

5 LOOK at the example  
this example?

## Section C: An evaluation of sources

This section is worth 5 marks. To get these marks you need to:

- critically evaluate **two** important sources appropriate to the investigation
- refer explicitly to the origin, purpose, value and limitation of the selected sources.

Your choice of sources is important. They must be sources that you can use meaningfully in your investigation and should not, for example, include a textbook or encyclopaedia or general website. They should appear in your evidence in section B (referenced) and again in your analysis in section D.

You must focus on the **origin and purpose** of each source – not on the content of the source. You can write about each source separately, or you can discuss both as a running commentary. We recommend the first option, so that your treatment of each source is clear and thorough.

### Example section C: An evaluation of sources

Foster, J. (1976) 'British Imperialism and the Labour aristocracy' in Skelley, J. *The General Strike, 1926*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 3–57.

The origin of the source is of value because the author is a professional expert in the field of history, studying at St Catherine's College, Cambridge, and lecturing in politics at Strathclyde University. He was awarded a PhD 'for a thesis on working-class consciousness in the early nineteenth century'<sup>1</sup>, showing he is a peer-assessed professional in early 20th-century British history and politics. The essay is part of J. Skelley's book *The General Strike, 1926*, which is a collaboration of historical essays, including bibliographical information throughout.

The purpose of Foster's essay is to analyse the run-up to the General Strike of 1926. This is valuable, since it enables a variety of information to be given over a long period of time, providing academic analysis and historical evidence of the political and economic causes.

The origin of this source also limits its value, however, as Foster is a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain<sup>2</sup>, therefore the evidence presented in the essay may not be accurate as it may focus on the trade unions and Communist Party. Also, as it was published in 1976 more evidence might since have come to light.

1 Skelley, J., 1976, *The General Strike, 1926*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. vii–viii.

2 Skelley, J., *op. cit.*, pp. vii–viii.



The purpose of this source also makes it limited; the title, 'British Imperialism and the Labour aristocracy', uses biased language, referring to the government as 'aristocracy'. This displays Foster's political views, which are extremely left wing, and therefore the analysis may not be objective.

**Cabinet Conclusions.** The National Archives, 6 October 1921. Accessed 19 May 2010. <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-23-27-cc-76-21-3.pdf>

The origin of the source is valuable since it is the minutes from a government cabinet meeting on 6 October 1921, from the British National Archives. It discusses a number of foreign and domestic issues, including unemployment and the economic situation; and contains confidential information vital to the event being researched. Present at the meeting were the prime minister, Lloyd George, and a number of other ministers who were figures of authority and would have had access to government statistics and confidential information.

The source is also valuable because its purpose is to inform a number of ministers of the foreign and domestic situation in Britain. This means that it would consist of statistics and valuable information relating to the causes of the miners' strike.

There are limitations to this source's origin. The meeting was conducted by government officials and the prime minister, therefore the information may be in line with government policy and to justify future government action. The meeting was conducted in 1921 and although it presents information about the build up to the General Strike, it does not produce evidence in the short term for why the strike occurred in 1926.

The purpose of the source is limited since the government may not have understood the miners' frustrations at the time. The purpose is to look at an overview of the situation in the country, and would not have focused specifically on coal mining.

### Examiner's hint

Note that the student used the word 'biased' to explain the language of the source. Be careful with this word. Students often use it to describe a source without actually explaining **why** the source is biased and why this is relevant to their analysis. It is not enough to say a source is biased without giving a clear explanation why. Here the student has clearly explained by giving the example of use of the word 'aristocracy' and has indicated why this might be a limitation.

### Examiner's hint

You must include the complete details of the source being evaluated – that is, the full provenance of the source. You will need to evaluate each part of the provenance, for example author, date of publication and place of origin. Your teacher, and in turn the moderating examiner, will need to see the full provenance to assess your evaluation properly.

The suggested word count for this section is 250–400 words. You should err towards the upper word limit in this section to ensure that you have made a thorough evaluation of each source so that you secure the full 5 marks.

## Activity

Go through the source evaluation above.

For each source indicate in the margin (using the letters 'O' 'P', 'V' and 'L') where the student has:

- referred to the origin of the source
- referred to the purpose of the source
- discussed the value of the source
- discussed the limitations of the source.

With regard to the first source, complete this table to show what points the student has made about:

- the date of the source (origin)
- the author of the source (origin)
- the nature of the source (origin)
- the author's purpose.

	Value	Limitations
Date		
Author		
Nature		
Purpose		