



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

Paper 3: Themes in breadth with aspects in depth

Option 35.1: Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763-1914

Option 35.2: The British experience of warfare, c1790-1918

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Introduction

It is recommended that centres should refer to previous Principal Examiner reports to achieve a more rounded view of what is typical performance in this paper. This examination series has taken place under exceptional circumstances and the comments in this report are based on a significantly smaller entry than is usual.

A Level paper 9HI035 deals with Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763-1914 (35.1) and The British experience of warfare, c1790-1918 (35.2).

The paper is divided into three sections. Section A contains a compulsory question which is based on two enquiries linked to one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C comprises a choice of essays that relate to aspects of the process of change over a period of at least 100 years (AO1). Most candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and there was little evidence of candidates being unable to attempt all three sections of the paper within the time allocated.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Candidate Performance

Q1. The majority of candidates engaged with the source and identified a range of points relevant to both enquiries. These were usually illustrated by direct reference to extracts from the source and the stronger candidates were able to deploy contextual knowledge, e.g. Kitchener's conduct of earlier campaigns, to develop their judgements. Most candidates were able to make developed inferences in relation to both enquiries.

The quality of evaluation in the responses was uneven with some candidates weighing up their points and making substantial judgements and others doing little more than paraphrasing the attribution.

Q2. Most candidates engaged with the source and identified a range of points relevant to both enquiries. However, a significant minority were clearly more comfortable displaying their knowledge of Nightingale's achievements which tended to deflect them from focusing on the problems she faced and the reasons for them.

There was considerable deployment of contextual knowledge to develop effective inferences but, in some cases, it was cited to illustrate what candidates felt was missing from the source. The tendency to do this has been commented on in previous reports.

There was some effective evaluation but a minority of candidates limited themselves to stock comments based purely on the attribution.

Q3. Candidates showed a sound overall knowledge and understanding of the impact of the Durham Report, e.g. the establishment of Responsible Government, but there was less development of the counter arguments,

e.g. the rights of the indigenous population, which were not always explicitly addressed. All candidates had some debate but there was considerable variation in the range of evidence being analysed.

Q4. Candidates addressed the nominated factor to some degree and there was some identification, development and weighing up of the relative importance of other factors. The responses varied in the quality of the specific evidence cited to back up points, especially in relation to the counter argument.

Q5. This question was chosen by the clear majority of candidates. All candidates showed a general understanding of Wellington's qualities, e.g. planning, supply and discipline but the level of specific illustration and explanation of significance was varied.

Most candidates weighed Wellington's qualities against other factors, e.g. the problems faced by the French, the role of the Royal Navy and the importance of allies. Again, there was a wide range in the depth of supporting evidence and analysis. The best answers were very impressive.

Q6. A minority of candidates selected this question but they were focused on the question and identified and began to develop informed debate. There was some tendency to advance sweeping judgements but the majority considered a sound range of specific evidence. One candidate made effective use of other campaigns in 1917, e.g. Cambrai.

Q7. Candidates all developed an informed argument with a range of other factors and some specific illustration and analysis of relative significance. However, there was a narrower interpretation of 'the Americas' than that anticipated by the specification. This bullet point in the specification was modified when the specification was revised. The revised specifications were sent to centres and it is important that they are duly noted.

Q8. Candidates all addressed the nominated factor and showed awareness, in varying degrees, of the significance of the retention of Gibraltar. Candidates identified a range of other factors with some effective illustration and weighing up of relative significance. Most candidates had sound coverage of the timeframe.

Q9. This question was the least popular in Section C but there were generally sound responses. The nominated factor was understood by all candidates and its significance as a turning point addressed, in varying degrees, by them. Coverage of the timeframe was generally sound although some of the points, e.g. the contribution of Armstrong, needed more explicit address to relative significance.

Q10. This question was chosen by the majority of candidates. The responses were varied. The best explained and illustrated the recommendations of McNeill- Tulloch and put them into context explaining their significance. They then weighed these points against other developments, e.g. Cardwell, Childers, Haldane before developing an informed and balanced judgement.

However, in many responses the pre-1855 period was neglected, or even ignored. This issue has been referred to in previous reports and clearly limits the level attained in BP2.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

- Candidates should aim to draw out reasoned and developed inferences that go beyond comprehension of the sources.
- Contextual knowledge should be used to illuminate and discuss what is in the source, rather than provide an answer to the enquiry. Material that is clearly beyond the scope of the enquiries is unlikely to be credited.
- Evaluation of the source should be linked to the enquiries and should amount to more than merely repeating what is in the attribution.

Sections B and C

- Candidates should identify the correct conceptual focus of the question.
- Candidates should avoid a narrative/descriptive approach; this undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels.
- Candidates must be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, so that they can address questions with chronological precision.