

GCE



Revised GCE
History

Student Guidance

A22: How to assess the value of a source

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018



GCE A22: History: How to assess the value of a source

When analysing sources, it is important to think about 3 things:

- The value of the source
- The limitations of the source
- The relevance of the source content to the question.

Assessing Value in A22 Question 1 (a)

In this question, you will be given a primary source relating to your period of study. It is your task to evaluate the source and make a judgement on how valuable it is in answering a specific question.

In this question one approach which can be used to help you structure your answer is the acronym –

VACDALMK

V=Value

A= Author

C = Content

D= Date

A= Audience

L=Limitations

M= Motive

K= Knowledge

One of the most common mistakes made by candidates in this question is that they fail to make use of the content of the source. This should be your starting point; after all, it is the content of the source which is key to any assessment of its value.

To reach Level 4 you need to ensure that you have commented on the key aspects above with some development. You cannot score a mark in Level 4 unless you have included relevant Knowledge which relates to the ‘historical context’.

Example:

1(a) Use Source 1 and your knowledge of this period.

How valuable is Source 1 as evidence to an historian studying opposition to Home Rule in the period 1912–1914?

Extract from an article in a local newspaper, published on 18 December 1913, showing that an application to drill had been granted to the Second Battalion of the South Down regiment of the UVF.

The Magistrate for the district of South Down has recently signed a declaration giving permission to the Second Battalion UVF to gather and drill tomorrow evening in the Square. This very positive move surely shows that the judges agree with the actions of our noble friends. Mr. Hall, the Commander of the 2nd Battalion South Down Regiment UVF, has been authorised on behalf of the members to hold meetings for the purpose of training and drilling themselves. They are permitted to be trained in the use of weapons for the purpose of practising military exercises, movements and defence. It was made clear to the Magistrate that the UVF are lawful citizens of the Empire and faithful subjects of His

Majesty the King and, as such, intend to defend Ulster and the Empire from the perils of the Church of Rome.

Answer:

Source One is of **value** as evidence in the study of opposition to Home Rule since it reveals the actions and attitudes of one battalion of the UVF in South Down. The article was published in a local newspaper, and although we do not **know who wrote it**, we can infer from the **content** that it was supportive of the UVF and was targeting an **audience** of like-minded unionists. The source is of **value** as it implies that there was support for the actions of the UVF, seeing the granting of permission as a **'very positive move'** and that **'the judges agree with the actions of our noble friends'**. This is accurate as it was well known that Carson, a barrister and judge, was a key figure in managing to galvanise Unionism's disparate strands as never before, uniting working-class organisations, bourgeois loyalist industrialists and the embattled southern landed gentry. He had many wealthy British donors sending money, speakers and (after 1913) guns across the Irish Sea. The **date** of this source is very significant and of value since it comes following the formation and formal launch of the UVF on 25th November 1913, which increased Unionist fears and heightened tensions of the possibility of a civil war. Carson's creation of the Ulster Covenant in September 1912 was seen as a call to arms which the source shows had been taken seriously by the men in South Down who were **'authorised on behalf of the members to hold meetings for the purpose of training and drilling'**. The source is clearly **intended** to motivate and encourage others to support the UVF who are described as **'lawful'** and **'loyal citizens'** whose purpose was to defend **'Ulster and the Empire from the perils of the Church of Rome'**. These were key arguments used to oppose Home Rule at huge public meetings under the slogans 'Home Rule is Rome Rule', 'Ulster will Fight, and Ulster will be Right'. **Whilst the source has some value**, we have to be aware that this is only one source representative of this one UVF battalion. However, it is a fairly accurate description as throughout Ulster, the UVF was regularly and publically drilled in military manoeuvres. A key limitation of this source is that it fails to show other methods of opposition to Home Rule before December 1913, such as the signing of the Covenant (1912) or the actions of the Conservative leader, Bonar Law, who seemed to incite civil war when he spoke at Blenheim Palace in July. The source also fails to deal with later events which were central to opposition, such as the Larne Gun-Running and the Curragh Mutiny of 1914. More importantly, we do not have details on the methods used by the UVF to oppose Home Rule.

In the sample answer you will see key aspects are highlighted in bold. The answer starts off by looking at the content of the source and using it to answer the specific question on opposition to Home Rule. The answer above is one approach to this question. Whichever way you choose to answer it, the key to success is to ensure you cover each of the areas in bold.

Be aware that some factors will reduce your mark in this question including:

- If you focus on the key areas only but fail to make use of the content, you will not be able to access the higher mark bands.
- If you fail to explain the reasons **why** the author, date, mode etc. are of value, you will also be restricted to the lower mark bands. For example, candidates sometimes say that the date is valuable because it is from the time. This tells the examiner very little. You need to use the date to place the source in **context**. The same applies to the author. It is not enough to say the author is from Ulster.
- In each of the key areas, be guided by **PEEL** –Make your **point**, give an **example**, back it up with

evidence and **link** it to the question.

- So, for example, in the source above: the **mode** of this source may reduce its value and could be seen as a limitation. (**POINT**) We have to be aware that the newspaper article is written for a particular purpose, to inform and even encourage the actions of the UVF. (**EXAMPLE**) However, we do not know who wrote this article, though we can see the author is subjective (**EVIDENCE**) as the language and tone of the article, seeing the UVF as 'noble' and 'lawful' seems to be supportive of the call to arms in opposition to Home Rule. (**LINK**)
- Remember to give your judgement – do you see the source as having value? You can give your judgement at the start, the end or throughout your answer, as in the sample answer above.