

The Battle of Antietam Documents Exam Mark Scheme

1. Using these sources and your own knowledge, analyze the significance of the Battle of Antietam. (30 marks)

This question requires candidates to analyze the significance of the Battle of Antietam (17 September 1862) *with explicit reference to the content of the sources*. Answers should address:

- the extent of military casualties;
- the cultural legacy of the battle;
- the strategic effect on the Union and Confederacy;
- the political impetus it gave to Emancipation;
- the disappointment of British diplomatic ambitions.

Answers to this question must address *all* of these consequences. The best answers will establish the most significant consequences and/or demonstrate connections between points of significance.

Military Casualties (6 marks: 2 for *analysis* and 4 for *evidence*)

Analysis: The Battle of Antietam (also known as the Battle of Sharpsburg on the Confederate side) was not only the bloodiest day of the Civil War, but also the bloodiest day in U.S. military history. The 23,000 dead and wounded at Antietam was four times the number of American casualties sustained on the Normandy beaches on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Another way to put Antietam in broader context is to recognize that the number of casualties in that single battle was more than all the other wars fought by the United States in the nineteenth century *combined*: the War of 1812, the Mexican–American War, the Spanish–American War, and all the Indian wars.¹ The extent of the casualties can be explained by the fact that the Civil War was fought at a time when firepower on the battlefield was increasing dramatically, but infantry tactics had not yet evolved sufficiently to mitigate the effects of this (and would not do so until well into the twentieth century). Antietam is therefore representative of battle at the birth of modern industrial warfare.

Evidence supporting the analysis:

- **Source A** provides visual evidence of the lethality of the battlefield. The photograph depicts the sunken road, which became known as “Bloody Lane”, and the description refers to the desperate fighting experienced by Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball’s Brigade in its attempt to clear the Confederate position.² The concentration of dead in this part of the battlefield was well described in several Union accounts.³ Also evident from the source – though requiring more careful scrutiny – is the destruction of the cornfield to the south of “Bloody Lane”, which indicates that cover was torn up by fire and movement.

¹ James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

² See battlefield map, at: <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/antietam/maps/antietammap1.html>
Also see Kimball’s Brigade marker, at: <http://www.antietam.stonesentinels.com/MarkersUS/M041.php>

³ One Lt. Col. of a New York regiment wrote “In the road the dead covered the ground. It seemed, as I rode along, that it was the Valley of Death. I think that in the space of less than ten acres, lay the bodies of a thousand dead men and as many more wounded.” McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, p. 4.

- In **Source B** Samuel Hodgman comments that his unit (a platoon in the 7th Michigan Infantry) had 29 men when it went into action, of which 20 had been wounded, and presumably six killed, as the author writes that he had “heard of but two who have come out safe”. This indicates that the percentage of battlefield deaths in the author’s unit was approximately one-fifth and the percentage of wounded was two-thirds. This was not untypical of casualties in some other units; on the Confederate side the 1st Texas Regiment lost 80 per cent of its men killed or wounded and of the 250 men in the 6th Georgia Regiment only 24 survived unscathed.⁴

Cultural Legacy

(6 marks: 2 for *analysis* and 4 for *evidence*)

Analysis: The cultural legacy of Antietam is in large measure explained by the high number of casualties and how this has been represented visually and in writing. As the historian John Keegan has remarked, the battle “would cast a chill for years to come”.⁵ Another historian, Lloyd Benson, has commented that the cemetery at Antietam is “one of the most powerful places to go for thinking about the meaning of the Civil War ... a place for reflecting upon the power of humans to shift the course of human events, or perhaps to acknowledge the limits of human reason and agency against the inexorable forces of nature and time.” This was captured, for example, in John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem, “The Battle of Autumn 1862”.⁶ Writing after the centennial of the battle James Rawley chose Antietam as one of a handful of turning points in the Civil War, not least because it facilitated the Emancipation Proclamation, forever changing the American social order.⁷

Evidence supporting the analysis:

- **Source A** is important not just as evidence of the military history of Antietam, but also as part of American cultural history. This is one of around a hundred photographs of the battlefield taken by Alexander Gardner and his assistant James Gibson, which were shown the following month in New York, at the studio of Mathew Brady. The exhibit – “The Dead of Antietam” – drew large audiences and had a profound effect. Although it “was not yet true combat photography” (because it did not show images of soldiers engaged in combat), “it was near to it ... and the pictures of gaping wounds and bloated bodies began to erode the romantic image of war.”⁸ The photographs therefore form part of a continuum in American civilian visualization of war, stretching from Antietam through Gettysburg, all the way through to the Vietnam War and recent combat in Iraq.⁹

⁴ John Keegan, *The American Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2009), p. 168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶ Lloyd Benson, “Ballots and Bullets: The Politics of Antietam and Chickamauga”, McQuaide Distinguished Lecture in History, 8 Oct. 2012, in *Juniata Voices*, Vol. 13 (2013), p. 23. The poem was published in *The Atlantic* magazine, 1 Oct. 1862, and is available at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1862/10/the-battle-autumn-of-1862/303954/>

⁷ James A. Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War* (First published 1966. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2nd ed. 1989), pp. 104-05. Rawley recognized that the Emancipation Proclamation was a turning point of such moment that he gave it a separate chapter.

⁸ Frank J. Wetta, “Photography and the American Military”, in James C. Bradford (ed.), *A Companion to American Military History Vol. II* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 818. Also see Benson, “Ballots and Bullets”, pp. 33-36 for discussion of the visual representations of Antietam and their social consumption.

⁹ Wetta, “Photography and the American Military”, p. 818.

- The cultural impact of Antietam – and the Civil War more generally – is also seen in **Source C** and **Source D**, which are indicative of the types of written representations that the American public consumed. Candidates might remark upon the fact that there was evidently a market for military memoirs even in the late nineteenth century, and newspaper reporting of the circumstances surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation through a type of insider's account is no different to the kind of journalism practiced by the *New York Times* today. The appeal of these types of written sources to a general readership is contingent upon their discussion of dramatic and significant events like the Battle of Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Strategic Effect

(6 marks: 2 for *analysis* and 4 for *evidence*)

Analysis: 1862 began well enough for the Union: Kentucky had been edged out of its neutrality; General George B. McClellan had transformed the condition of the Army of the Potomac after its mauling at the First Battle of Bull Run in August 1861; and General Ulysses S. Grant enjoyed a relatively easy advance into Tennessee. Thereafter, however, the Union suffered a series of setbacks: in March, the North was given a fright by the ironclad Confederate warship *Virginia* in the Battle of Hampton Roads; in April, Grant became bogged down in bloody battles at Shiloh (Tennessee) and Corinth (Mississippi); at the end of June, McClellan's Peninsula Campaign ground to a halt near Richmond (Virginia) in the face of a Confederate counteroffensive that became known as the Seven Days' Battles; and in August the Union defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run encouraged General Robert E. Lee to go on the offensive, invading Maryland.¹⁰ John Keegan has commented: "Strategically it altered the balance of the war, wresting the initiative from the North and threatening it with the spectre of defeat within its own territory."¹¹ From the foregoing sketch it is evident that the Battle of Antietam became the fulcrum of the war in 1862. Although Lee's forces were not driven from the battlefield, he made the decision to withdraw across the Potomac; however, McClellan failed to pursue him, which is where the strategic outcome of Antietam becomes a little more equivocal.

Evidence supporting the analysis:

- **Source D** and **Source G** can be used in conjunction to establish the strategic situation before the Battle of Antietam. Secretary of State Seward noted in July 1862 that the Union had suffered "repeated reverses" and he referred to "the greatest disasters of the war" having befallen the Union. Similarly, Lincoln spoke of the "disaster at Bull Run", at which point "Things looked darker than ever." This tallies with the view of the British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, who thought that during this period "the Confederates seemed to be carrying all before them".
- In **Source C** McClellan contended that at Antietam the Union "victory was complete" and he declared his pride in having "defeated Lee so utterly". According to McClellan the enemy retreat to Virginia had profound strategic consequences because it had permanently ended the Confederate ambition of strategic offense, which is why he claimed to have "saved the North so completely." Yet McClellan was over-reaching in his claims: he failed to win a decisive victory, which he could have achieved if he had "coordinated

¹⁰ See McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, Ch. 2 and 3; and Russell F. Weigley, *A Great Civil War: A Military and Political History, 1861-1865* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), Ch. 4 and 5.

¹¹ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, p. 165.

his attacks or thrown in even half his reserves.”¹² This highlights the fundamental defect in McClellan’s generalship – his timidity – with which President Lincoln became increasingly exasperated and he therefore subsequently relieved him of command.¹³

Political Impetus to Emancipation

(6 marks: 2 for *analysis* and 4 for *evidence*)

Analysis: John Keegan has commented that Antietam “also altered for good the moral atmosphere of the war, by providing Lincoln with the opportunity to proclaim large-scale emancipation of the South’s slave population, a measure long desired by the president himself and millions of his fellow countrymen.”¹⁴ It is important to recognize, however, that the president did not go to war in order to free the slaves; at the end of 1861 Lincoln told Congress that he did not want the war to “degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle”, and suggested that freed slaves might be resettled abroad.¹⁵ The president approached the issue cautiously, recommending in March 1862 that Congress adopt a joint resolution encouraging the states (not the Federal Government) to implement the gradual abolition of slavery, with appropriate compensation for slave owners. As James Rawley has observed, this was “strikingly different from the future Emancipation Proclamation.”¹⁶ With the border states reluctant to move voluntarily in this direction, and the fact that the strategic initiative had shifted to the Confederacy by the middle of 1862, it made less sense to exercise restraint on the issue of slavery. Emancipation would simultaneously disrupt the South’s war effort (by undermining its economy) and strengthen the North (by providing the opportunity to recruit freed blacks into the Union armies).¹⁷ Therefore, on 13 July Lincoln told Secretary of State Seward and Secretary of the Navy Welles that he had “come to the conclusion that it was a military necessity absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union.”¹⁸ When Lincoln met his Cabinet nine days later he read to them a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, but at this point only Secretary of War Stanton and Attorney General Bates were unequivocally supportive. The president had anticipated the arguments against the Emancipation Proclamation, including Postmaster General Blair’s warning that it would be costly in electoral terms. Lincoln was persuaded to delay only by Secretary of State Seward’s arguments.¹⁹

Evidence supporting the analysis:

¹² Steven Woodworth, “Civil War Military Campaigns: The Confederacy”, in Lacy K. Ford (ed.), *A Companion to the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 248.

¹³ Kevin Gannon, “Saving the Union”, in Lacy K. Ford (ed.), *A Companion to the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 214; Keegan, *The American Civil War* p. 169; Weigley, *A Great Civil War*, p. 154. A more balanced brief assessment of McClellan is given by Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, p. 110. For a thorough discussion see Thomas J. Rowland, “In the Shadows of Grant and Sherman: George B. McClellan Revisited”, *Civil War History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Sept. 1994), pp. 202-25.

¹⁴ Keegan, *The American Civil War* p. 169.

¹⁵ David Reynolds: *America, Empire of Liberty: A New History of the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 159.

¹⁶ Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, p. 121.

¹⁷ Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, pp. 132-33; Reynolds: *America, Empire of Liberty*, p. 160.

¹⁸ Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), Vol. 1, pp. 70-71; quoted in Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, p. 134.

¹⁹ Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, pp. 134-35.

- In **Source D** Carpenter relates Seward's advice to Lincoln that emancipation should only take place in circumstances of military success, otherwise it might "be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted government". Lincoln apparently admitted that he had never considered this: "The wisdom of the view of the Secretary of State struck me with very great force. It was an aspect of the case that, in all my thought upon the subject, I had entirely overlooked." For that reason Lincoln set aside the Emancipation Proclamation and waited until more propitious circumstances presented themselves. In the immediate wake of the Battle of Antietam the president wrote a second draft, read it to the Cabinet, and it was published the following week.
- The significance of McClellan's claim in **Source C** that Antietam was a victory should therefore be evaluated partly in terms of its political significance for Lincoln. As John Keegan has put it, "For political if not military reasons, he decided to accept McClellan's judgement that the battle had been a victory".²⁰

Impact on British Diplomacy

(6 marks: 2 for *analysis* and 4 for *evidence*)

Analysis: The attitude of Great Britain was a critical factor in the American Civil War. A fundamental economic concern was cotton from the South, which supplied the British textile industry. British opinion was not in favor of slavery (which had been abolished in the Empire in 1833) but at first this did not appear to be the key issue because Lincoln claimed that the North was fighting to preserve the Union. This disposed Britain favorably towards the cause of Southern secession, in the same way that Britain had encouraged Italian freedom from Habsburg rule during the previous decade.²¹ The string of Union setbacks during the first half of 1862 suggested that there might be an opportunity for Britain, in conjunction with France and Russia, to mediate an end to the American Civil War. On the day of the Battle of Antietam, Foreign Secretary Lord Russell wrote to Prime Minister Lord Palmerston: "I agree with you that the time is come for offering mediation to the United States Government, with a view to the recognition of the independence of the Confederates. I agree further that, in case of failure, we ought ourselves to recognize the Southern States as an independent State."²² However, by the time that the British Government had digested the strategic outcome of Antietam, it was evident that there was no chance of successful mediation or diplomatic recognition, which was profoundly significant in determining the prospects of the South.²³

Evidence supporting the analysis:

- **Source E** demonstrates the change in the British Prime Minister's thinking about a diplomatic initiative. He recognized that the circumstances prevailing at the time of his letter were very different to those earlier in the year, when "the Confederates seemed to be carrying all before them". Palmerston therefore concluded that the British Government would have to remain "lookers-on" until "the war shall have taken a more decided turn."

²⁰ Keegan, *The American Civil War* p. 170.

²¹ Reynolds: *America, Empire of Liberty*, p. 158.

²² Quoted in Spencer Walpole, *The Life of Lord John Russell* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 2nd ed. 1889), pp. 349-50.

²³ Keegan, *The American Civil War* p. 170; McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, pp. 141-42; Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, p. 114. The effects of Antietam on British policy are discussed at length in Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2010), Ch. 14, "A Fateful Decision".

- Candidates might also revisit McClellan's claim in **Source C** that he had "saved the North so completely". Although McClellan was commenting on the strategic outcome of Antietam, his bold declaration may also be applied to the diplomatic effect of the battle. Had the Union suffered another defeat then it would have forced Lincoln's administration to decide whether to accept a mediated settlement on the basis of Southern secession, or possibly risk greater intervention by the European powers.
2. How useful are these sources for historians studying the significance of the Battle of Antietam? **(20 marks)**

Award *10 marks* for discussion of the utility of the sources and *10 marks* for discussion of the limitations associated with the sources (i.e. 4 marks for balanced discussion of each source). Answers must go well beyond general assertions of utility based on the fact that these are primary sources; the nature of the sources must be engaged thoroughly. Answers may adopt a source-by-source approach, commenting carefully on issues of provenance.

Source A

- Candidates should comment on the origin and especially the *purpose* of the source. The original negatives of this photograph and others taken by Alexander Gardner and James Gibson are held in the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division; the digital image is an authentic copy of the original. Gardner and Gibson arrived at Antietam within two days of the battle in order to create a visual record for the masses who would never visit the battlefield. As noted above (in relation to Q.1) the photographers worked for Mathew Brady in New York, whose studio exhibited the photographs in October 1862.²⁴ The photographs taken by Gardner and Gibson therefore had journalistic, artistic, and commercial purposes.
- This source is *useful* because it provides a visual record of a crucial Confederate position on the battlefield.²⁵ The source is highly evocative of the fierce fighting at Bloody Lane, perhaps even more than written accounts of the combat and the aftermath. The photograph also corroborates the written record left by Union soldiers who commented on the concentration of bodies in this part of the battlefield.²⁶
- The source is not *sufficient* because it was taken two days after the battle and provides a record of Bloody Lane at that moment only. By the time that Gardner and Gibson photographed the battlefield most of the Union dead had already been removed and buried. There is a possibility that Union dead were not depicted because of the likely negative impact that this would have had on morale in the Northern States.²⁷
- A further *limitation* of the source – and one which is common to all photographs – is that regardless of the photographer's skill a photograph can only illustrate aspects of the past that are accessible to one of our senses: it can tell us nothing about noise, smell, touch, and taste. In this particular case the photograph cannot capture the smell of death on the battlefield.

²⁴ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, p. 7.

²⁵ William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day* (New York, 1976) contains photographs taken at the same spots and with the same camera angles as the historic photographs.

²⁶ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, pp. 4 and 122.

²⁷ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, p. 7.

Source B

- Candidates should comment on the origin and especially the *purpose* of the source. An original copy of the letter is held in a named Civil War archive and as such it may be regarded as authentic. Although the author does not mention Antietam by name, the date of the letter makes it possible to relate it directly to the battle of the previous day. Similarly, although the soldier does not state explicitly that he served on the Union side, his reference to “the rebs” in the final sentence indicates that he was a Union soldier, as indicated in the provenance.²⁸ This source may be considered *reliable* because the letter was a private communication that was not intended for publication. The author was writing to let his brother know about his physical condition and to provide some brief details about his unit’s experience in the battle. There does not appear to be any hyperbole and indeed the author is clear about the limits of his own knowledge: “The details of the battle you will get in the papers much better than I could give them. I know scarcely anything of them as yet farther than what concerns our own Regt.”
- This source is *useful* because it reveals the characteristics of warfare in the mid-nineteenth century. This can be seen, for example, in the author’s comment that the Confederate forces had “poured in a tremendous fire of Shell, grape & canister & musket balls” on his unit. The source is *useful* because it discusses the extent of casualties in the author’s unit (mentioned above in relation to Q.1) and indicates the nature of battlefield wounds. The author had suffered a wound to his left leg from musket fire, “a ball hole through my left leg about four or five inches above my Knee”; and a wound to his right leg from artillery fire, “a good hard rap from a piece of shell on the inside of the calf”. The author also mentions that one of his comrades (George Travis) had sustained a broken leg (possibly from artillery fire, but it could equally have been from a heavy fall); and another (Albert) had “got a ball through his breast crosswise”, which remarkably was “not very bad”; and lieutenant Phetteplace had been “shot through the thigh”. This variety of wounds is consistent with the description of different types of fire having been “poured in” to the unit’s flank. For such a short letter there is a remarkable amount of information about firepower, casualties, and wounds.
- However, the source is not *sufficient* for a historian studying the significance of Antietam. The letter gives just one soldier’s experience in the battle and other primary sources – derived from Union and Confederate soldiers – would be required in order to determine whether this particular author’s experience can be deemed typical. With some further details about exactly where on the battlefield the author was positioned it might be possible to assess whether the author’s experience was a typical one, or whether his unit had suffered disproportionately by comparison with other Union forces positioned close by or further away.²⁹
- On the other hand it might be argued some of the limitations associated with this source speak to a wider significance that goes well beyond Antietam. The author had a very limited view of what had occurred on the battlefield, as he admitted in the final sentences of his letter. In another part of the letter Hodgman mentions that the Confederate forces

²⁸ He was a lieutenant in the 7th Michigan Infantry. See “Samuel Chase Hodgman”, *Antietam on the Web*, available at: http://antietam.aotw.org/officers.php?officer_id=11423 Also see John Heiser, “‘It has been stirring times with us lately’ – The Letters of Samuel Hodgman, 7th Michigan Infantry”, *From the Fields of Gettysburg: The Blog of Gettysburg National Park*, 27 Oct. 2011, available at:

<http://npsgnmp.wordpress.com/2011/10/27/%E2%80%99Cit-has-been-stirring-times-with-us-lately%E2%80%9D-the-letters-of-samuel-hodgman-7th-michigan-infantry-part-1/>

²⁹ See Tom Nank, “The 7th Michigan Infantry at Antietam”, *Antietam Journal*, 28 Aug. 2014, available at: <http://antietamjournal.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-7th-michigan-infantry-at-antietam.html>

had attempted to capture his unit's colors, and he had "endeavored to rally our men around them twice". The use of colors – which had been a consistent feature of warfare since ancient times – was necessary to give any sense of where units were positioned on the battlefield at any particular moment. Senior officers observing the battle through binoculars or a telescope might have been able to distinguish between different units, but it is quite conceivable that a junior infantry officer like Samuel Hodgman might only have had sight of his own colors and would have had no wider sense of what was unfolding on the battlefield. Therefore, probably the most significant and timeless aspect of this source is that it reveals uncertainty in situational awareness, or what the nineteenth-century Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz called "the fog of war".

Source C

- Candidates should comment on the origin and especially the *purpose* of the source. This is an excerpt from a private letter from General McClellan to his wife written just three days after the battle, but he subsequently included this letter in his autobiography, so there are two different contexts to comment upon in relation to this source. In writing to his wife McClellan was expressing privately his pride in his achievements at Antietam. However, when McClellan published this correspondence the source took on a different purpose. McClellan was addressing the public, trying to persuade the readers of his autobiography that he was a brilliant general who had saved the North from Robert E. Lee's invading army.
- The source is *useful* because it reveals (a) McClellan's analysis of the significance of Antietam; and (b) how he viewed himself. According to McClellan the battle had resulted in an unequivocal victory and had tipped the strategic balance, all of which he had accomplished with "a beaten and demoralized army", apparently magnifying McClellan's leadership skill.
- However, the source is neither *reliable* because it is obviously biased nor is it *sufficient* because it does not provide the longer-term context in which to evaluate McClellan's ebullient judgments. As noted above (in answer to Q.1) the Union victory at Antietam came after several defeats at the hands of the Confederacy, so it is understandable that McClellan was elated in his letter to his wife. However, the strategic outcome of the Battle of Antietam was far less clear than McClellan's letter suggested; President Lincoln subsequently removed McClellan from command precisely because he had failed to achieve an unequivocal victory when the opportunity presented itself. The published source must therefore be seen as McClellan's attempt to rescue his military reputation.
- Candidates may reflect on the fact that although the countervailing views of the president undermine the veracity of the source, Lincoln's assessment of McClellan was that of a frustrated political leader. It would therefore be instructive to evaluate McClellan's claims in relation to the opinions of senior Union and Confederate military commanders. Lee, for example, remarked that McClellan was the most difficult adversary that he had to face.³⁰

Source D

- Candidates should comment on the origin and especially the *purpose* of the source. According to his memoir, published the year after a series of articles in the *New York Times*, Francis B. Carpenter felt that the Emancipation Proclamation was momentous and he had "an intense desire to do something expressive of appreciation of the great issues

³⁰ Rowland, "In the Shadows of Grant and Sherman", p. 203.

involved in the war.”³¹ This is what motivated him to paint *First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln* (1864).³² However, candidates should note that the *New York Times* articles and Carpenter’s memoir were catering to public interest in Lincoln’s presidency following his assassination in April 1865, and therefore had a commercial purpose.

- This source is *useful* because it provides a nearly contemporaneous (although second-hand) account of a crucial Cabinet meeting at which Emancipation was discussed. William Stoddard, one of Lincoln’s aides, later wrote: “These meetings are wonderfully secret affairs. Only a private secretary may enter the room to so much as bring in a paper. No breath of any ‘Cabinet secret’ will ever transpire, so faithfully is the seal of this room guarded.”³³ Candidates might remark that if this source is accurate then Lincoln was surprisingly candid with Carpenter about the views of his Cabinet, especially as Carpenter had no official connection with the government.
- Candidates should comment on some of the *limitations* of this source, especially those relating to origination. Carpenter relates in the source that it was “on the occasion of our first interview” (6 February 1864) that Lincoln told him the history of the Emancipation Proclamation, which Carpenter wrote down “soon afterward.” So, the events of Lincoln’s Cabinet meeting on 22 July 1862 were recalled by Lincoln on 6 February 1864, the account was then written down at an undetermined interval “soon” thereafter, and this account was published on 16 June 1865. Candidates might therefore suggest that this source does not have the same value as an official record or a diary entry originated at the time of the Cabinet meeting.
- Carpenter asserted in the preface to his memoir that it was “a simple matter-of-fact record of daily experience and observation, fragmentary, but *true*, in all essential particulars.”³⁴ However, this is not *sufficient* and in order to check the accuracy and *reliability* of Carpenter’s account it would be advisable to compare it with accounts written by direct participants at the time of the events, such as the diaries of Salmon P. Chase, Treasury Secretary, or Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy.³⁵

Source E

- Candidates should comment on the origin and especially the *purpose* of the source. The original copy of the letter is held in the UK National Archives, and it has been quoted by a well-known historian in a peer-reviewed book published by a major press, so the source may be regarded as authentic. This is an excerpt from a letter written by Lord Palmerston to Lord Russell approximately one month after the Battle of Antietam, in which the prime minister is expressing his view to the foreign secretary that the time is not right to attempt a mediated settlement of the American Civil War.

³¹ Francis B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1866), p. 12; reprinted with an introduction by Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln: Six Months at the White House* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

³² See United States Senate, *First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln*, at: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/artifact/Painting_33_00005.htm#bio

³³ William O. Stoddard, *Inside the White House in War Times* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1890), p. 24.

³⁴ Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, p. v.

³⁵ Salmon P. Chase, *Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase*, Compiled by Samuel H. Dodson, *American Historical Association, Annual Report for the Year 1902, vol. 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903); Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles*, reprinted, William E. and Erica L. Gienapp (eds), *The Civil War Diary of Gideon Welles, Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

- The source is *useful* because Palmerston and Russell were the two most senior figures in the British government and they were very experienced in the conduct of foreign affairs (both served as secretary for war and the colonies, foreign secretary and prime minister during long political careers), so Palmerston's judgment can be regarded as well-informed. Although Antietam is not mentioned explicitly in the excerpt, Palmerston's letter implies that the battle has altered the strategic balance between the Union and the Confederacy. It therefore provides a British view on the significance of Antietam.
- The source is not *sufficient* because it does not indicate the economic and strategic reasons why Britain wished to mediate an end to the Civil War (to secure cotton supplies from the South for the British textile industry, and to weaken the North in order to bolster the British position in Canada), nor does it indicate the desired outcome of mediation (secession and independence of the Confederacy). The source also does not indicate that the British hoped to enlist the support of France and Russia in the mediation effort.