

**GROUP ASSIGNMENT 1: Using a Primary Source**

Written records provide us with useful information about historical events, everyday life, and the beliefs of different peoples. Historians use two types of written records: primary sources and secondary sources.

**Primary sources** provide useful information about historical events. However, primary sources can give conflicting views of an event or development. Two statements about the execution of Louis XVI follow. The first is an official announcement published by the National Convention on January 23, 1793. The second is a letter written on January 23 by a noble living in Paris to a friend in England.

**Procedure:**

- 1). Read the introduction as a whole class (see above).
- 2). As a group read the two accounts of Louis XVI's execution (see next page).
- 3). Then as a group just discuss—do not write anything—the following questions.

**a. Read the sources to find out what information is given.** a). How do the two sources differ in describing the attitude of the French people to the news of Louis' execution? b). According to each source, what was the outcome of the king's execution?

**b. Compare the two sources.** a). Do the sources agree on any points about the execution of Louis? b). On what points do the sources disagree?

**c. Evaluate the reliability of each source.** a). How might the National Convention voting for Louis XVI's execution affect the nature of its public proclamation? b). How might the noble's background affect his view of the king's execution? c). Which source, do you think, is more reliable? Why?

- 4). Then individually compose an answer (minimum 100 words in length) to the following question. Ensure you appeal to both relevant logic, events, personalities and evidence in the composition of your answer. Submit your answer using *Google* docs sharing read/write permissions with the classroom teacher ([rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca](mailto:rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca)).

**d. Use the sources to draw conclusions.** How do the differences between the sources reflect divisions in France during the revolution?

**Official account of Louis' execution by The National Convention**

Citizens, the tyrant is no more. For a long time, the cries of the victims, whom war and domestic discord have spread over France and Europe, loudly protested his existence. He has paid his penalty, and only approval for the Republic and for liberty have been heard from the people.

We have had to combat deep-seated prejudices and the superstition of centuries concerning monarchy. Uncertainties and disturbances always accompany great changes and revolutions as profound as ours. But respect for liberty of opinion must cause these disturbances to be forgotten; only the good which they have produced through the death of the tyrant and of tyranny now remains. The National Convention and the French people are now to have only one mind, only one sentiment, that of liberty and fraternity.

Now above all we need peace in the Republic, and the most active surveillance of the domestic enemies of liberty. Let us unite to avert the shame that domestic discord [civil war] would bring upon our newborn republic.

**Account from *A Noble's Report on the Death of the King***

The frightful event of the 21<sup>st</sup> has spread dismay everywhere, and it is worth noting that even the most zealous supporters of the revolution found this measure both excessive and dangerous. It will not save us from the untold ills which threaten us, the reality and length of which are now all the more sure. We must make up our minds to sacrifice peace, security, and fortune. I very much fear that civil war will come as a finishing touch to the horrible crimes and all the misfortunes which now assail us. I doubt, moreover, whether this crime added to so many others, has the universal approval of France. Even if we thought that the king were guilty, we would not wish for his death, especially after he has endured such a long and sorrowful captivity. Meanwhile, prudence must silence criticism because under the empire of secret accusations, of inquisition, or even more, of tyranny, it is dangerous to speak one's thoughts.