marxist historian Albert Soboul, the regime now proceeded to strike out at people who were “hostile to Jacobin centralisation and who remained attached to the system of popular democracy.” First amongst their targets was Jacques Hébert, a leader of the radical *sans-culottes*, who had vocally demanded a Law of Maximum (that is, government regulation of the upper limits of food prices and the lower limits of wages). After he backed his demand with a threat of an uprising (September 1793), the Convention responded by passing the Law of the Maximum

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(September 1793). However, Hébert's later call for a vague uprising (February 1794) prompted the Convention to pass Robespierre's Law Against Conspiracies (March 1794), which legitimised the subsequent trial and execution of the Hébertists. By June–July 1794, the *sans-culottes* movement also began to feel that Terror was no longer a means of preserving the Republic, but of consolidating a repressive dictatorship.

Socially, the Jacobin government became increasingly hostile to *sans-culottes* ideas and values. Historian Donald Sutherland argues that “the *sans-culottes* movement was a major victim” of what he calls the Jacobin dictatorship. He argues that many *sans-culottes* were absorbed into the Jacobin government as officials, but that any form of democracy, such as the clubs and the Paris ‘sections’, were “simply ploughed under”. By May 1794, when the Jacobins were actively bullying popular societies to close down, “it was the end of the *sans-culottes* as an autonomous movement.”

Administratively, the Jacobin government had also begun to reverse the decentralisation of political power that had begun with the Municipal Revolution of 1789, stripping the departments of much of their authority and imposing ‘national agents’ appointed in Paris. Local authorities were required to write regular reports to the Committee of Public Safety, and were rigidly controlled by the central government.

Economically, the Jacobin government had begun to go back on its concessions to the popular revolutionary movement. The Committee of Public Safety, backed by a conservative Paris Commune, issued a Law on the Maximum on Wages (July 1794) that was so severe that many working families would face starvation. Evidence for this is that a worker's daily wage fell from 8 francs to just 3 francs. This led to further strikes and protests, creating the impression that the *sans-culottes* were against the Jacobin government. The Paris Commune, which had been applying Le Chapelier Law since April 1793 to stop strikes, now brutally repressed strikes for higher wages caused by the Wage Maximum. Evidence for the impact of this economic measure is that only a week later, when Robespierre and his associates were being guillotined in the executions of Thermidor, members of the crowd called out “Down with Maximum!”

The historiographic debate about the success of Thermidor is polarised between those who feel that divisions within the Convention were the key factor, and those who feel that the attitude of the popular movement was most important circumstance. For Marxist historian George Rudé, the *sans-culottes*, “politically silenced, were further estranged by the government's economic measures.” For fellow Marxist Albert Soboul, too, measures such as the revision of the Law of the Maximum and the disempowerment of the Paris ‘sections’ led to “an insuperable sense of alienation from the regime amongst the Parisian *sans-culottes*.” For Alan Forrest, Thermidor was primarily “a palace revolution within the Assembly”, although he admitted that “it owed its

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success to the fact that the Paris popular movement had become disenchanted with the [Jacobin] mode of government and allowed them to fall.” For William Doyle, too, the Jacobin’s Maximum on Wages “alienated ordinary Parisians at a crucial moment”, although he also notes that the Thermidor conspiracy worked so quickly that sheer confusion prevented some of the popular movement from deciding how to react quickly enough. Like Forrest, he sees the rebellion as “not so much the overthrow of one man [...] as a rejection of a form of government.” Thus, the political and economic disappointments of the *sans-culottes* may not have been the trigger for the events of July 1794, but they were certainly an important reason for their success.

### SECTION B: REVOLUTION TWO

#### Part One: Revolutionary Ideas, leaders, Movements and Events

##### Question 1: The Night of Patriotic Delirium, August 1789

##### Some background notes for teachers on the idea of ‘patriotic liberty’

Simon Schama’s use of the term ‘patriotic liberty’ caused understandable concern to some teachers and some students in 2009, because it was an unfamiliar variant of the more familiar key term ‘Liberty’. For future reference, the author would like to offer the following reflections on the quite complex meanings of the term.

The standard revolutionary principle of Liberty, as later defined in foundation documents such as *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, focused strongly on the idea of personal liberty or freedom, and upon the circumstances under which the state might deprive a citizen of his or her liberty. Schama has gone beyond this, however, to a rather more complex and sophisticated term. He is certainly correct in evoking the word ‘patriot’ (not meaning traditional patriotism, but rather commitment to reform for the common good) and ‘liberty’ (in the broader sense of the struggle against absolutism for constitutional rights). As a deft cultural historian, Schama is sensitive to the “demonstrative” side of human behaviour, whereby human acts, often made in a theatrical manner, assert a basic political principle. Elsewhere in *Citizens*, he correctly identified that the Revolution created what he termed “a cult of self-dispossession”, whereby “giving something of one’s own to the Nation became a demonstration of patriotic probity.” This is an important perception, because it does link with the idea that the old regime was losing faith in itself. Revolutions often begin ‘at the top’, when the privileged and the powerful begin to lose faith in their own privileges, and then seek to give them up. Cultural historians now focus on many apparently insignificant acts that



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assume new meaning once we understand Schama's idea of altruistic sacrifice. In the Paris of the 1780s, French men and women, inspired by the neo-classical ideal of the 'examples of virtue' taken from ancient Roman history, considered what they could give up to help the common good and the common goal of liberty. For example, a group of revolutionary women, led by the wife of the painter Jacques-Louis David, tried to emulate the women of ancient Rome, who had famously donated all their jewels to the Senate, and arrived at the National Assembly in 1789 to surrender their own jewels to the cause of liberty. They were immediately dubbed the 'patriotic' revolutionary women of Paris. Schama himself cites the less relevant, earlier example of how even Louis XIV tried to demonstrate his commitment to the general good by sacrificing luxury items from Versailles to help the Royal Treasury. By 1789, the two key 'patriot' ideas were Liberty and Equality, which meant that any act that would work to end privilege was immediately judged 'patriotic'. Schama is correct in identifying that the night of 4 August took the idea of the patriotic sacrifice to liberty and equality to a new level of significance, transforming it from an individual or group act of sacrifice to a national level. It is a pity that Schama did not further explain his term '*demonstrative*' to remind students of the highly *theatrical* nature of this episode. It is also regrettable that he does not use the more common term of 'The Night of Patriotic Delirium', because the adjective makes the link to the focal idea of patriotism, while the term 'Delirium' (sometimes translated from the French as 'Drunkenness') would remind students that the planned theatricality spilled over into some sort of collective emotional outburst. Thus, Schama's insight into the political culture of these men is very profound, but it is still one that might understandably have challenged some students.

(\* The author expresses his debt to collegial discussions with Mr. Alan Thomas and Mrs. Lorraine White to explore the implications of this extract from Schama.)

**a.**

- i.** The nobles and clergy felt some emotions of apprehension, or fear, on the night of 4 August as the end of the feudal regime was being discussed.
- ii.** The same deputies felt a sense of "demonstrative patriotism", or a genuine sense of making sacrifices for the good of the nation.

**b.**

- i.** Some nobles may have felt that they could afford to lose their feudal dues, or that they might be able to continue collecting them in another form.

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ii. Some nobles held genuine ideals, from their experience in the American Revolution, that they could make a ‘patriotic’ sacrifice for the good of the country.

c.

The political and constitutional ideals of the reformers of 1789 were called ‘patriot’ ideas, suggesting three key concepts.

First, the word initially referred to the struggle of the American ‘patriots’ for ‘liberty’ against British ‘oppression.’ Many French volunteers had learnt these principles directly during “their service to America [in the War of Independence] in the 1770s.” Although the people of 1789 were not fighting a war of liberation, they felt they were waging a similar struggle for liberty against royal absolutism in their own country. In particular, the ideal of no taxation without proper representation would inspire the debate over voting by order or by head in the Estates-General (May–June 1789), culminating in the Tennis Court Oath (June 1789), which demanded that representation be enshrined in a constitution.

Secondly, they justified proposed reforms as being in the interests of ‘la Patrie’, which now meant ‘the common good’. This is the opposite of privilege, the legal basis of society in old regime France, which only guaranteed sectional interests. Revolutions often start at the top of society, where those who enjoy wealth and privilege lose faith in their right to do so. This links with the idea of the ‘virtuous’ citizen, the individual who makes personal sacrifices for the good of all. In the Night of 4 August, these ‘patriotic’ ideals were a *powerful* factor – but not the *only* factor – in the actions of the men who rose to surrender their own privileges and privileges generally. Schama’s term “citizen-nobles [...] from the upper crust” refers to men like the Vicomte de Noailles – the very example of a liberal noble who had served in America and who was inspired by American ‘patriot’ ideals – who was the first to condemn fiscal privilege, feudal dues such as the labour obligation, and all other forms of privilege. Nobles like the Duc d’Aiguillon, who followed, were literally therefore, demanding “the extinction of their own customary society”, which is why Schama claims that these people gave “serious support to the cause of patriotic liberty.” Another Breton, du Moustier, put the problem in political terms: the peasants wanted to throw off “slavery and tyranny” and to express their “desire for liberty.” This was crucial to the final stage of the revolution of 1789 because, without their sacrifice, the national assembly might have been tempted to oppose the demands of the Great Fear merely as criminal activity.

Third, Schama correctly identifies this as “*demonstrative* patriotism”, meaning that the sacrifice had to be made in public, in a dramatic fashion, to draw public attention to the underlying constitutional principle. He does not mention that the members of the Breton Club, who opposed noble privilege and wanted to push the national assembly to abolish all forms of privilege, deliberately planned this dramatic statement in the hope that it might work “a

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kind of magic”; Schama does admit the force of feeling unleashed as deputies were “swept away” in an emotion that was not “feckless posturing”, but born of deeply genuine belief. He fails to mention the contemporary name of the Night of Patriotic Delirium, which gives an idea of the power of the emotion. This event was crucial to the development of the Revolution because, once the deputies had performed this public drama, they could not go back on what they had promised, but merely modify and qualify what they had meant when they abolished the feudal system.

### d.

This extract is useful in providing a reliable view of the reasons for the events of the Night of 4 August because it goes beyond the single explanation of ‘patriotism’ – the combination of idealism and altruism and the desire to make sacrifices for the common good – to acknowledge that a number of *other* motives were also at work to drive this event. Schama also hints at the possibility of cynical calculation based upon self-interest. He admits that the liberal nobles and the bourgeois deputies who made these sacrifices on 4 August may well have hoped simply to avoid a more general attack on private property. His argument would have been more powerful had he evoked how the reports of peasant rebellion flooding in from provincial France gave all deputies the impression that the rebellion was spreading like a conflagration, and that an all out attack on property was imminent.

The limitations of the extract are that it fails to mention the sequence of events that occurred during May–July 1789, all of which were driven by the principle of ‘patriotic liberty’, and together form the chain of events referred to as the Revolution of 1789. The Night of 4 August 1789 was the fourth and final stage of the progressive unfolding of this revolution.

First, the preceding revolutionary events of 1789 – the debate over the order of voting in the Estates-General, the Third Estate’s redefinition of itself as a national assembly (17 June 1789) and its theatrical assertion of its unity in demanding a constitution (Tennis Court Oath, 20 June 1789) – had all served to establish the political or ‘constitutional’ revolution and the redefinition of sovereignty that were the priorities of the bourgeois deputies of the Third Estate. The subsequent capture of the Bastille (14 July 1789) had involved other social groups, notably the urban workers of Paris, but had still served to compound the strictly political gains of the ‘patriot’ deputies. For J. M. Thompson, however, the peasant rebellion known as the Great Fear “was a rising of the illiterate and unpropertied majority, whose views had been ignored [...] in the middle-class scramble for representation.” For the first time, the focus was moved to economic demands, specifically those of rural working people.

In the long term, the Night of 4 August must be seen in the context of the ‘patriot’ principles of 1789, of the national assembly’s previous debates about

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the constitution of the new society, and specifically of the ‘patriot party’s’ programme to abolish distinctions between the privileged and the unprivileged. These ‘patriots’ could not gain majority support in the assembly for such a radical social and legal change, and the debate had reached a parliamentary impasse. It was at this point that the peasant rebellion (which had started in December 1788) and the Great Fear (July–August 1789) provided an ideal opportunity to break the deadlock. Initially, the national assembly was not at all sympathetic to the peasants: its debates of 3 August condemned the peasant attacks on property as illegal acts by brigands, and called for repression and retribution. Nonetheless, the radical minority of the ‘patriot party’ could now argue that forceful repression of the peasant revolt would erode popular support for the revolution, create an opportunity for the King to re-assert his authority and possibly cause more widespread attacks on property. Unwilling to call in the royal army and give the King an opportunity to reassert his authority, these deputies recommended a legislative response to the problem. Their next parliamentary manoeuvre was to turn to an existing political group, the Breton Club, who were already committed to the principles of Liberty and Equality by the abolition of privilege in all its forms. They were asked to mount a concerted campaign to abolish the feudal system on the night of 4 August 1789. Members such as de Noailles and d’Aguillon led the way, demanding fiscal equality between the orders and the abolition of all privilege.

In the shorter term, the night of 4 August must be seen in the context of the impact of the reports of the Great Fear, which continued to arrive in Paris even as the actual rebellions in the distant provinces were dying down. For Marxist historian Albert Soboul the reforms “were more a concession to the needs of the moment than the sign of a real desire to satisfy the grievances of the peasantry.” These needs were, however, a matter of national interest. For historian Donald Sutherland, the deputies of the national assembly saw their task as “containing mounting disorder, the risk of an attack on all forms of property and the catastrophe for state finances of a continuing tax strike.” As Schama himself concedes, the priorities were much broader than “a cynical attempt to save something from the wreckage”.

In terms of outcomes of the Revolution of 1789, Schama’s extract mentions only the birth of “demonstrative patriotism”. For other historians, the strategic importance of the event in the Revolution of 1789 is much greater. The night of 4 August is seen as the fourth and final stage in the assault on the political and social order of the old regime. For historian Donald Sutherland, the event, though planned, was “an astonishing patriot victory”. For historian J. M. Thompson, the event not only helped destroy feudalism, but “attacked the throne from behind”. The peasant insurrection “made it impossible for the king to hold out any longer against the frontal attack from Paris”, and hence “made the revolution irresistible.” For historian Michael Sibalís, the legislation proposed on the night of 4 August would later result in legislation which

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“transformed a country of subjects divided by privilege into a united nation of citizens equal before and under the law.” For Sibalis, “it marks the end of the old regime and the birth of modern France.”

Finally, however, the usefulness of the extract is limited because of the main historical problem of the Night of 4 August, namely, that the emotional late-night sitting was not recorded in any detail, and hence it is difficult to determine precisely whether calculation or enthusiasm prevailed, and how much debate there was. For Revisionist historian Gwynne Lewis, the episode reveals “serious contradictions between the rhetoric of liberty [...] and the reality of a revolution led by a wealthy, propertied elite.” She argues that the deputies were intoxicated by the heady experience of giving away the tithe and personal feudal dues, but that their devotion to liberty could never eclipse that other sacred principle of the French Revolution, property. Since seigneurial dues were related to contracts, they were a form of property, and they could not be stripped from the individual by any authority. It is likely that many deputies made this objection on the night of 4 August, but that their objections were shouted down and erased from the written record. Historian Michael Sibalis states that the minutes were edited to give an impression of unanimity, whereas other testimonies hint at considerable opposition as well as some vocal repression of dissent. This moment of ‘patriotic liberty’ might have been a ‘delirium’, but it was not unanimous.

### SECTION B: REVOLUTION TWO

#### Part Two: Creating a new society

#### Question 2

**France [5 August 1789-1795]: The extent to which political power was achieved for all people.**

*The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (August 1789) represented a complete redefinition of the origins and nature of sovereignty, and a new definition of the right of citizenship, but it never intended, and did not achieve, the passing of political power to *all* people during the Revolution. While sovereignty and civil rights were deemed to be universal, and part of the natural rights Rousseau had spoken of, the exercise of political power remained sectional, that is, something to be defined and given differently to different groups in society. The distribution of power changed considerably during the three main phases of the Revolution, and this may be gauged partly by the constitutions of 1791, 1793 and 1795 successively. Historian Alan Forrest argues that “France did not have one political revolution [...] after 1789, but several.” During these revolutions “each different group (Girondins and

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Montagnards, Thermidorians and Directorials) tried to steer government along paths more suited to its own ideas.” (*The French Revolution*, p. 43, 49.) The most important issue at stake in each one of these ‘revolutions’ was who would have access to political power, and under what conditions.

The redefinition of sovereignty, or the origins of political power and legitimacy, was one of the most fundamental principles stated during the first, moderate phase of intensive reform (1789–1791). The Declaration states in Article 3 that “the source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation”, thus reversing forever the vertical hierarchy of the old regime, whereby sovereignty descended from God to his chosen representative, the King, and thence down to his subjects. By extension, “law is the expression of the general will”, but there is a condition: “all citizens have the right to concur personally, or through their representatives, in its formation.” Alan Forrest notes that, while some civic rights were deemed universal, the political right of voting and holding office was from the start predicated on economic status such as paying tax or owning property. This ambiguity emerged more clearly in the Constitution of 1791. Historian J. M. Roberts argues that the bitter debates of 1789–1790 centred upon “who should henceforth exercise the national sovereignty henceforth proclaimed”, dividing those who wanted limited political participation based upon property, and those who wanted a broad, democratic political participation. The first group won the debate, and political participation was handed to people who had a degree of wealth. The ‘passive’ citizens numbered about three million of the adult male electorate; they had the rights of citizens, but not the right to vote. The ‘active citizens’, defined by paying direct taxes equivalent to three days’ wages, numbered about 4.25 million; however, they merely chose electors who would choose the deputies, wealthier men again who might have numbered 50,000. (Roberts, *The French Revolution*, 33). They in turn chose deputies to the National Assembly, but these had to be very rich men who paid 52 French pounds per year. From the outset, therefore, the transfer of political power was predicated upon socio-economic status, and was never universal.

During the second, more radical phase of the Revolution (1792–1794), when the interlocking crises of international war, civil war, political dissent from the Federalists threatened the consolidation of the new society, the National Convention was forced to tolerate claims to political power by social groups who had been neglected by the Constitution of 1791. First amongst these were the urban working people of Paris who, in general, had been relegated to the status of passive citizens because many did not own sufficient property. Deprived of formal political participation in the form of voting and office-holding, they rapidly developed informal types of political participation, both in radical clubs such as the Cordeliers, in many of the forty-eight ‘section’ meetings in Paris and, after 9 August 1792, the Paris Revolutionary Commune. Knowing that the Jacobin government relied upon them for armed support, they

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seized political power for themselves, in the form of practices such as ‘the right to insurrection’, a concept duly acknowledged in the Jacobin Constitution of 1793. The second important social group was women, who also used the radical club, such as Claire Lacombe’s ‘Society of Revolutionary Republican Women’. The result of these claims to political participation can be seen in the Constitution of 1793 (June 1793), the most democratic France has ever had. For Alan Forrest, “sovereignty lay unequivocally with the people”, but “legislative and executive authority were concentrated in the Convention”. Yet this transfer of political power to the widest electorate France had seen did not take place: between August–December 1793, Robespierre opposed closing down the Convention, and moved toward the theory of Revolutionary Government (25 December 1793).

During the third phase of the Revolution (July 1794–October 1795), the essential development of the revolution was an attempt to return to the principles of 1789, whilst restricting the exercise of political power to a sectional group selected and defined by its wealth, gender and age. Specifically, the ‘men of 1795’, led by Boissy d’Anglas, asserted that “absolute equality is an illusion”, and that political power should be exercised by “the better amongst us”, by which he meant men of property. If political involvement meant the right to vote, the new arrangement was very democratic in appearance: anybody who paid a direct tax or had served in the war could vote creating an electorate significantly larger than the active citizens of 1791. By contrast, the right to hold political office was made much narrower. Historian D. Sutherland comments that the voters simply chose ‘colleges’ of ‘electors’, selected from very wealthy men who paid taxes equivalent to 200 days of labour. This not only excluded urban working people, but even the professional middle classes – the lawyers, journalists, doctors, bureaucrats – who had led the revolution in its early days. In essence, a small group of perhaps 30,000 very rich bourgeois and some nobles controlled who could become a deputy, and they always chose wealthy people like themselves. They chose the deputies to the lower house of the Council of Five Hundred (no property qualifications, but a minimum age of 30 years) and to the upper house of the Council of Ancients (no property qualifications, but a minimum age of 40 years). These age qualifications were designed to favour older men who had amassed property, and who therefore had a stake in the existing order of things.

This process of consolidating the new society also meant the dismantling of the institutions that had allowed the *sans-culottes* movement to seize and assert political power: the Paris Revolutionary Commune was replaced by a more municipal body (August 1794), the forty-eight sections of Paris were closed, stripped of their cannon, and replaced by mere suburban ‘arrondissements’. The Jacobin Club was shut down, clubs were forbidden and the right to present collective petitions removed. The *sans-culottes*’ egalitarian philosophy of ‘Fraternity’ was abolished, and the practice of the right to insurrection strongly

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discouraged. The two final attempts at popular insurrection – the risings of Germinal (April 1795) and Prairial (May 1795), which demanded a return to the radical Constitution of 1795 and the reduction in bread prices – were firmly repressed.

If the men of 1795 wanted to exclude working people and the middle classes from power, they also wanted to restrict political power from anybody else who might aspire to a dictatorship. They achieved this by a very rigorous separation of the powers of legislature, executive and judiciary, and by designing a constitution that was almost impossible to change by constitutional means.

The outcomes of the Revolution, in terms of political power, have been the subject of lively historiographic debate. Revisionist historian Tim Blanning points to “the extent to which it furthered the interests of the bourgeois”, adding that “at both a national and a local level it was they who benefited most from the new political arrangements.” By contrast, some left-wing historians, such as Daniel Guerin, argue that the settlement of 1795 was a resumption of power by the propertied classes. More recently, historian Martyn Lyons has argued that the coercive Jacobin Republic had suffocated democracy, and that the return to constitutional government in 1795 allowed true democratic political life to resume. Historian Peter McPhee also accepts 1795 as a necessary adjustment to the course of the revolution: the multiple crises of 1792–1793 had pushed events far beyond the revolution’s original course, which was really only that of a bourgeois revolution, into an extreme radicalism that could not be sustained. For McPhee, the Constitution of 1795 pulled the revolution back into its original aims and ideals, and to a revolution the bourgeoisie could accept. For historian D. Wright, it is clear that 1795 represents a political ‘reaction’ to previous radicalisation, but he notes that the Constitution of 1795 can also be read the opposite way, as evidence of “the permanent political gains of the Revolution.”