
An Investigation Into Finding Effective Ways Of Presenting A Written Source To Students

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Written historical sources can be quite challenging for students to analyse in secondary school. They are sometimes long and tedious to read as well as containing difficult and awkward text. The presentation of such sources by history teachers to their class has to be well thought out.

This paper describes the various methods used to offer the same written source as historical evidence for analyses but in different formats to a class of 13/14 year olds. The written source was a letter taken from the textbook used by history students who will eventually be sitting for their SEC O Level history paper. The source can be found in their Maltese history textbook 'From the coming of the Knights to EU membership'. This letter is one of the most challenging sources in the textbook and this paper reports the endeavour to improve ways of teaching this written source to students. This source was used with two groups of history students and different techniques were used to make the source more palatable to the students and thus support their learning. Students' work was then evaluated from a worksheet given after the activities and this was contrasted with the answers to the same sheet of questions prior to the study. The students' work mostly improved and hence from these results, this paper makes recommendations about the possible best format to present written sources to students.

Keywords:

Supporting 13/14 year-olds analyses written sources

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Abstract

Written historical sources can be quite challenging for students to analyse in secondary school. They are sometimes long and tedious to read as well as containing difficult and awkward text. The presentation of such sources by history teachers to their class has to be well thought out.

This paper describes the various methods used to offer the same written source as historical evidence for analyses but in different formats to a class of 13/14 year olds. The written source was a letter taken from the textbook used by history students who will eventually be sitting for their SEC O Level history paper. The source can be found in their Maltese history textbook 'From the coming of the Knights to EU membership'. This letter is one of the most challenging sources in the textbook and this paper reports the endeavour to improve ways of teaching this written source to students. This source was used with two groups of history students and different techniques were used to make the source more palatable to the students and thus support their learning. Students' work was then evaluated from a worksheet given after the activities and this was contrasted with the answers to the same sheet of questions prior to the study. The students' work mostly improved and hence from these results, this paper makes recommendations about the possible best format to present written sources to students.

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Introduction

Written historical sources are often used in history teaching and learning, apart from being an integral part of routine history lessons they also come up in the form of summative assessment in annual exam papers. Students are required to show comprehension of the text, knowledge about the period in general and any other skills such as the analysis of the source where the student has to be able to detect bias and comment on reliability of text. Therefore, there is a real need to train well our students on how to work with written sources. Many students find it difficult to comprehend the written source for various reasons. However if the right teaching takes place, students can tackle and analyse written sources.

There are many problems the teacher needs to be aware of, for example students might not have enough background information and knowledge about the subject in general and hence, they find it impossible to understand what the text is all about. The teacher needs to set the context at the beginning of the lesson before giving the students the written source for them to analyse (Blyth & Hughes, 1997). Sometimes, there might be cultural differences which the children find incomprehensible and this might confuse their whole understanding of the text. Wassermann

(2013) emphasises the importance of the “cultural memory” which changes the historian’s perspective of whoever is analysing the particular source. The teacher needs to ensure s/he know about such cultural differences before s/he presents a source to the class. Moreover, language may be archaic and some words might have changed their meanings over time and this leads to unnecessary confusion and the style and the form in which the text is written might render a historical text incomprehensible to secondary school children. There may also be legal jargon or words and phrases in a foreign language which they might not understand. Furthermore, there might be too many unnecessary details in a text. Sometimes texts might be too long and this might make the students lose interest. D’Amato, carried out an action research project to find out why her low-achieving thirteen-year old male students were not motivated to learn history. From the research carried out, she concluded that:

The close relation between language and teaching-learning of history was one of the strongest barriers...I noted that the linguistic demands of the subject of history, the language used when communicating with the students, along with the demands placed on their use of language created barriers and hindered their learning (D’Amato, 2008, pp. 58-59).

All this shows that one of the main problems students face when tackling written sources is the language barrier and students also experience difficulties when the historical term they need to understand is a theoretical higher order concept and not tangible such as movements (slave revolt); institutions (the Church) and different cultures (medieval). Research work on language difficulties in history teaching and learning, have long been documented (See for example Bernbaum, G. 1972; Banham, D. 2000; LeCocq, H. 2000; Smith, P. 2001).

This short study tried to find ways of how a complex, long, written source can be made palatable to secondary school children. It attempted to find practical ways how a written source can be made easier by adopting the right pedagogical approach.

The chosen text is an exercise found in a History Sec O Level textbook *From the Coming of the Knights to EU Membership* (Vella, 2009). This exercise presents a written source in the form of a letter which dates back to 1959–60 and is about the events of the Sette Giugno which had occurred 43 years prior and it is written by a mill owner of the time, Antonio Cassar Torregiani. After being asked to read the letter the pupils are requested to analyse the source by answering a set of questions. (See Figure 1a and 1b) The researcher chose this particular written source after a conversation with the editor of the book herself, Vella pointed out that there was a problem with this exercise since teachers had complained to her that students found it hard and difficult to do, while at the same time it presented valuable historical evidence and therefore it would be a great loss if the exercise was put aside. This research work provided a good opportunity to create resources to support students’ learning by helping teachers to present this exercise in such a way that their students’ reception to it would improve and ultimately their written responses would be of a higher level.

The exercise was analysed to see what was making it so difficult. There was a linguistic barrier for there were difficult terms such as ‘bourgeoisie’ which would pose a barrier for the students’ understanding. Moreover, it was a real possibility that teachers were giving the exercise without first giving enough background information on the historic contextual events referred to in the letter. Presentation of a source can definitely make a huge difference as to how it will be received by pupils and presentation of this exercise as found in the textbook is not very good. Despite the

colour image of Antonio Cassar Torregiani the letter is an authentically reproduction of the original typed letter. It is long and tedious to read and needs quite an effort to read it at one go, apart from the fact that due to its length finding the correct answer to the questions asked of it can be quite a daunting task. Better organisation and management of this source was needed.

The activities created were aimed at tackling the mentioned problems and it was hoped that through these adjustments and alterations this written source would become more comprehensible to students. History classes in a girls' Secondary State school were used to try out the activities. The researcher used history lessons to try out the new tasks and to see how the students would perform before and after they had tried out the tasks on this source. Students' answers were then corrected by three teachers (See Appendix 1 for the Marking Criteria used) and an average mark for the students before and after the lesson was calculated to see whether the changes had had any impact.

The Study

The lessons were spread over two double history option lessons: one with a form 3 class and the other with a form 4 class (the topic of this letter 'the Sette Giugno Riots' is part of the Sec O Level three year course in secondary school and may be taught at any stage). There were four form 3 students (13 year-olds) and five form 4 students (14 year-olds).

The researcher who carried out the fieldwork was not familiar with the students however she knew the teacher and hence there was full help and collaboration to test out the methodological variables created by the authors of this paper. The teacher helped by giving the class the exercise from the book to work as class work during one of their lessons before the new activities. Behaviour-wise the form 3 students were quite restless while the other class consisted of a mix of students. A good working relation was established with all the participants and consent to carry out the study was attained from the ethics board and school administration informing all participants and their guardians as well as teachers and the Head of School of the study's purpose and giving them their right to drop out of the study if they wished without giving a reason. Confidentiality was ensured throughout the whole study.

The Different Strategies

1. An authentic-looking letter (Figure 2) which had a yellowish background (to make it look old) was given to the students in an envelope together with a magnifying glass. Each student was given the letter in an envelope individually. When they opened the letter, there were exclamations of how lovely the letter looked especially when compared to how it is presented in the book. They inquired about how such an artefact had been created and this showed that their interest had already been captured. When they were using the magnifying glass, one student was heard saying that she will be using the tool a lot in the future when she becomes an archaeologist.

FIGURE 1a

A miller, Antonio Cassar Torreggiani wrote a letter to his grandchildren many years after the events of 1919 had occurred. Below is the original letter (typing errors included!)
Read carefully and then answer the questions.



A lamentable episode in the aftermath of World No.1 developed in Malta on the 7th June 1919 resulting in deplorable shooting, arson of flour mills, and pillage of private houses.

The causes of the disturbances, were various, the background including the introduction of Succession duties without proper representation, the agitation of a National Assembly for Self Government, and the exasperation of the high cost of foodstuff and the low standard of living.

The movement for proper representation was started by the Chamber of Commerce, when Col J.L. Francia M.V.O. was President, and the writer Secretary of what was then, and I believe still is, the premier constituted body in the Island. The President invited to a meeting at the Exchange, then known as the "Borea", the presidents of all the Constituted bodies of the Island, and the local representatives of the Council of Government. A letter was written to the Secretary of state for the Colonies requesting that a more ample and liberal Constitution be granted to this Island on the plea of "No taxation without representation".

As no result appeared to be forthcoming, the movement was subsequently taken up by Dr. Filippo Sciberras, who aided by his friends set up a National Assembly, which held its first meeting on the 7th June at the Circolo Giovine Malta, Kingsway, corner with St. Lucia Street in Valletta. All the Constituted bodies were represented, including the Casino Maltese, whose members, the writer was then elected as representative.

On my way to the Circolo Gwan Malta, I was accosted by some intimate friends, who asked where I was going to, and to whom I replied I had prepared a fine speech on "No taxation without representation, which I was to read at the Assembly. I was told I had better change my mind, for apparently I was no longer wanted at the National Assembly, and that riots had broken out. They further pointed out, my house in Valletta had been attacked, has been literally sacked, and that three bodies of unfortunate victims lay prostrate dead before my door. I was literally stunned, the first thing I thought of were my children, and I turned round succeeded to take them to a place of safety.

I should now at this stage, be excused, if for no other motive but that of history, I relate to the background of one of the causes of the riots, the high cost of foodstuffs in which I had incidentally been involved. As one of the leading millers of Malta, I was ordered to act as flour control Officer and to import the wheat requirements of the Island, which by the Grace of God I succeeded to do, and for which I am sure my country is grateful to this day. The difficulties of those times, however should not be forgotten.

To keep down the price of bread, I imported a shipload of wheat which was loaded and carried by my ship, the S/S Aut Cassar, from Philadelphia to Malta, a cargo of Durm wheat purchased from Messrs. Facey & Co. On arrival of the ship at Gibraltar, it was rumoured that the Mediterranean was infested with German submarines. I cabled to London for a war insurance quotation, and my London agents Mr. Hick & Co. Of St. Helens London, telegraphed 60% premium, I repeat 60%, which would have raised the price of bread by 3 pence per rotolo. I risked the greater part of my family belongings not to raise the price of bread, and did not insure. The convoy from Gibraltar to Malta consisted of 17th steamers, 15 of which were sunk by enemy action, the remainder, one of them the "S/S Aut Cassar" unexpectedly arrived safely to Malta after a long delay, with a low priced wheat cargo, but with no gratitude from any quarter.

My ship S/S Aut Cassar was subsequently torpedoed and sunk by German submarines, off Grimsby just before Armistice Day, on the 6th November 1918, and subsequently freights were almost doubled through through the scarcity of ships remaining afloat.

In March 1919, the price of wheat had gone up considerably, and the local millering Industry was faced with the dilemma, either to buy at a high price and face the public with a rise in bread up to 9½d. Per rotolo, or decline to import the wheat requirements of the Island. Lord Methuen, the Governor of Malta at the time, received me on several occasions in company with the Lieut. Governor Sir Robertson. My pleadings and exhortations to suspend the bread tax until more favourable times were of no avail, as the current Government expenditure had risen over £800,000 and Lord Methuen would on no account give way to suspend the bread tax.

Capt. Ingham, who was Lord Methuen's adjutant at the time, and whom we have the pleasure to have among us at the time, was helpful in arranging my meetings with Lord Methuen.

No alternative appeared open to me at the time, and I had to decide either to import wheat at the current high price, or leave the Island without breadstuff, the first necessity of life. I decided to face the situation but could not easily get the millers to decide. I asked the Lieut Governor S/S Robertson to guarantee the millers against any loss in money or possible riots, and with this object in view, I had the valuable assistance of Sir Arturo Mercieca who made out

FIGURE 1b

the necessary contract, on the Signature of which, a cargo of wheat was afloat secured per "S/S Priestfield through which it was made possible to continue the supply of bread without any interruption. Having been refused the suspension of the bread tax, I again insisted that some sort of other assistance should be forthcoming, and when I mentioned a subsidizing I was herided as having asked for something unheard of, for something more than the suspension of the bread tax, for something that did not exist in any country of Europe. Times however have shown I was right, for a subsidy on bread was introduced, throughout the whole of Europe, and still exists in Malta, after 15 years that Second World War is over, a policy which beyond any doubt has justified my pleadings for the suspension of the bread tax in World War No.1.

Col J.L. Francia who originated the movement to obtain proper representation on changes in local taxation, after the imposition of Succession duty, received no thanks from the mob rule on the contrary coerced by other political factions, the mob sacked the house and his valuable furniture was carried away to the disgust of responsible opinion, my house in Ol Bakery Street was likewise looted, and some fine oil paintings by Maestro Cali, which I miss to this day, were torn and trampled upon.

Strange enough, after the lapse of one year of one year, several men whom I always held as friends, especially a trader in the import of potatoes, whom I had assisted and financed on several of his enterprises, at last came to my office, and kneeling before me, confessed of the prominent part he had taken in burning my house, asking for pardon, which I willingly gave him, telling him however that I forgive, but do not forget.

Messrs, L. Farrugia & Sons, who were conspicuous millers at the time, and who are now the leading brewers in the Island, had their flour mills burned down, St. Georges Flour mills were also attacked by the mob, but the arson failed, as my employees were a happy crew and defended the mills with crow bars and byonets. The diplomatic manager Mr. W. Chetcuti told the crowd, "you want have any bread if you burn down this mill. They took a bag of flour each as it was thought better than putting their comrades out of employment by burning down the mills. A man who attempted arson had his arm pinned down by a byonet, and several men were wounded in the defence of the mill which was miracolously saved, by men who are still in the service of the country.

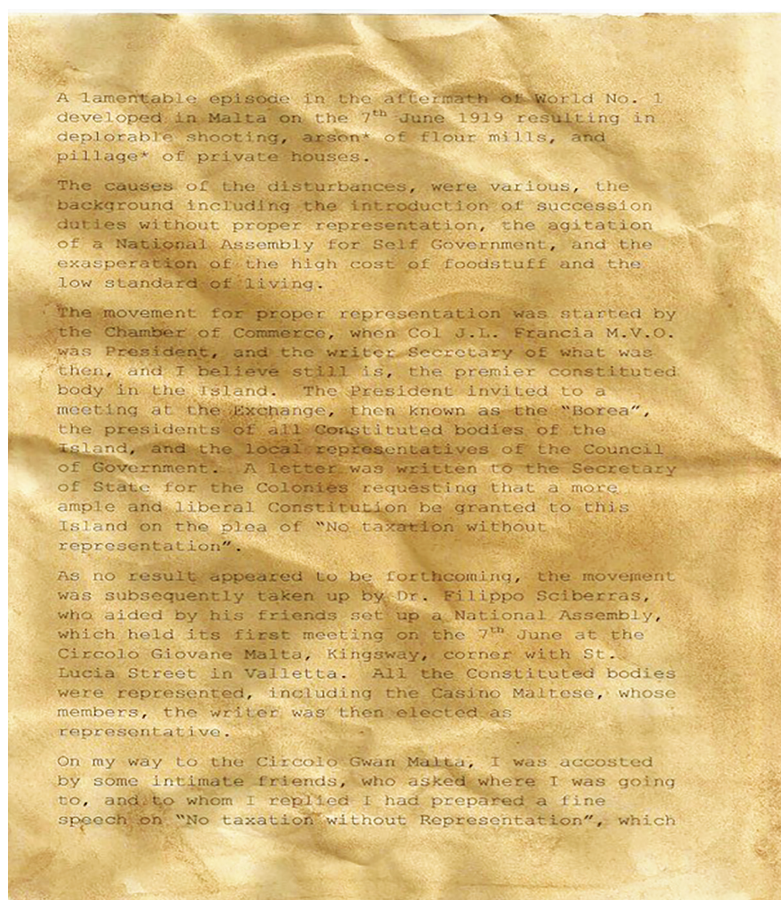
After three days rioting Lord Methuen ordered me to leave the Island, and I left Malta by the S/S Iris, bound for Marseilles. Captain Roberts who was in command, was very courteous there, and later he became Capt. Of my ship the S/S Knight of Malta.

On arrival in London, and on entering my hotel, I was accosting by a fine looking gentleman, who informed me I was wanted at 10 Downing Street. The gentleman took me there and I was ushered in a room where Lord Morley received me in a kind and courteous way.

He wanted to know from me what was happening in Malta, and I related to the best of my ability the causes which in my opinion had lead to the disturbances. My mind at that time reverted to the speech I had to deliver at the Circolo Giovane Malta, and I tried to explain in my way that after all there was no harm, if the little Malta a form if Self Government be instituted to ensure the imposition of local taxes by local representation. Lord Morley was in a good mood, and I felt he was agreeing with what I said, and encouraged in this way I ventured to suggest the necessity of a House of Review. I was told a House of Review without the power of the purse is of little use.

1. There is no date on this letter. Find out when it was written by reading the last sentence in paragraph 11.
2. What in the opinion of Cassar Torreggiani were the causes of the disturbances of 7th June 1919?
3. Why was Cassar Torreggiani on the National Assembly (read paragraph 4)
4. Where was he going when he was informed that his house in Valletta had been attacked?
5. Go through paragraphs 7 to 11 and then make a list of Cassar Torreggiani's efforts to keep the price of bread down. Say why he was unsuccessful in each case.
6. He says that the flour mills of L. Farrugia & Sons (Farsons) were burnt down but his flour mills at St Georges were attacked but not burnt down. How were Cassar Torreggiani's mills saved?
7. Why did he go to London and what happened there?
8. This primary source might revise how the disturbances of the Sette Guigno are viewed. Why do you think so?
9. How reliable do you think this source is? Why do you think so?

FIGURE 2



It was smeared with a teabag so as to look old and wrinkly. This idea was obtained from reading books on how to make artefacts attractive to schoolchildren mainly Murphy (2005) and Andreetti (1993). The font was enlarged but the same style was kept as this is the same as the typewriter's font. Then, they were instructed to read it individually and five minutes were allowed.

2. Then the text was read by the researcher and some words which were thought to be difficult in English were given Maltese translation and sometimes rather than a mere translation a short Maltese explanation was given (Figure 3)
3. The students were then given another copy of the source: this time round it was printed on hard card board and it also had enlarged font size and line spacing (Figure 4). Moreover, some phrases within the text were in bold or highlighted so as to draw the students' attention to them as there are many unnecessary details in the text. Furthermore, the paragraphs were numbered and an empty textbox was added on top of each paragraph. The tasks were the following:
 - a. the students were provided with a number of subtitles/ headlines which they had to determine whether they deem fit or not to fit in the empty boxes on top of each paragraph. (Figure 5)
 - b. The students had to work this together so as to peer assess and help each other. In addition, pictorial sources were added aiming to enhance meaning to the text. (Figure 6)

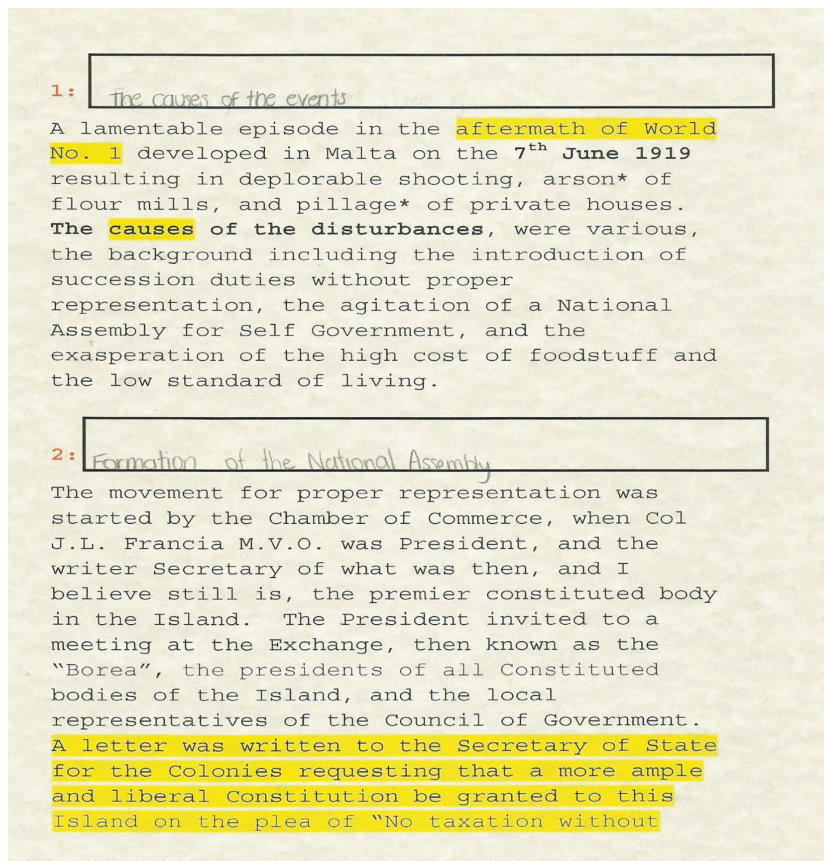
VOCABULARY HELP

FIGURE 3

(In order of how they appear in the source)

- I. **Miller/wheat importer**- xi hadd li jimporta l-qamh minn barra. Kellhom pożizzjoni important fis-soċjeta' ghax il-poplu kien jghix minn fuq il-hobz
- II. **National Assembly**- ghaqda li kienet giet iffurmata min-nies Maltin li riedu li l-Maltin ikollhom Kostituzzjoni ahjar
- III. **Mob**-ghaqda ta' nies
- IV. **Dilemma**- sitwazzjoni diffiċli sabiex taghzel u tiehu decizjoni
- V. **Suspension**- twaqqif ghal xi zmien
- VI. **Aftermath**- bhala rizultat
- VII. **Disturbances**-kunflitti
- VIII. **Succession duty**- taxxa
- IX. **Low standard of living**- ghajxien fqir
- X. **No taxation without representation**- sabiex ikun hemm taxxa kellhom jaqblu maghha l-Maltin ta' klassi gholja wkoll. Din kienet haga li riedu l-Maltin
- XI. **Aided**- moghti ghajjnuna
- XII. **Freights**-goods, affarijiet ta' bżonn li kienu jigu impurtati
- XIII. **Scarcity**-nuqqas
- XIV. **No avail**- ghalxejn
- XV. **Subsidy**- sapport finanzjarju normalment minghand il-gvern; sussidju
- xvi. **Bayonet**- arma

FIGURE 4



- c. They were asked to give a name or a description to the pictorial sources . A vocabulary box was also added at the end of the source so the students have a constant reference to the meaning of the difficult vocabulary
4. Questions from the book were given to the students but the chronology order was changed. The reason behind this was that the sequence of the questions in the textbook did not follow any chronological pattern which made it necessary for students to search for answers in a haphazard fashion. By placing the questions chronologically the task was made easier and less confusing. Hence, questions 1-3 can be answered by reading paragraphs 1 till 4, questions 4-5 by reading paragraphs 5 till 9 while questions 6-7 by reading paragraphs 10 till 13.

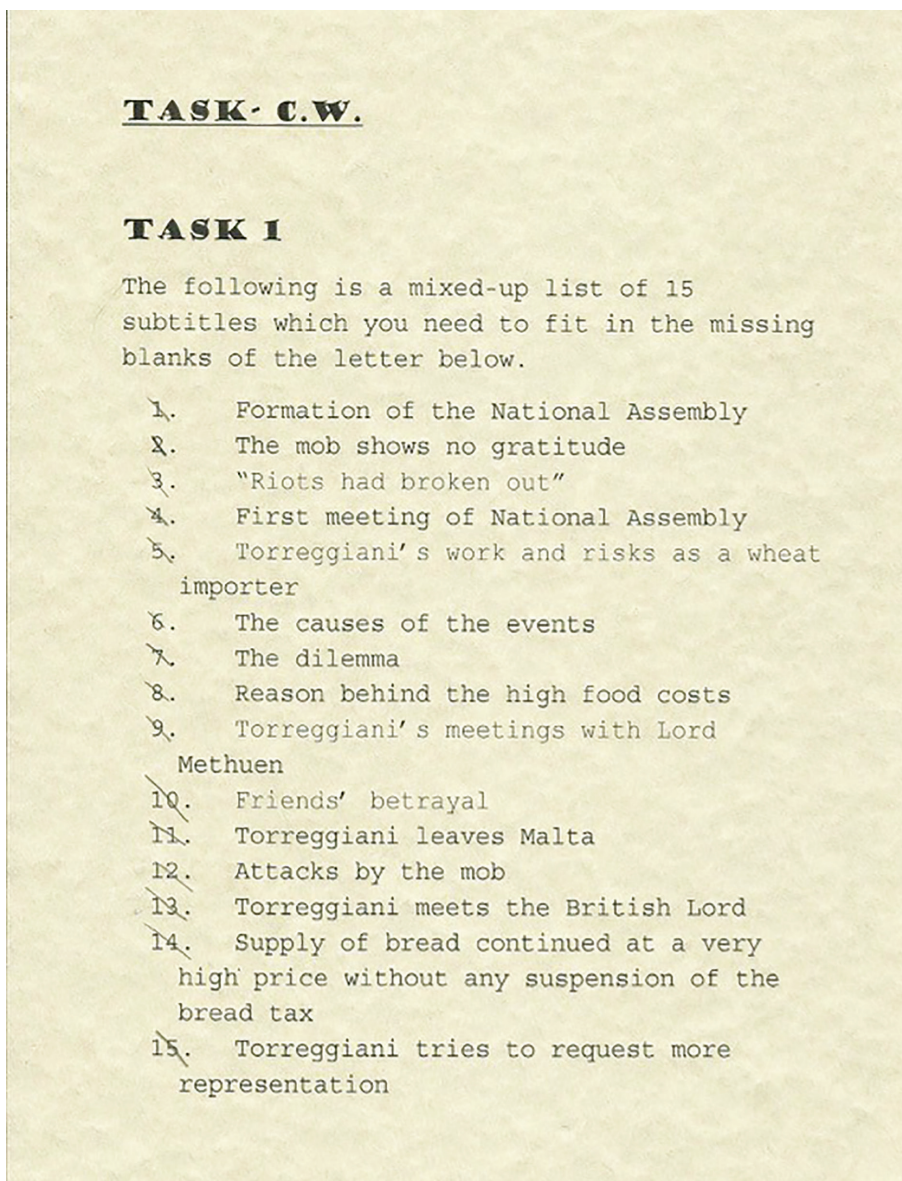
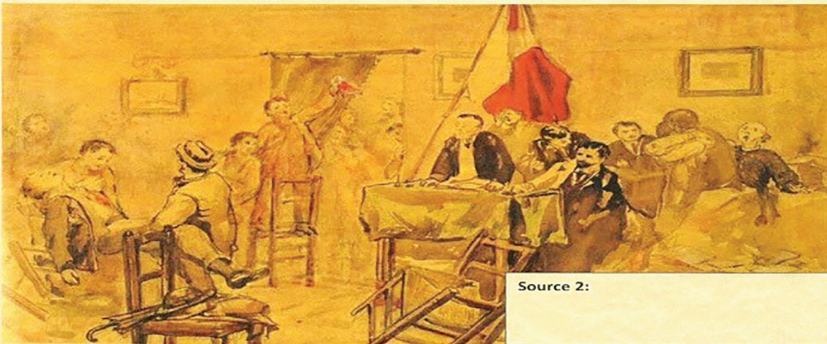


FIGURE 5



Source 2:

4 :

On my way to the CircoloGwan Malta, I was accosted by some intimate friends, who asked where I was going to, and to whom I replied I had prepared a fine speech on "No taxation without Representation", which I was to read at the Assembly. I was told I had better change my mind, for apparently I was no longer wanted at the National Assembly, and that riots had broken out. They further pointed out, my

Source 3:




FIGURE 6

The numbering of the questions in the book as they appear in a parallel way to the researcher's version

Question on book	Question on researcher's version
1	4
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9

All these exercises had to be worked in groups (See Figures 7a and 7b)

FIGURE 7a

GROUP WORK

(to focus on specific parts of the letter)

Group 1:

Read from paragraph 1 till paragraph 4

1. What in the opinion of Cassar Torreggiani were the causes of disturbances of 7th June 1919?
2. Why was Cassar Torreggiani on the National Assembly (read paragraph 3)
3. Where was he going when he was informed that his house in Valletta had been attacked?

Group 2:

Read from paragraph 5 till paragraph 9

4. There is no date on this letter. Find out when it was written by reading the last sentence in paragraph 9
5. Go through paragraphs 5 to 9 and then make a list of Cassar Torreggiani's efforts to keep the price of the bread down. Say why he was unsuccessful in each case.

Group 3:

Read from paragraph 10 till paragraph 15

6. He says that the flour mills of L. Farrugia & Sons (Farsons) were burnt down but his flour mills at St. Georges were attacked but not burnt down. How were Cassar Torreggiani's mills saved?
7. Why did he go to London and what happened there?

As a whole class:

(All letter)

8. This primary source might revise how the disturbances of the Sette Guigno are viewed. Why do you think so?
9. How reliable do you think this source is? Why do you think so?

FIGURE 7b

Analysis of data

Each student showed an improvement after the teaching had been carried out in class. The low-achieving students and also the high achievers improved their mark and this was the case for every question. The average total before the tasks had been that of 12.72 out of 50 meaning 25.4% and the average total after the tasks was that of 24.3 out of 50 resulting in a 48.6%. Hence there was an increase of 23.2% in the mark. The average mark student mark almost doubled. Apart from source presentation, the way in which the activities were managed and organised also probably helped the students understand and cooperate more, another factor which might have contributed was the peer work. One can note the improvement below as data from answers for each question are discussed as well as displaced as percentages, tables and graphs.

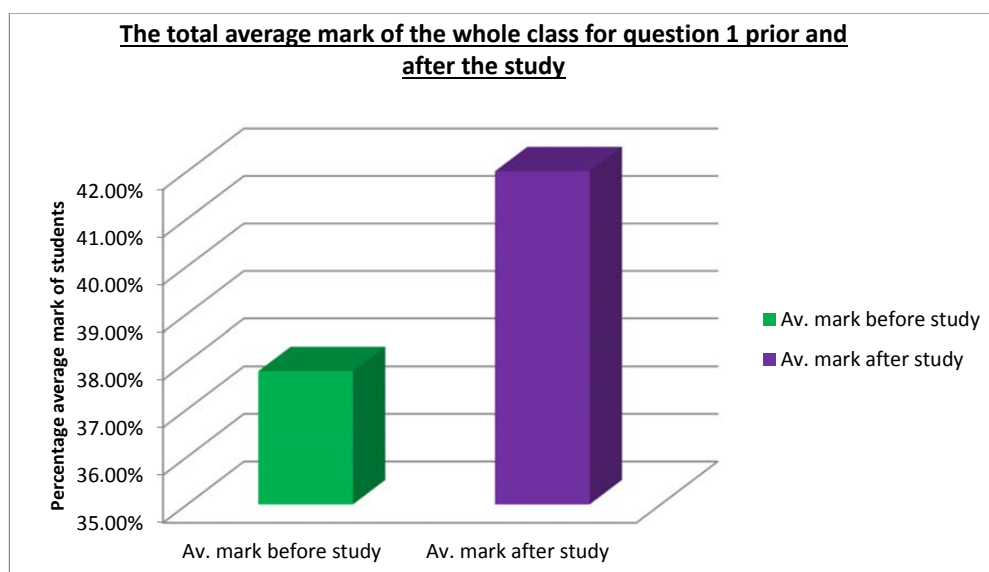
QUESTION 1: *There is no date on this letter. Find out when it was written by reading the last sentence in paragraph 11*

The question has 5 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 1.89 (37.8%) while the aftermath is 2.1 (42%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 4.4%

TABLE 1. Average mark of the whole class for question 1 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	1.89	2.1
Percentage mark	37.80%	42%

GRAPH 1



Discussion of answers before the study

Many of the students confused the date of when WWII was over and this led the researcher to realise that it should be pointed out during the explanation or while reading the letter to the students. Others tended to avoid the maths part and quoted Cassar Torregiani by saying that the letter was written fifteen years after WWII. This was considered as correct but did not receive the full marks.

Discussion of answers after the study

An improvement was noted after the study. Prior to the study, the students were getting lost in the original source as there was no numbering of the paragraphs and they had to count them until they found which paragraph is the eleventh. After the study, the paragraphs were numbered and the font was increased and hence, it was easier for the students to immediately find out which one it is. The researcher followed suggestions made by Vest (2005) and these seemed to improve student achievement (see Chapter 2, p. 11).

Furthermore, the questions given to the students after the lesson are not in the same chronology order as can be found in the book even though they are the same questions.

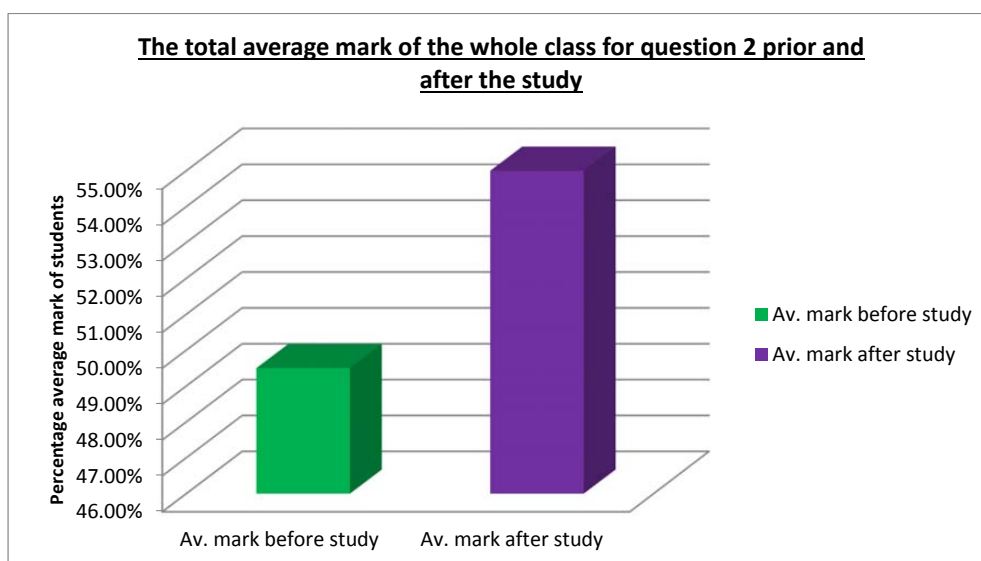
QUESTION 2: What in the opinion of Cassar Torregiani were the causes of the disturbances of the 7th June 1919?

The question had 8 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 3.96 (49.5%) while the aftermath is 4.4 (55%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 5.5%.

TABLE 2. Average mark of the whole class for question 2 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	3.96	4.4
Percentage mark	49.50%	55%

Graph 2



Discussion of answers before the study

Students had to mention four of these causes. The answers varied and prior to the study, many of the students did not give the four reasons and hence lost marks; in fact many of them simply mentioned one or two of these causes. There was only one student who answered in full but the majority referred to a few. For instance, the following are the answers which two students gave to this question: “the causes of disturbances were various and the exasperation of the high cost of foodstuff and the low standard of living” and “the background including the introduction of succession duties without proper representation, the agitation of a National Assembly for self-government”.

Discussion of answers after the study

After the study, it is noted that students mentioned more causes than they did in the first time they answered this question. This may be because the text had an enlarged font and the causes were easier to find and it the student could read the text with ease apart from the fact that it was more inviting. The bold text helped them focus even more on the important parts of the text rather than on petty detail and they could easily spot the causes they had to mention.

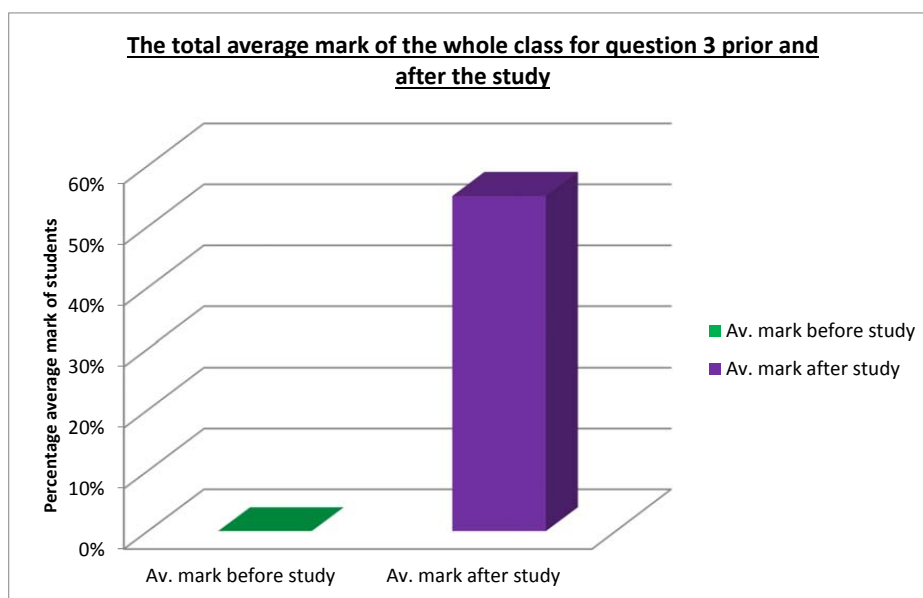
QUESTION 3: Why was Cassar Torregiani on the National Assembly? (read par. 4)

The question has 4 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 0 (0%) while the aftermath is 2.2 (55%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 55%.

TABLE 3. Average mark of the whole class for question 3 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	0	2.2
Percentage mark	0%	55%

Graph 3



Discussion of answers before the study

All of the students got this question wrong the first time round. The reason behind this may be because they mistook the paragraph from where they had to get the information as due to the small font and lack of line and paragraph spacing, it is difficult to determine which paragraph is which and where one ends and the next one starts. It may also be because they did not understand what Torregiani was trying to explain.

Discussion of answers after the study

After the study, the mark increased by 55%. This is probably due to the paragraphing and the bigger font which eases the difficulty and makes one more comfortable while reading. Moreover, the students were told the context during the study and hence, they knew better what they were reading about and hence had a fuller comprehension of the text.

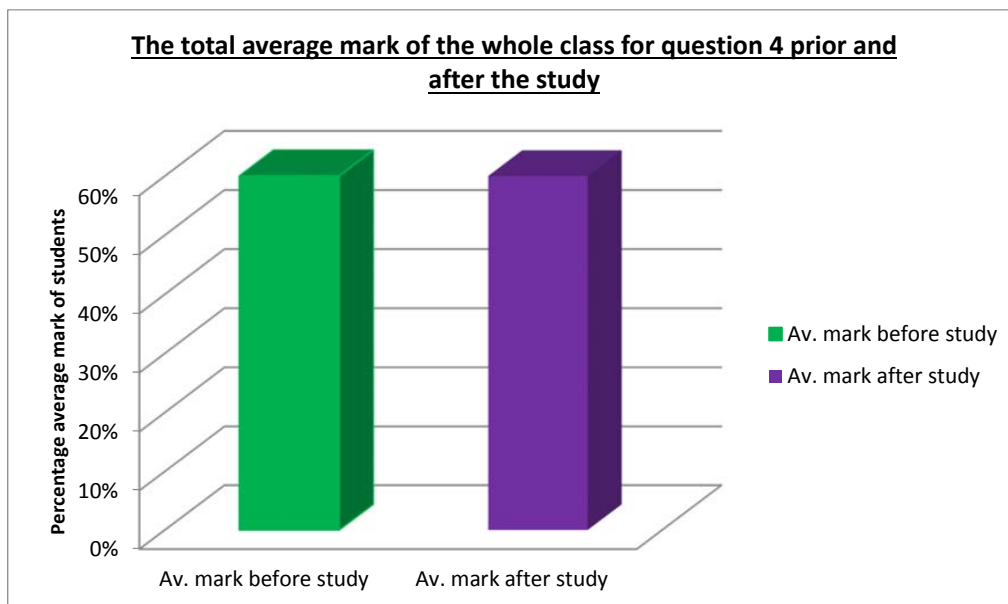
QUESTION 4: Where was he going when he was informed that his house in Valletta had been attacked?

The question has 2 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 1.2 (60%) while the aftermath is 1.2 (60%) and hence there is no discrepancy (0%).

TABLE 4. Average mark of the whole class for question 4 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	1.2	1.2
Percentage mark	60%	60%

Graph 4



Discussion of answers before and after the study

The students achieved a similar result prior and after the study when answering this question. This was not a very challenging question as they could easily understand where Torregiani was going. However some of them still gave incomplete answers and hence the marks were halved. There were also some who answered with ‘to London’ looking at the second half of the text even though the questions given by the researcher had the paragraphs from where they had to extract the answers indicated to them.

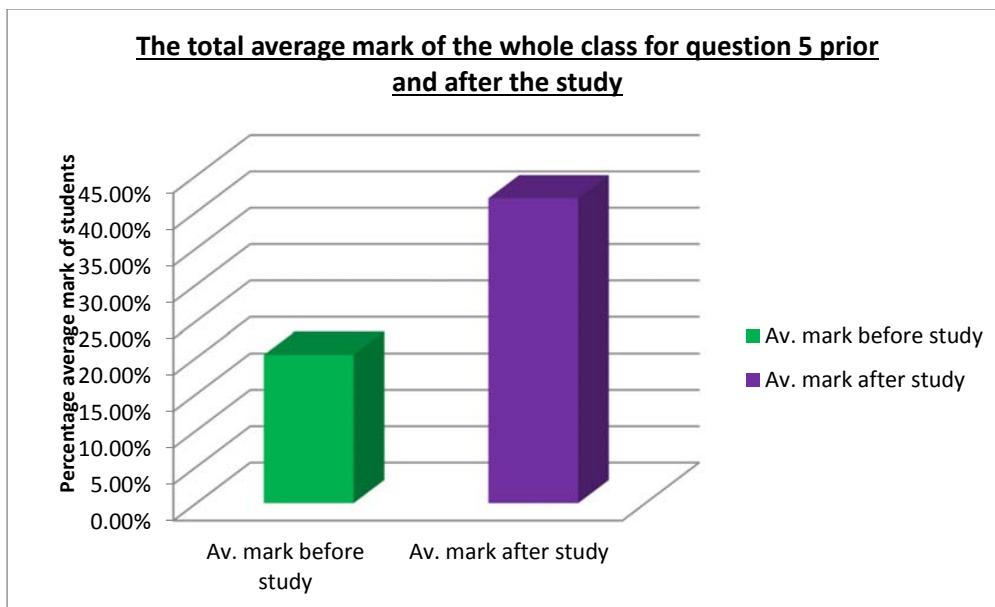
QUESTION 5: Go through paragraphs 7 to 11 and then make a list of Cassar Torregiani’s efforts to keep the price of the bread down. Say why he was unsuccessful in each case.

The question has 16 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 3.26 (20.375%) while the aftermath is 6.7 (41.875%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 21.5%.

TABLE 5. Average mark of the whole class for question 5 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	3.26	6.7
Percentage mark	20.38%	41.88%

Graph 5



Discussion of answers before the study

Before the study was carried out many students were only giving one or two answers. For instance, the following is an answer which a student gave to this question: “he imported a shipload of wheat which was loaded and carried by his ship”. There were many who left it blank and this reflects that many of them had given up or could not understand what was expected out of them. In fact, one student answered with: “the riots still happened, people still died” which is clearly out of context.

No one gave the full answer and the reason behind this may also be the discomfort the students felt while reading the text and while trying to look for answers. Moreover, as no explanation had been given, students may not have understood the efforts and work Torregiani was doing to keep the price of bread down. The difficulties in the level of English may have been of a hindrance too for the students to comprehend and answer better this question and this proves D'Amato's work on the students' language barrier when faced with a written source with difficult vocabulary.

Discussion of answers after the study

After the study, the average mark doubled and there were more attempts at answering the following questions. All students had an attempt at it, unlike the first time when there were some who just left it out or gave up before this question. Marks varied however, there were those who got full marks as well and everyone seemed to have understood that Torregiani was making an effort in order to help the Maltese.

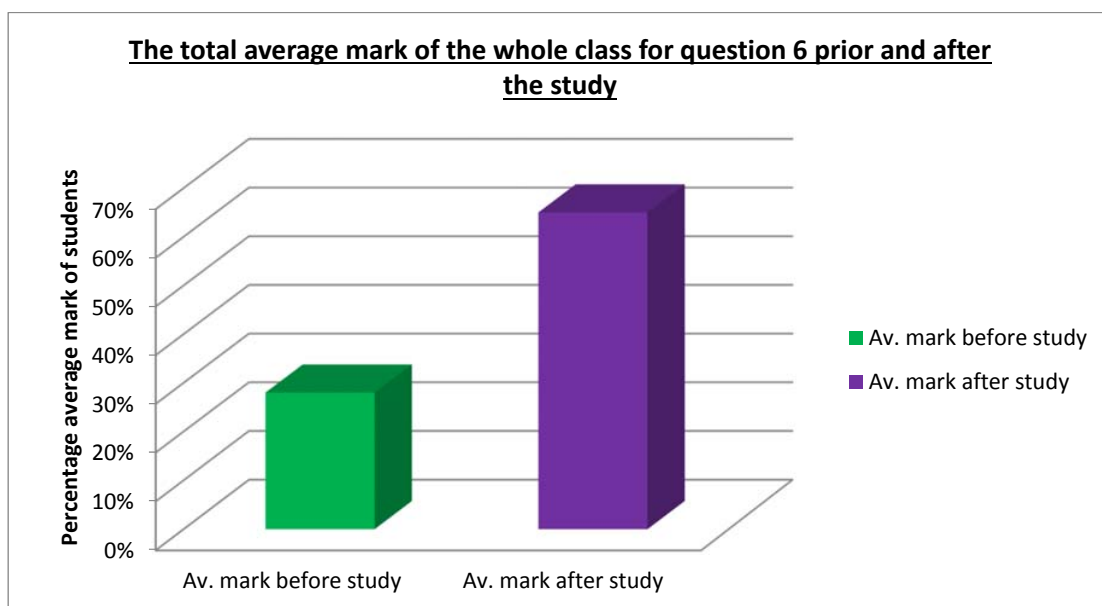
QUESTION 6: He says that the flour mills of L. Farrugia & Sons (Farsons) were burnt down but his flour mills at St. Georges were attacked but not burnt down. How were Cassar Torregiani's mills saved?

The question has 2 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 0.56 (28%) while the aftermath is 1.3 (65%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 37%.

TABLE 6. Average mark of the whole class for question 6 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	0.56	1.3
Percentage mark	28%	65%

Graph 6



Discussion of answers before the study

Many of the students were writing invalid answers prior to the study and there were some who left it blank. This reflects the students' lack of understanding of the text and the difficulty in the English language in the studied source. In fact, some answer examples prior to the study are as follows: "by the English soldiers", "they were saved by the mob" or "they were saved because maybe no one attacked them".

Discussion of answers after the study

After, the majority of students gave the full answer and mentioned that the mills were saved because the workers gave them a bag of flour each and also protected the mills with bayonets. There were some who lost half the mark because they mentioned that the mills were protected with bayonets only without mentioning the bag of flour or vice versa.

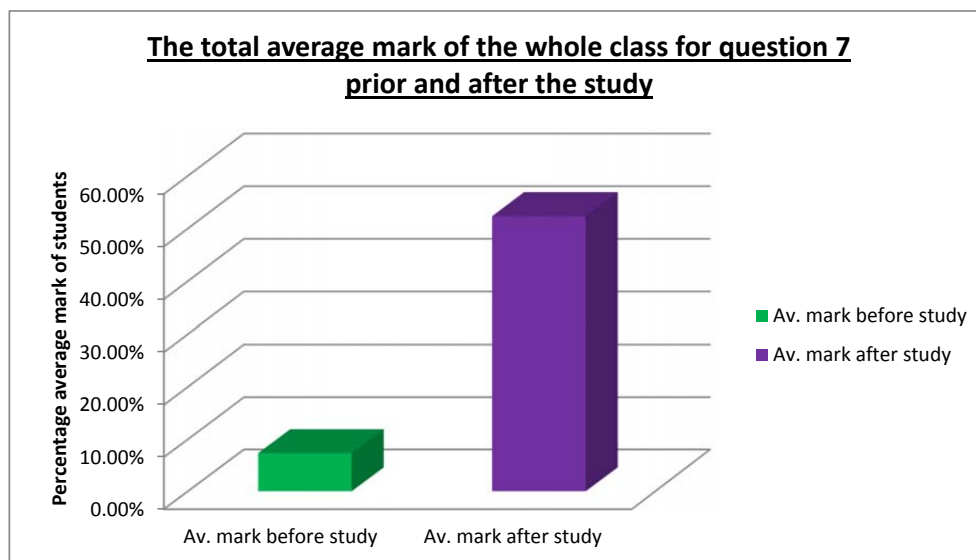
QUESTION 7: Why did he go to London and what happened there?

The question had 3 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 0.22 (7.33%) while the aftermath is 1.57 (52.33%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 45%.

TABLE 7. Average mark of the whole class for question 7 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	0.22	1.57
Percentage mark	7.33%	52.33%

Graph 7



Discussion of answers before the study

There were two students who left this question unanswered prior to the study. Another student invented the answer and wrote: "he was afraid and he talked to the King" while another student wrote that the reason behind going to London was to go to the hotel. The reason behind this

probably is that the students were disheartened with the length of the source and its unfriendly presentation before the study. Moreover, there were others who were falling into the trap of recounting a story and the list of events that happened in London in chronological order instead of going straight to the point leaving the important part out. For example: “He was ushered to a room where Lord Morley received him with a kind and courteous way” simply extracting part of the text and pasting it down. It seems that the students did not understand the text and the question itself and hence, did not manage to go into the heart of the matter when answering. They did not answer the ‘why’ part of the question.

Discussion of answers after the study

On the other hand, after the study was carried out, the students were answering the question more directly and mentioned the facts that Torregiani was ordered to leave Malta to recount what was happening here and there were a few who mentioned that he ended up giving the speech he had to give at the National Assembly on the 7th of June. However, the habit of recounting the events as happened in chronological order still appeared in the students’ answers.

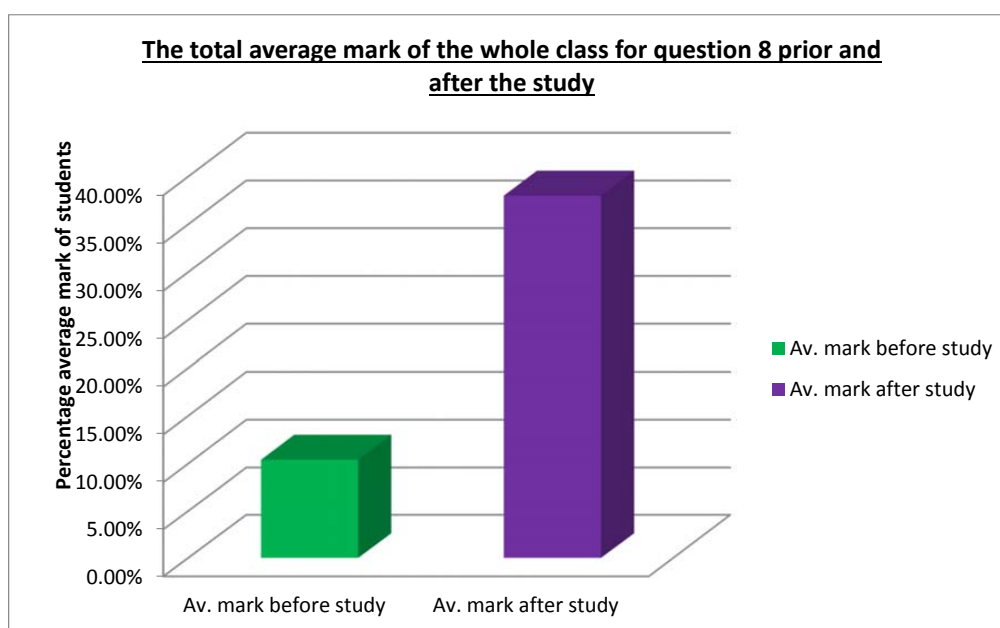
QUESTION 8: This primary source might revise how the disturbances of the Sette Giugno are viewed. Why do you think so?

The question has 5 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 0.52 (10.4%) while the aftermath is 1.9 (38%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 27.6%.

TABLE 5. Average mark of the whole class for question 8 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	0.52	1.9
Percentage mark	10.40%	38%

Graph 8



Discussion of answers before the study

This proved to be challenging as the students could not extract the answer from the text. The answer to this reflects whether the students have fully understood the text or not. Students have to be skilled at detecting bias to answer this question and prior to the study answers were confusing. For example, “I think that this is original” and “primary source might revise the disturbance of the Sette Giugno”. There were three students who left this question unanswered.

Discussion of answers after the study

After the study, the answer varied and some students pointed out that Torregiani is writing, that it is a primary source and that it's from the point of view of a miller. The students would not have concluded likewise hadn't the question been discussed in class. The students suffered when it came to expressing themselves in this question. The attempt at answering can be seen for example: this reflects that they need to be aided more when it comes to their language skills in order to avoid any form of language barriers as D'Amato (2008, p. 13) emphasises.

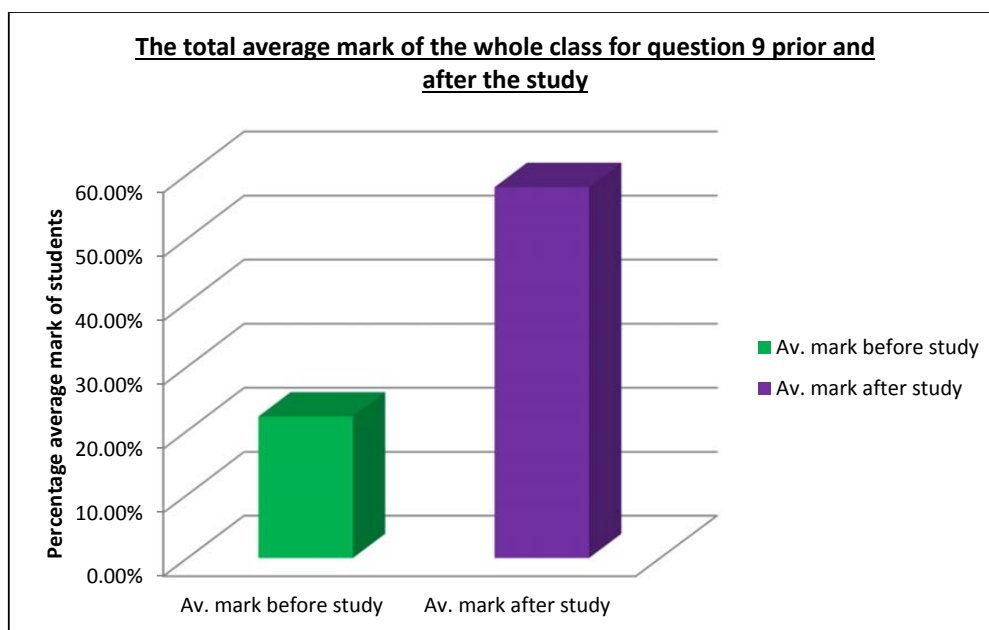
QUESTION 9: How reliable do you think the source is? Why do you think so?

The question has 5 marks. The average mark of the students before the study is 1.11 (22.2%) while the aftermath is 2.9 (58%) and hence there is a discrepancy of 35.8%.

TABLE 6. Average mark of the whole class for question 9 prior and after the study

	Av. mark before study	Av. mark after study
Actual mark	1.11	2.9
Percentage mark	22.20%	58%

Graph 9



Discussion of answers before the study

Answers prior to the study varied and there were some invalid ones for example: “because it has an old font” or “because that was what I thought”. However, there were some answers which mentioned “biased” and Torregiani’s “point of view”.

Discussion of study after the study

During the study this question was discussed in class with the students. The students did not get the full marks because it was felt that some of them could not express themselves well. For example: “you cannot trust his words, because we don’t know if it’s true or not”. However, there were some quite valid answers such as: “I don’t think it is very reliable as it is taken from a biased point of view and not that of the whole nation”. The facts that there was a comparison with other views made the answer a very valid one. Moreover, the student did not answer with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ and hence, indirectly replying that there were some truths in the source. Any answer was marked good as long as the student managed to support the answer with a valid reason. Through class discussion during the study the students briefly debated on what they think about the subject and the researcher encouraged them to make use of the text as proof to back their answer with a valid reason.

Conclusions from the study

The purpose behind the research was to improve the teaching and the presentation of the written source and for the students to understand how to analyse the text in more detail. The aim of making the text in the question more inviting was reached and the students were motivated and understood the source more.

The researcher tried to eliminate the problems students face when trying to tackle a written source. The problems found when tackling this particular written source and which may constitute potential problems in other written sources were as follows:

The linguistic barrier

Certain language in the source was outdated and students were not knowledgeable enough in English and needed extra help in order to comprehend the full text. Specific history terms such as a ‘House of Review’ and ‘National Assembly’ also posed a problem as students did not know what they mean.

The cultural barrier and the lack of background information

Time changes people and cultures. The students may find it difficult to understand social life during warfare as they are used to a different lifestyle and conditions. Hence, it is quite challenging to empathise and understand the time of when the source was written. Anachronisms of values and ideas may also hinder the students from a full comprehension of the context of when the source was written.

The presentation of the source

The technique in which the source was primarily presented troubled the students as well. The source had a small font and was presented to the students as a chunk of incomprehensible words. This made the students weary and the majority gave up in finishing the entire task.

The presentation of the questions based on the source

The source was merely given to the students without any scaffolding techniques. The students felt inept as there were no other preceding tasks helping them answer the questions on the source. The students hence ceased to make an effort to answer the set of questions based on

a source which they have never done any work about. There was no teacher management or organisation in the source presentation.

Tables 10 and 11 show the breakdown of average mark before and after tasks for each question and the final total average class mark before the activities (12.7) and the total average class mark after the activities (24.3)

Table 10

Student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S av.
Question 1 av	0.7	0.7	1.3	5.0	1.3	0.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	1.89
Question 2 av	7.0	6.0	4.7	4.7	4.7	2.3	2.0	2.7	1.7	3.96
Question 3 av	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Question 4 av	1.8	2.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.20
Question 5 av	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	1.0	3.26
Question 6 av	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.56
Question 7 av	0.7	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.22
Question 8 av	1.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.52
Question 9 av	2.0	3.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	1.3	1.11
Total mark	27.2	28.0	8.0	11.0	6.0	3.7	8.0	16.7	6.0	12.7 2

Table 11

Student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S av.
Question 1 av	0.7	1.7	1.7	5.0	2.7	0.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	2.1
Question 2 av	8.0	1.0	8.0	3.3	4.0	2.7	3.3	6.0	2.7	4.4
Question 3 av	2.7	7.3	0.7	0.3	0.7	1.7	1.3	4.0	1.3	2.2
Question 4 av	1.3	1.3	1.7	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.7	2.0	1.3	1.2
Question 5 av	14.7	16.0	4.7	4.7	3.3	1.0	0.0	14.7	1.0	6.7
Question 6 av	1.0	2.0	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.3
Question 7 av	2.7	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	0.3	0.3	3.0	0.3	1.7
Question 8 av	1.3	4.3	2.7	2.3	2.0	0.0	0.3	3.7	0.0	1.9
Question 9 av	3.3	4.0	2.3	2.0	2.3	3.7	0.0	4.7	3.7	2.9
Total mark	35.7	40.0	25.0	21.3	18.3	11.7	12.0	43.3	11.3	24.3

Recommendations

It is the authors' opinion that the following changes to the presentation of this written source played a strong, important part in the students' improved performance, an improvement of 23.2% after the study was carried out (See Appendix 2 for one example of a student's written work which shows the improvement before and after the new tasks). Therefore the following recommendations which may be useful to teachers when preparing any written source.

1. In order to solve the linguistic barrier, archaic words should be explained to the student during reading and a vocabulary/translation sheet may be given to the students for them to refer to during reading. In the sheet there may also be the explanation of a specific history register.
2. To avoid a possible cultural barrier, it is recommended that the teacher asks students questions about the time when the written source was written. Moreover, more information may be added by the teacher about the period in order for the student to have a clear idea of the time and the culture of this time when the source was written. The researcher recommends a setting of the context for the students as suggested by Blyth (1997) and Hughes (1997). In fact, during the study, it could be observed that the students seemed more at ease when the context was set.
3. For a better presentation of the source:
 - a. Present students with authentic old looking paper which may be smeared with a teabag to get a brownish hue. Moreover, when dried the paper may be crumpled for it to look older. This is done for the students to be put in the picture and appreciate the source more.
 - b. The font and the line spacing need to be increased for the students to read the text with more ease.
 - c. Pictures and a description alongside them may also be added especially for visual learners. However, the authors suggest that teachers need to be careful not to add a lot of pictures as this may lead to the students getting distracted from the written source itself.
 - d. The important parts of the text which the students need to focus on may be highlighted and put in bold. Parts of the text can also be changed to another colour to grab the students' attention more.
 - e. The paragraphs may be numbered. This helps the students not to get lost and flustered while reading the text or trying to answer any of the questions.
 - f. A magnifying glass may be used to scrutinise the source better, this proved to be quite motivating and exciting to the students.
4. Prior to the questions based on the source, the authors suggest giving the students scaffolding tasks which help them when it comes to answering the questions individually. Tasks may vary and one may be matching a subtitle from a list provided to the student with its respective paragraph. In fact, in the 'Note from the Editor' section in the textbook, *From the coming of the Knights to EU membership* from where the studied source was taken, the editor suggests that some exercises can be used as a preparation task to something else or as a conclusion to a topic. In fact, the editor of the book points out that:
5. The objective of this textbook is not to create an all-encompassing coverage of the SEC syllabus to be regimentally followed by the class teacher. On the contrary it is meant only to offer a supplement to the syllabus to be used in conjunction with various other activities. The practical examples purposely only touch a few of the sup-topics in the syllabus (Vella, 2009).
6. Moreover, the students probably do better when there is more teacher management and a better organisation of the lesson in class. Peer work and class feedback via an interactive whiteboard prior to the final exercise where the students had to work individually were carried out and these were definitely an asset.

This study has shown that there can be a marked improvement in students' responses when the correct pedagogical strategies are employed, with the right approach a tedious exercise was transformed into an exercise which Counsell (2004, p.18) would describe as one of those that "give joy - by historical enquiry which establishes curiosity amongst students".

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