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Exam focus

OCR: Nineteenth-century electoral reform

Elizabeth Francis

This resource presents a sample source annotation and commentary relating to nineteenth-century electoral reform, a topic featuring in OCR Y110, *From Pitt to Peel: Britain 1783–1853*.

Source questions

The source on the next page is an example of the type of primary source you might receive in OCR Y110, in which you will be required to evaluate four primary sources.

Before you begin your response to a source question, it is important that you read the set sources carefully and annotate them. The example on the next page demonstrates some of the annotation you might consider when assessing a given source.

Remember you must consider the content of the source in relation to the context as well as the provenance.

Sample question

How far do the sources support the view that women made a significant contribution to the introduction of the Great Reform Act of 1832?

Sample source with annotation

See the next page for a sample annotated source for the question above. The annotations are given in boxes which link to highlighted sections of the source text.

The use of the word 'Reformers' suggests that women were part of the demands for reform at this time. Female Reform Societies were established from 1819 in the major textile areas of the North.

A large number of women came from the small locality of Oldham to protest, suggesting the importance of the movement.

Cartwright was founder of the first Hampden Club and wrote a piece called 'The English Constitution', advocating universal suffrage, the secret ballot and equal electoral districts.

A club of **Female Reformers**, amounting in numbers, according to our calculations, **150 came from Oldham**; and another, not quite so numerous, from Royton. The first bore a white silk banner, by far the most elegant displayed during the day, inscribed 'Major Cartwright's Bill, Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and Vote by Ballot'. The females of Royton bore two red flags, the one inscribed 'Let us die like men, and not sold like slaves'; the other 'Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage'.

A group of women of Manchester, attracted by the crowd, came to the corner of the street where we had taken our post. **They viewed the Oldham Female Reformers for some time with a look in which compassion and disgust was equally blended**, and at last burst out into an indignant exclamation — "Go home to your families, and leave *sike-like as these* to your husbands and sons, who better understand them." The women who addressed them were of the lower order of life.

John Tyas describes the female reformers at St Peter's Field, 19 August 1819. His account was published in *The Times*.

John Tyas was a reporter for *The Times* and was sent in 1819 to cover the parliamentary reform meeting at St Peter's Field. *The Times* had been crucial to the reform movement. Tyas was arrested with Henry Hunt, Joseph Johnson and John Saxton as he was positioned on the platform with them. As a writer for a newspaper that supported parliamentary reform, he would have wanted to demonstrate the role of women in the movement.

Some women had mixed feelings about those that protested alongside the men, believing it should be left to the men to deal with.