# **Answering Source Analysis Questions – a guide**

## **Source analysis questions**

**When:** The exam call for source analysis in two parts:

* Section A, Question 3 (a,b,c,d)
* Section B, Question 1 (a,b,c,d)

**What:** The source may be either primary or secondary and in the past the exam has used both a graphic and a written source (alternating between section A and B)

Regardless of the source type the a,b,c,d structure of past exams calls asks for the same skills in source analysis

## **Short answer (a) & (b)**

* These are the easiest marks you get in the exam. Answer them quickly and concisely and move on.
* This question will ask you identify and explain parts of the source. You should explain what these parts of the source mean as quickly as you can.
* e.g.
  + Identify two reasons stated in the source that….
  + Identify two ways the author…
  + Identify two features of the representation that…
  + Identify two ways the artist suggests…

## **Using your own knowledge and the source… (c)**

* This question asks for more.
* This question **requires the students to use their own factual knowledge PLUS key ideas from the given text/image TO ILLUSTRATE historical** **context** i.e. the circumstances that led to the document being produced.

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| ***FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE***  Your factual knowledge should include the following:   * ***Context*** - What was going on at the time? What events had occurred or were occurring? * ***Causes*** - What specific events, ideas, policies or actions might have led to this source being created? * ***Origin*** - Who was the individual, group, ideological movement or historian that created, or might have created the source? What were their reasons, motives or perspectives? How the source and its ideas reflect their attitudes or self-interest? * ***Ideas*** - All sources are an expression of ideas. Are the ideas reflected in your source ‘for’ or ‘against’ the revolution or some particular aspect of it? Identify and discuss these ideas, bearing in mind that some may be obvious while others may be more subtle or implied. |

* You will know far more about the context/circumstances than you can write in your answer. How do you know what to talk about? – use the key ideas in the document to direct your choice i.e. link your knowledge directly to the ideas in the document.

### **Explain the strengths and limitations (d)**

* “This question acts as a discriminator” – Di Wolff Chief Examiner, 2007
  + i.e. it separates the sheep from the lambs. Want to do well? Work on being able to nail this question
* **In this question you need to measure the views in the document against the opinions of historians or contemporaries of the period.** Views are key here. What are the views of the source? How do these compare to other views? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that view?
  + Good answers do the following
    - Identify the view given in the document and the source of this view I.E THE VOICE or Function of the document
    - Demonstrate a clear understanding of this view – “This view is supported by …’ (contemporary views, or historians)
    - Outline the merits of the view
    - Identify the strengths/limitations/different views
    - These comments should all be linked to the question posed

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| ***THINKING ABOUT ‘VOICE’***  To evaluate the ‘voice’ of a source you should think about the following   * ***Perspective***. Think about the source’s view or representation of the new society. How valid or accurate is it? How ‘honest’ or credible is it? Does it paint a fair picture? Whose attitudes or interests does it serve? * ***Bias***. Does the source have an obvious political message or perspective? Is it rhetorical or propagandist? Does it use exaggeration or emotion? |

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| ***EVALUATING THE SOURCE***  When you start to evaluate the usefulness of the source and compare it to other interpreatations, think about the following:   * ***Alternative perspectives***. Weigh up the evidence by considering how other sources or historians might represent the same topic. What might by suggested by another image or document, created by a different group? What might one or two other historians argue? * ***Validity and credibility***. Form conclusions about the accuracy, trustworthiness and overall merit of the source. Does it tell the truth or does it misrepresent or mislead by omission? How much popular support existed for the ideas and perspectives offered in the source? Identify information that can be gleaned from the source but consider also what it either ignores, fails to take into account or misrepresents. |

* To structure your answer, use prompts or signposting – strengths and limitations – to tie your arguments together

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| ***STRUCTURE FOR PART (d)***   1. **Analyse** the document **in relation to the question asked**. What is it telling us? Whose VOICE – (version) is coming through? Can you mention another piece of evidence which backs up this evidence? 2. **Identify weaknesses, silences in relation to the question asked.** Are there points of view which are left out, important issues which are not addressed etc? Can you mention pieces of evidence which you know/need to fill in these gaps? 3. Finish with an **overall sentence of evaluation** which **answers the exact question which is asked.**   To identify the exact question you need to focus on the phrase which occurs *after* the general instruction ‘Explain the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence ...**now comes the question** |