

5.1 Contextualizing 18th-Century States

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to write the **context** for the crisis of the late eighteenth century.

You must be able to:

- name the fiscal, intellectual and social conditions of the crisis
- explain how war debt produced political conflict
- state what the Enlightenment supplied to critics of the state
- avoid narrating the Revolution instead of contextualising it

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ The conditions

Debt from prolonged war, a tax system that exempted the wealthiest, a body of theory grounding authority in consent, and a commercial class with wealth and no political standing.

■ Debt into conflict

Servicing war debt required new revenue; new revenue required either taxing the exempt or obtaining consent. Both routes forced a political question the crown had avoided.

■ What theory supplied

4.3's social contract gave critics a standard by which the existing arrangement could be judged illegitimate rather than merely inconvenient.

2 Practice

2.1 Name three conditions of the late eighteenth-century crisis. [3]

2.2 Explain how war debt forced a political question. [2]

2.3 A crown must raise revenue and cannot tax the exempt.

(a) State its remaining option. [1]

(b) State the risk of taking it. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A tax system exempting the wealthiest makes new revenue [1]

- **A** easy to raise
- **B** obtainable only by taxing the exempt or seeking consent
- **C** unnecessary
- **D** automatic

3.2 The social contract supplied critics with [1]

- **A** an army
- **B** a standard of legitimacy
- **C** revenue
- **D** a monarchy

3.3 A context paragraph lists three conditions with no consequences.

(a) State the fault. [1]

(b) Explain the fix.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 any three of: war debt; a tax system exempting the wealthiest; a theory grounding authority in consent; a commercial class without political standing.

2.2 servicing the debt required new revenue, which could only come from taxing the exempt or obtaining consent — both political questions.

2.3 (a) to seek consent from a representative body. (b) summoning such a body opens the whole basis of authority to question.

3.1 B. the exemptions leave only those two routes.

3.2 B. consent becomes a test of legitimacy.

3.3 (a) conditions without stated consequences explain nothing. (b) state what each made possible, which is the purpose of contextualising.