

2006 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

Modern History

Section I (continued)

Question 3 (10 marks)

Assess how useful Sources C and D would be for an historian studying the impact of total war on the home fronts during World War I.

In your answer, consider the perspectives provided by the TWO sources and the reliability of each one.

Source C is a primary literary source from American ambassador James Gerard. It outlines the effect that the war had on the German homefront and the consequences from the naval blockade imposed by Britain. The source's perspective is that of an American who takes the role of an onlooker to the situation unfolding in Germany. His account is free from personal bias, making the source a reliable one. Although source C is not a particularly emotive-driven one, it still provides an overview of life in Germany during the war, providing details of food shortages and employment. The source does have its limitations. It provides only a picture of civilian life in Germany, which was vastly different to the conditions experienced in Britain. It also doesn't provide details of other facets of total war including the political and economic situation of Germany and measures taken to overcome these problems.

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Question 3 (continued)

Source C also doesn't detail the initial reaction to war in Germany and the factors which brought about the descent into eventual revolution, and changes in attitudes.

Source D is a primary pictorial source. It is a British propaganda poster from the Ministry of Food, printed in 1917.

The poster reflects the attitudes and lives of civilians in Britain during the war. Voluntary rationing was introduced in 1917, which this poster demonstrates.

The symbolism of the British Navy in the background of the poster and the slogan 'Defeat the U-Boat' encourage feelings of nationalism and pride, which propaganda posters hoped to achieve. The woman in the poster's foreground represents the increasing role women were playing during the war.

The perspective of Source D is a British one, allowing historians to analyse the effectiveness of propaganda which played a large role in the war. It is reliable in showing the British government's role in the lives of civilians and the measures gone to, to encourage nationalism and further support for the war. It is limited as it presents only one view, and that of the government may differ to public opinion. Because the poster is propaganda also, other sources need to be used in conjunction with Source D to provide an overall picture of conditions on the homefront.

These sources, C and D, can be used in corroboration with other sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles of the homefronts in terms of total war. Total war involved a number of factors and all these would have to be considered by an historian