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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel

In GCE History (8HI0/2C)

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2C.1: France in revolution, 1774-99

Option 2C.2: Russia in revolution, 1894-  
1924

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## 8H10 2C

### Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this first post-Covid AS Level Paper 2C which covers the options France in revolution, 1774-1799 (2C.1) and Russia in revolution, 1894-1924 (2C.2). The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question for the option studied, each part based on 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/continuity, similarity/difference and significance.

Generally speaking, candidates found Section A more challenging mainly because some of them were still not clear on what was meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. The detailed knowledge base required in Section A to add contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources was also often absent. Having said this, although a few responses were quite brief, there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B. The ability range was diverse, but the design of the paper allowed all abilities to be catered for. Furthermore, in Section B, few candidates produced wholly descriptive essays which were devoid of analysis and, for the most part, responses were soundly structured. The most common weakness in Section B essays was a lack of knowledge. It is important to realise that Section A and Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic, and, as a result, full coverage of the specification is enormously important.

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

### 8H10\_2C\_Q01\_a

Stronger responses demonstrated clear understanding of the source material on Louis XVI's acceptance of the French Constitution in September 1791 and showed analysis by selecting some key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. the King had not been entirely honest with the National Assembly about his reasons for accepting the French Constitution). Knowledge of the historical context concerning Louis XVI's acceptance of the French Constitution in September 1791 was also confidently deployed in higher scoring answers to explain or support inferences, as well as to expand or confirm some matters of detail (e.g. Louis XVI accepted the Constitution partly in order to be officially reinstated following his suspension over the flight to Varennes in June 1791). In addition, evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry, and based on valid criteria, such as the extent of Louis XVI's antipathy towards the Constitution, to show the value of the source. Similarly, explanation of utility referred relevantly to the nature or purpose of the source material or the position of the author (e.g. Louis XVI's views were privately expressed to trusted family members, so he was likely to be candid in his opinions).

Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on Louis XVI's acceptance of the French Constitution in September 1791 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making basic/undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. Louis XVI was critical of the Constitution). Lower scoring answers also tended to add limited contextual knowledge to information taken from the source material to expand or confirm some points, but these were not developed very far. Although related to the specified

enquiry, evaluation of the source material by weaker candidates was limited and often drifted into 'lack of value' arguments. Furthermore, although the concept of utility was often addressed by noting some aspects of source provenance, it was frequently based on questionable assumptions (e.g. the author was the King and so had unbiased views on the French Constitution).

#### 8HI0\_2C\_Q01\_b

Stronger responses demonstrated understanding of the source material on the September massacres in 1792 and showed analysis by selecting key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. this brutal episode was driven by a public frenzy of violence). Knowledge of the historical context concerning the September massacres in 1792 was also confidently deployed in higher scoring answers to explain or support inferences as well as to expand, confirm or challenge some matters of detail (e.g. the September massacres lasted for five days and resulted in 1100-1400 deaths). In addition, evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry, and explanation of weight referred relevantly to the nature or purpose of the source material (e.g. as a high-ranking diplomat based in Paris, Gower was in a good position to provide an informed account of the September massacres), the position of the author, or knowledge of the historical context to support/challenge the source content. Judgements were also based on valid criteria such as the accuracy of Gower's account of the September massacres.

Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the September massacres in 1792 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. the mob could not be controlled). Lower scoring answers also tended to add limited contextual knowledge to information taken from the source to expand or confirm points, but this was not developed very far (e.g. the massacres were triggered by rumours of counter-revolution). Although related to the specified enquiry, evaluation of the source material by weaker candidates was limited and often lacked focus on either the 'has weight' or 'doesn't have weight' aspect of the question. Furthermore, although the concept of utility was often addressed by noting some aspects of source provenance, it was frequently based on questionable assumptions (e.g. as an outsider, the British diplomat would be uninformed about French affairs).

#### 8HI0\_2C\_Q02a

Stronger responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the source material on the conditions experienced by workers at the Lena Goldfields in 1912 and showed analysis by selecting some key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. worker dissatisfaction with their working and living conditions was widespread). Knowledge of the historical context concerning the conditions experienced by workers at the Lena Goldfields in 1912 was also confidently deployed in higher scoring answers to explain or support inferences, as well as to expand or confirm some matters of detail (e.g. the working day at the Lena Goldfields was long and arduous – 11 to 11.5 hours per day). In addition, evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry, and based on valid criteria, such as the nature of working/living conditions for workers at the Lena Goldfields, to show the value of the source. Similarly, explanation of utility referred relevantly to the nature or purpose of the source material or the position of the author (e.g. as a set of

demands sent to the management, the source shows how the workers were attempting to persuade the mining company to make improvements in living and working conditions).

Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the conditions experienced by workers at the Lena Goldfields in 1912 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making basic/undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. the workers were discontented with their conditions). Lower scoring answers also tended to add limited contextual knowledge to information taken from the source material to expand or confirm some points but these were not developed very far (e.g. the management refused to improve conditions for the workers). Although related to the specified enquiry, evaluation of the source material by weaker candidates was limited and often drifted into 'lack of value' arguments. Furthermore, although the concept of utility was often addressed by noting some aspects of source provenance, it was frequently based on questionable assumptions (e.g. the workers were likely to be overstating how poor their working/living conditions were).

8H10\_2C\_Q02b

Stronger responses demonstrated understanding of the source material on the role of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) in October 1917 and showed analysis by selecting key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. the MRC was in an overwhelmingly favourable position to take power in October 1917). Knowledge of the historical context concerning the economic problems facing Russia during the First World War was also confidently deployed in higher scoring answers to explain or support inferences as well as to expand, confirm or challenge some matters of detail (e.g. the MRC provided Trotsky with a body to organise and camouflage the Bolshevik takeover of power in October 1917). In addition, evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry and explanation of weight referred relevantly to the nature or purpose of the source material (e.g. Trotsky may have been anxious to boost his role and revolutionary credentials in 1917, given his marginalised situation in 1932), the position of the author or knowledge of the historical context to support/challenge the source content. Judgements were also based on valid criteria such as the ability of the MRC to secure military backing and working-class support in October 1917.

Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the role of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) in October 1917 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. the MRC was important for the success of the October revolution). Lower scoring answers also tended to add limited contextual knowledge to information taken from the source to expand or confirm points but this was not developed very far (e.g. the MRC controlled key points in Petrograd). Although related to the specified enquiry, evaluation of the source material by weaker candidates was limited and often lacked focus on either the 'has weight' or 'doesn't have weight' aspect of the question. Furthermore, although the concept of utility was often addressed by noting some aspects of source provenance, it was frequently based on questionable assumptions (e.g. as a communist, Trotsky would give an unbiased account of the MRC's role).

Q3

Stronger responses targeted the reasons for the onset of the French Revolution in 1789 including an analysis of relationships between key issues and the concept (causation) involved in

the question. In addition, sufficient knowledge to develop the stated factor – the summoning of the Estates-General (e.g. the summoning of the Estates-General raised public expectations of reform, Louis XVI failed to exert his influence over the Estates-General, the Tennis Court Oath defied the King) and/or the importance of other events or developments in 1789 (e.g. the storming of the Bastille, the establishment of bourgeois institutions, notably the Commune and the National Guard, the Great Fear and the October Days) was demonstrated. Judgements made about the relative importance of the summoning of the Estates-General for the onset of revolution in 1789 were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of the reasons for the onset of revolution in 1789. Low scoring answers often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a description of events in France during 1789. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it lacked range/depth (e.g. Louis XVI viewed the Estates-General mainly as a tax-raising forum). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

#### Q4

Stronger responses targeted how significant Robespierre's role was in the development of the Terror in 1794. These answers included an analysis of the links between key issues and a focus on the concept (significance) in the question. In addition, sufficient knowledge to assess the significance of the stated factor – Robespierre's role (e.g. Robespierre's attempt to impose the Cult of the Supreme Being, his role in the purge of the Hébertists and Indulgents and the drafting of the Law of 22 Prairial) and/or the significance of other factors in 1794 (e.g. Robespierre was only one of 12 members of the Committee of Public Safety and all committee decisions were collective, he disagreed with the policy of de-Christianisation, the role of other key individuals such as St-Just) was demonstrated. Judgements made about the relative significance of Robespierre's role in the development of the Terror in 1794 were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of the significance of Robespierre's role was in the development of the Terror in 1794. Low scoring answers often lacked focus on significance or were essentially a description of events in France during 1794. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it lacked range/depth (e.g. Robespierre inspired great fear among sections of the population of Paris). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

#### Q5

Stronger responses were targeted on the extent to which the Directory brought stability to France in the years 1795-99 and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (consequence). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the outcomes of stability (e.g. writing off two-thirds of the national debt, Ramel's financial reforms, the profits of war plunder) and instability (e.g. the monetary crisis of 1795-97, the failure of the constitution of Year III to provide political stability, the destabilising effects of electoral interference by the Directors). Judgements made about the extent to which the Directory brought stability to France in the years 1795-99 were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised, often lacked a focus on consequence, and sometimes merely offered a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or only offered one narrow aspect related to the demands of the question (e.g. the value of the assignat collapsed and the introduction of indirect taxes was unpopular). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

#### Q6

Stronger responses targeted how significant revolutionary activity in the Russian empire was during the 1905 Revolution. These answers included an analysis of the links between key issues and a focus on the concept (significance) in the question. In addition, sufficient knowledge to assess the significance/relative insignificance of the stated factor – revolutionary activity (e.g. the geographical extent of, and social groups participating in, revolutionary activity in 1905, revolutionary activity in 1905 forced the Tsarist regime to make concessions such as the October Manifesto, fundamental divisions existed between opposition groups limiting their impact, the bulk of the army remained loyal to the Tsarist regime, the October Manifesto drove a wedge between the liberals and the workers) was demonstrated. Judgements made about the relative significance of revolutionary activity in the Russian empire during the 1905 Revolution were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of the significance of revolutionary activity in the Russian empire during the 1905 Revolution. Low scoring answers often lacked focus on significance or were essentially a description of events in Russia in 1905. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it lacked range/depth (e.g. different social groups protested against the Tsarist regime in 1905). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

#### Q7

Stronger responses targeted the reasons for the onset of the Russian civil war and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (causation). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the stated factor - the closing of the Constituent Assembly (e.g. closure revealed the Bolsheviks' hypocrisy in initially calling for elections and their determination to hold onto power at any cost both of which galvanized resistance) and a range of other factors (e.g. the draconian terms of Brest-Litovsk, foreign intervention designed to protect external interests in Russia and overthrow the Bolshevik regime, the threat posed to Bolshevik rule by the Czech Army of Liberation). Judgements made about the relative importance of the closing of the Constituent Assembly were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a limited analysis of the reasons for the onset of the Russian civil war. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far (e.g. the terms of the Brest Litovsk treaty hardened anti-Bolshevik opposition). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Q8

Stronger responses were targeted on how accurate it is to say that the Bolshevik regime succeeded in imposing central control over the Russian economy in the years 1917-24 and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (change-continuity/consequence). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop both sides of the debate (e.g. under state capitalism, private companies were directed and monitored by the state but central economic control was not imposed to maintain worker and peasant support, although War Communism imposed compulsory grain requisitioning and state control of large-scale industry, it also led to a thriving black market in foodstuffs, the NEP legalised private ownership/trading but imposed a 'tax-in-kind' on the peasants and retained state control over the 'commanding heights' of the economy) Judgements made about the extent to which the Bolshevik regime succeeded in imposing central control over the Russian economy in the years 1917-24 were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised, often lacked a focus on change-continuity/consequence, and sometimes merely offered a narrative of the economic policies under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or only offered one narrow aspect related to the demands of the question (e.g. the NEP introduced private ownership and trading). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

#### Paper Summary

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

#### Section A

##### Value of Source Question (1(a)/2(a))

- Candidates must be more prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source e.g. look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid writing about the deficiencies of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

##### Weight of Source Question (1(b)/2(b))

- Candidates should be prepared to assess the weight of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support/challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period



- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source. However, simply stating that a source is limited because it does not cover certain events or developments does not establish weight since no source can be comprehensive.

## Section B

### Essay questions

- Candidates must provide more factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan your answer before you begin to write your response
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay more careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing and use them throughout the essay to prevent deviation from the central issues and concepts
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.