

Name:

School:



WINCHESTER
COLLEGE

Entrance Examination

History

Thursday 9th May 2019

Total time allowed: 1 hour 15 minutes

- You may have 10 minutes to study the source documents before the examination starts.
- Answer ALL questions in Section A and ONE question from Section B.
- You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on Section A and 30 minutes on Section B.
- Please start Section B on a fresh sheet of paper.
- Total marks for Section A: **25**. Total marks for Section B: **20**.

Section A: Louis XIV and Absolutism

Louis XIV (1638-1715) ruled France from 1643 until his death in 1715. During this time, Louis XIV developed a system of government which centralized political, judicial and religious authority on the person of the King; a process many historians describe as the development of 'absolutism'. The following sources and questions explore the nature and extent of Louis' power, and the relationship between Louis and his Chief Financial Minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert.

You are not expected to know the specialized background to the material but will be given marks on the strength of your interpretation of the sources. The questions follow the sources. Answer all of them.

Source A:

This source is taken from the memoirs of Louis XIV, writing in the late 1660s. In it, he advises his son about how a King should behave as monarch.

The function of kings is to observe the whole earth, to learn the news of every province and every nation, the secrets of every court, the attitudes and weaknesses of every foreign prince and his ministers; to be informed about an infinite number of things that we are presumed not to know about, to see what our subjects carefully hide from us, to discover the most obscure ideas and the most hidden interests of our courtiers...

I commanded the four Secretaries of State not to sign anything at all without talking to me about it, the Superintendant of Finances¹ likewise, and no financial business was to be transacted without being registered in a book, that was to remain with me, with a much abridged summary, where I could always see at a glance the current balance and expenditures...

All requests for mercies of any type had to be made directly to me, and I granted all my subjects without distinction the privilege of appealing to me at any time...

I resolved, above all, not to have a chief minister, there being nothing more shameful than to see on the one hand all the functions and on the other the mere title of a King.

Memoirs of Louis XIV

¹ The King's chief finance minister.

Source B:

Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704) was a theologian and political theorist. In the 1670s he wrote a book 'explaining the nature and the properties of royal authority' from which the following extract is taken.

Royal authority is sacred. God establishes kings as his ministers and reigns through them over the nations. All power comes from God. It is through them that he exercises his rule. It appears from all this that the person of kings is sacred, and that to try to harm them is a sacrilege...Kings must respect their own power, and only use it for the public good. Their power coming from on high, they must not believe that they are masters of it to use it according to their own will; but they must use it with fear and restraint, as something which comes to them from God, and for which God will call them to account.

Royal authority is absolute. In order to make this term odious and intolerable, some pretend to confuse absolute and arbitrary government². It is absolute because there is no power able to coerce the sovereign, who in that sense is independent of all human authority. But it does not follow from this that government is arbitrary, for besides the fact that everything is submitted to God's judgement, everybody remains the legitimate owner of their goods and nobody believes that their right to property will ever prejudice the laws, which are constantly vigilant against injustice and violence.

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics drawn from the true words of Holy Scripture*

Source C:

This source is taken from a report written by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis' Chief Finance Minister, to the King. The text in italics on the left hand side shows the King's annotations on the report.

It must be done as soon as possible.

Good.

As you judge most appropriate.

All the merchants are asking if it please Your Majesty to permit the circulation of Spanish royals at 3 livres 58 sous³, at which they have been fixed by the last decree issued in Your Majesty's presence, and I believe that this is necessary. The edict for the alienation of the tax on timber in the province in Normandy has been registered in the courts. I estimate that this will yield four to five million livres. It is necessary to know if Your Majesty wants it to be farmed out

² In this context 'arbitrary' means 'unrestricted by law' or despotic.

³ A 'Spanish royal' was a Spanish gold coin; livres and sous were French units of currency.

at a discount of one-sixth, or whether it should be collected direct.

It is for you to judge which is best.

My advice would be to farm it out; I will await Your Majesty's order.

The ordinances are signed.

I ask you to sign the enclosed ordinances.

I will be very happy to have news of Versailles.

I am setting off for Versailles; I will report to Your Majesty tomorrow about the state of the building works.

Colbert to Louis XIV, 24 May 1673

Source D:

This letter, written by the King to Colbert, followed a disagreement at the King's Council held the previous day. The King's Council was held daily and included all of the King's most important ministers.

I was sufficiently master of myself, the day before yesterday, to hide from you the pain which I felt on hearing someone like you, on whom I have heaped kindnesses, speak to me as you did. I have felt much friendship for you, as is clear from my actions; I still feel this, and I believe I give you firm evidence of it when I tell you that I restrained myself for your sake, and that I did not wish to say to your face what I am now writing in case you displease me further. It is the memory of services which you have given me, together with my friendship, which make me give this advice: profit from it and do not risk angering me again, for, after I have listened to your opinions and those of your colleagues, and have pronounced on all your statements, I never wish to hear the subject mentioned again... I do not want a single complaint. I am telling you what I think so that you can work on a secure basis and will not take any more wrong steps.

Louis XIV to Colbert, 24 April 1671

Source E:

This extract was written by a courtier at Versailles, the Duke de Saint-Simon, in 1715, shortly after Louis' death.

Louis XIV wished to reign by himself; his constant jealousy on this matter amounted to a weakness. He genuinely reigned in small matters; the big he could not attain, and even in the small he was often influenced... Colbert completely controlled the finances, but made Louis believe that everything passed through his hands by overwhelming him with documents for his signature...

Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*

Questions

Read Source A.

1. In your own words, explain the different ways in which Louis tried to be an 'absolute' monarch. [4]

Read Source B.

2. According to Bossuet, what is the source of royal power and why is this important? [2]
3. Is there evidence that Bossuet thought royal power was limited? If so, in what ways was it limited and why? [4]

Read Source C.

4. To what extent does Source C show Louis practising the ideals which he expressed in Source A? Give reasons for your answer. [4]

Read Source D.

5. What does this letter suggest about the nature of the relationship between Louis and Colbert? [2]
6. Why do you think Louis chose to write a letter, rather than confront Colbert at Council the previous day? [2]

Read Source E, then consider all of the sources.

7. To what extent do you think Louis XIV was an absolute monarch? [7]

Section B: Essays

Answer one question. Use examples from your own knowledge to support your answer. Wherever possible, anchor your arguments in your knowledge of the past. All questions are worth 20 marks.

1. Is it ever right to remove historical statues?
2. Choose an invention that you have studied and explain its significance.
3. How useful are works of art in aiding our understanding of history?
4. Do you think individuals can change the course of history? Explain with reference to any historical figure (or figures) you have studied.
5. Explain the reasons for the decline of any empire you have studied.
6. Are wars always destructive? Explain your answer.
7. Assess the causes of a rebellion, revolution, or conflict that you have studied.

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