



A-level HISTORY 7042/2F

Component 2F The Sun King: Louis XIV, France and Europe, 1643–1715

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Supporting Marking Guidance

A separate Supporting Marking Guidance document has been created for use in this series and any future series.

It has been written by the senior examining team. It applies to all A-level History options. The purpose of the guidance is to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across all options. The guidance does not reflect a change in the standard applied, but clarification and amplification of the standard. We hope that the guidance document will aid you in your understanding of how the standard should be applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work. The Supporting Marking Guidance should always be used in conjunction with the mark scheme, and any relevant examiner standardising and teacher training material.

Examiners can find the Supporting Marking Guidance on the associate extranet.

Teachers can find the Supporting Marking Guidance alongside the current mark scheme on Centre Services on results day. It will also be published with any future assessment materials on the public website.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying discontent in France towards the end of Louis XIV's reign.

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- Fénelon was a known critic of Louis XIV by 1708 and had spoken out about the discontent experienced in France due to Louis XIV's absolutism. This adds value to the source as it suggests that Fénelon is well placed to comment on the cause of discontent in France, from a place of protection whilst in exile
- the source is a private letter to a trusted friend which is valuable as Fénelon is able to speak freely to the receiver, without fear of retribution. However, the fact that it was written whilst Fénelon was in exile in 1708 could limit the value of the source as he is relying on second-hand information. He had not been in France since the 1690s. His role as a known critic of Louis XIV could also weaken the source as he may be prone to exaggeration when it comes to describing the state of France
- the source is written in 1708 which is at the height of the War of the Spanish Succession and at a time when the conflict was going very badly for France. By 1707, French fortresses, such as Casale, had been lost and the Allies controlled the entire Po Valley, leaving southeastern France open to invasion. Discontent was high during this time so the date of the source adds value as it can provide a reason for this atmosphere in France
- the tone is critical of the King which limits its value.

Content and argument

- Fénelon is recounting a conversation with the former finance minister who reports France is in 'desperate times'. This is valuable as the finance minister would be well informed in regard to the state of France and this provides a clear reason for discontent. Indeed, Desmaretz had replaced Chamillart in 1707 as the latter had failed to raise enough revenue to fund the war. This was partly due to regional poverty at this time which massively hindered taxation collection and returns, with most Generalities seeing considerable arrears by 1707
- the source states that the war had led to famine across the country, which is valuable as we know that the length of the war had a significant financial drain on France. Depopulation was a key concern and between 1694 and 1710 deaths from famine had increased by 140% in the east and 116% in the southeast. War had broken out in 1702, so by 1708 there had been six long years of fighting. This follows the Nine Years War which had already crippled France economically
- the source suggests that the army is in 'trouble' and that there is a lack of direction. This is valuable as it highlights discontent among the armed forces as well as the people of France more generally. Following the death of Louvois in the 1690s, Louis XIV had become his own War Minister and, by 1708, his health was deteriorating leading to a lack of rigor previously seen in the army
- the source suggests that the country will starve if peace is not reached, which is valuable as it highlights how desperate many people were towards the end of the reign. Harvest failure and widespread famine from 1708 meant that even basics like bread became unaffordable to the masses. Prices rocketed by 400% in Picardy and 112% in Paris.

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the source is a speech from Louis XIV himself which is valuable as it demonstrates that the King is aware that there is discontent in France in 1709 and that this needs addressing. Louis intends his words of reassurance to be heard by everyone in his kingdom
- the purpose of this source also increases its value, as Louis is attempting to use his propaganda machine to dispel feelings of anger towards the Crown due to the poor state of the country after years of war
- however, the fact that the source is coming directly from the Crown limits the value as it merely provides the Crown's perception of the discontent felt by the people of France which would not be a truly accurate representation
- the tone of the source appears to be self-justification, which is valuable as it shows that Louis XIV was aware of the widespread anti-war feeling in France as he feels the need to address his people and explain his policies.

Content and argument

- the source refers to the war as a key cause of discontent in France, which is valuable as the War of the Spanish Succession had been raging for seven years and was taking its toll on the whole country. In 1709 alone, there were riots in Valenciennes, Anjou, Paris and Rouen. The King is aware that there is discontent in France and that the country wants peace
- the source suggests that the Crown has shared 'all the evils' which the war has inflicted on the people of France, but this could limit the value as this statement is highly unlikely. The King puts the blame on his opponents for prolonging the war, claiming that he has shown how much he wants peace not so unfavourable to France. Whilst it is true that the peace terms offered in 1709 would have weakened France, as they included provisions such as Louis XIV's grandson giving up his right to Spain, it seems too far to suggest that this means that the King of France is aware of how his people are suffering. It also seems like Louis is trying to deflect the blame for the continued discontent experienced by the people of France
- however, the fact that the King believes he understands the hardship of his people and suffers equally shows how out of touch he is, which would add value to the source
- the source makes it clear that peace is not a likely outcome in the short term, which is valuable in demonstrating why ongoing war will cause further discontent in France during the remaining years of Louis' reign. This is shown by the peace terms offered in 1709, which would have restricted France back to its 1684 boundaries.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the author of the source is from north western France where there were known to be riots during 1709. This is valuable as it is providing an insight into the reasons for these riots from someone who was there at the time
- the source is from a bourgeois citizen, who would not have been involved himself in the riots, so can provide an informed insight from the perspective of an observer. However, it could also be argued that this limits the value of the source as a member of the bourgeois would not have experienced the same level of suffering as others who were less fortunate
- it is from a diary, therefore the author is merely recording his observations on the situation in 1709. This is valuable as it would suggest that there is no clear motive for providing a dishonest account about discontent in France during the end of the reign
- the tone of the source is informative, which could increase its value as it does not seem to be exaggerating the discontent experienced in France in 1709.

Content and argument

- the source refers to the lack of food available throughout the year, which is valuable as the winter of 1708/09, in particular, was devastating for France and was a key cause of discontent. During the winter of 1708/09, alternating thaws and further severe frosts destroyed crops leading to famine across the country. Partridges froze in the fields and the wine even froze at Versailles
- the source refers to a tax levied on all citizens in proportion to their wealth. This is valuable as it demonstrates how desperate the situation was becoming that the Crown felt it necessary to tax all of its subjects on a proportionate basis
- the source details riots in Rouen, which is valuable as this is direct commentary on discontent resulting in violence and highlights the level of anguish experienced by those in northwestern France
- however, the source seems to imply that it was the responsibility of the bourgeoisie to stop the discontent in France from resulting in violence. This could limit the value of the source as this statement could be seen to be exaggerating the role of the bourgeoisie in regard to settling violence caused by discontent in France.

Section B

- 0 2** 'In the years 1643 to 1648, the Regency government in France was weakened most by its financial policies.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that in the years 1643 to 1648, the Regency government in France was weakened most by its financial policies might include:

- despite inheriting a country in debt, Mazarin continued to borrow money during the years 1643 to 1648. By 1645, expenditure had reached 136 million livres. A big proportion of this expenditure went on secret expenses and was not properly audited. This weakened the regency government as it led to rumours that Mazarin was enriching himself at the expense of the state, in light of his large personal fortune
- Mazarin frequently borrowed money at high interest rates which plunged the country further into debt. Often interest rates were between 15% to 20% which increased the debt owed by the Crown. These loans were often from abroad which led to further distrust of Mazarin, especially in light of the fact that he was not French himself and was already viewed with suspicion
- during 1643 to 1648, the government tried to enforce new taxes, such as the *toise*, but these taxes were repeatedly paused due to protests. As a result, Parlement refused to approve any new taxes in 1645, leading to further tensions between the Crown and Parlement
- by 1648, taxation had soared to three times its 1630 figures. Payment arrears increased, as did troop use to enforce collection and riots in the provinces, demonstrating a clear lack of royal authority over taxation matters.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1643 to 1648, the Regency government in France was weakened most by its financial policies might include:

- the regency of Mazarin and Anne of Austria was widely unpopular and caused problems for the Crown when it came to the authority of the King. Anne had the regency council overturned in 1643 which caused widespread resentment from the nobility and there were plots against the government during the regency period which led to increased instability. For example, *l'affaire des importances* attempted to murder Mazarin, demonstrating the feeling of dissatisfaction with the Cardinal
- the Crown experienced resistance from the Parlement of Paris during this period. This resulted in a power struggle between the Parlement and the regency government which was much bigger than just financial matters
- the Thirty Years War continued during the years 1643 to 1648, causing a huge military burden which became more and more difficult to justify. The Treaty of Westphalia failed to include a peace with Spain which fuelled further resentment
- the outbreak of the Fronde in 1648 was effectively the start of a civil war at a time when France was still fighting Spain. Managing domestic strife whilst fighting abroad proved to be a major challenge for the government and one that had a lasting impact on Louis XIV.

Students may argue that financial policies were the biggest cause of the problems facing the regency government in the years 1643 to 1648 as it resulted in political tensions at home. The repeated mismanagement of the royal finances caused clashes with Parlements and can be attributed to the outbreak of civil war in 1648. However, one could also argue that financial policies were not the biggest cause of the problems as it was general mismanagement by the regency council more broadly that proved the bigger challenge or, perhaps, the ongoing Thirty Years War.

0 3 'France was strengthened by the Dutch War.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that France was strengthened by the Dutch War might include:

- Louis gained territory at Nijmegen. Franche Comte was an important acquisition, for it added human and economic resources to the kingdom and strengthened the eastern frontier. Some of the frontier towns also became part of Vauban's chain of fortifications on the northern and eastern frontiers, to protect France from future invasions
- the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold was weakened because he was trying to defend his eastern frontier from the Turks, and was trying to put down a rebellion in Hungary which made him less of a threat to France
- whilst the war was economically challenging for France, Louis' enemies did suffer more. The Dutch Republic was ruined financially and economically and Spain also suffered financial losses
- following Nijmegen, Louis was able to enact his policy of Reunions. This further strengthened the northeastern frontier as France was able to manipulate the peace terms to enable annexation of much of the region between Moselle and the Rhine, including most of Luxembourg and Alsace, including Strasbourg.

Arguments challenging the view that France was strengthened by the Dutch War might include:

- the Dutch were tougher opponents than Louis XIV expected and it turned into a European conflict which was not short, and in which Louis was not unambiguously victorious. France paid a heavy international price for the war – coming to be perceived as the principal danger to international peace
- the French destruction of crops, livestock and buildings and the killing of civilians in the Dutch Republic and the Rhineland shocked even hardened contemporary opinion, and created Francophobia
- French state debt increased as a result of the war, and taxes were raised in France. The French economy also suffered. Violent social protest broke out as a result
- it marked a move away from the idea of using 'gates' to protect frontiers, and onto the idea of using a linear strategy to protect frontiers. This preferably included a line from the North Sea to the Mediterranean defined and protected by strongly fortified towns, using the latest military technology to make them hard to capture. In order to strengthen the frontier towns, Louis engaged in a series of reunions (essentially land grabs) in the early 1680s which would cause later conflict.

A final assessment would suggest France was the dominant power in 1679, meaning that France was strengthened by the Dutch War. When Louis invaded Dutch territory in 1672, he was not thinking in such strategic terms as he wanted a short war. However, the long conflict proved to be so costly that it left the other powers even more exhausted than France. Alternatively, it could be argued that France's prestige was deeply damaged as there was no lightning victory and the economic consequences for Louis XIV were still dire.

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- To what extent were the actions of Louis XIV, from 1685, responsible for the outbreak of the Nine Years War?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

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- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the actions of Louis XIV, from 1685, were responsible for the outbreak of the Nine Years War might include:

- Louis acted in an aggressive way which led to the formation of an anti-French coalition by 1689. The aims of the Grand Alliance could have been defensive rather than provocative
- Louis' quarrel with the Pope resulted in violent action which shocked the whole of Europe. He violently seized the Papal State of Avignon in 1687. He also installed his candidate as the Archbishop of Cologne by force in 1688. These aggressive moves against the Pope shocked the whole of Europe
- Louis sent troops to capture Phillipsburg and devastate the Palatinate. He also took advantage of the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and offered James II troops to provoke Irish Rebellion
- Louis used a scorched earth policy when invading the Palatinate. This policy led to widespread Francophobia and provided further evidence to the Grand Alliance that France's aggressive foreign policy needed to be stopped
- the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was seen as aggressive and was even condemned by other Catholics, many Huguenots fled to the Dutch Republic and shared their stories of persecution.

Arguments challenging the view that the actions of Louis XIV, from 1685, were responsible for the outbreak of the Nine Years War might include:

- William of Orange became William III of England in January 1689 and, by May, had formed a powerful anti-French coalition called the Grand Alliance which was very threatening to France. This also resulted in the loss of England as an ally
- the Holy Roman Emperor provoked Louis by usurping what Louis believed to be his sister-in-law's territory in the Palatinate. The Holy Roman Emperor also refused to convert the Truce of Ratisbon into a permanent peace which had implications for the French North Eastern frontier
- the Pope had joined forces with the Holy Roman Emperor and had appointed an inexperienced Imperial candidate to the vacant position of Archbishop of Cologne over a much more experienced French candidate. Cologne was of vital strategic importance for France
- Louis argued that any actions taken by France in 1688/89 were defensive in motive as the Grand Alliance posed a serious threat to France's national security. Louis made a public proclamation explaining this in 1689.

Overall, one of the key reasons why the Grand Alliance formed in the first place was because of expansionist and aggressive French foreign policy. This became even more extreme following the invasion of the Palatinate and the use of a scorched earth policy. Alternatively, it could be argued that Louis XIV was provoked into war in 1668/89 as the major countries in Europe all formed the Grand Alliance against him. Louis, therefore, had no choice but to act defensively during this time period to stop the growing threat from his enemies.