

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]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.1 Contextualizing 18th-Century States** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Conflict, Crisis, and Reaction in the Late 18th Century** section of the AP European History handout on the **Know** page.

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.