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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In History (8HI0) Paper 2C

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Publications Code 8HI0_2C_1906_ER

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, the fourth year of the reformed 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 the impact of the Enlightenment in France before 1789 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 Enlightenment had a wide impact on French society). Knowledge of the historical context concerning the impact of the Enlightenment 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 Catholic Church banned Enlightenment works). In addition,

evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry, and based on valid criteria, such as the challenge to the ancient regime, 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. the author, although likely to be unsympathetic, acknowledges the scale of the Enlightenment's impact on France before 1789). Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the impact of the Enlightenment in France before 1789 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making basic/undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. Barruel was critical of the Enlightenment). 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. Barruel represented the views of all French people).

8H10_2C_Q01_b

stronger responses demonstrated understanding of the source material on Napoleon's role in the coup de Brumaire in France in 1799 and showed analysis by selecting key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. Napoleon played a key role in the coup de Brumaire). Knowledge of the historical context concerning Napoleon's role in the coup 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. Napoleon was not the only major figure involved in the coup). 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. Napoleon was attempting to convince the French people he was a moderate, committed to the republic and above party politics), 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 Napoleon's account of the coup. Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on Napoleon's role in the coup de Brumaire and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. Napoleon had much support). 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. Napoleon did meet the Council of the Five Hundred). 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. the author could be relied on because he was involved in the Coup).

8H10_2C_Q02a

Stronger responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the source material on the spread of revolutionary activity in the Russian Empire in 1905 and showed analysis by selecting some key points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. different social groups participated in revolutionary activity). Knowledge of the historical context concerning the spread of revolutionary activity 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. revolutionary activity in 1905 spread beyond the main centres such as St. Petersburg). In addition, evaluation of the source material was related to the specified enquiry, and based on valid criteria, such as the nature and extent of revolutionary activity, 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. a French diplomat based in Kharkov would be expected to be well informed about revolutionary activity in the area). Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the spread of revolutionary activity in the Russian Empire in 1905 and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making basic/undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. there was widespread discontent). 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 Tsar was forced to introduce the October Manifesto). 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. as an outsider, the French diplomat would be uninformed about Russian affairs).

8H10_2C_Q02b

Stronger responses demonstrated understanding of the source material on the economic problems facing Russia during the First World War and showed analysis by selecting key

points relevant to the question, explaining their meaning and selecting material to support valid inferences (e.g. economic pressure had brought the Petrograd working class to breaking point). 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. to help fund the war effort, the Tsarist government abandoned the gold standard and printed more money but this created severe inflation). 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. the report's content is confined to economic conditions in Petrograd in October 1916), 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 weakness of the Russian economy or the social consequences of these economic problems. Weaker responses demonstrated limited understanding of the source material on the economic problems facing Russia during the First World War and attempted some analysis by selecting and summarising information and making undeveloped inferences relevant to the question (e.g. Russian people were going hungry). 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. brief details of the food shortages or price rises). 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. the Petrograd secret police would deliberately downplay the economic problems to protect the Tsarist system).

8H10_2C_Q03

Stronger responses targeted how significant was the storming of the Bastille in the development of the revolution during 1789. 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 – the storming of the Bastille (e.g. the purely symbolic importance of the storming, Louis XVI lost control of Paris, the storming revealed the weakness of official authority and the power of the mob) and/or the significance of other events or developments in 1789 (e.g. the significance of the Tennis Court Oath, the Great Fear and the October Days) was demonstrated. Judgements made about the relative significance of the storming of the Bastille in the development of the revolution during 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 significance of the storming of the Bastille in the development of the revolution during 1789. Low scoring answers often lacked focus on significance 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. the storming of the Bastille symbolised popular discontent with the ancient regime). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

8H10_2C_Q04

Stronger responses targeted the extent to which the reforms of the National Assembly (1789-91) changed France and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (change-continuity). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop both sides of the debate (e.g. limitations of the indirect electoral system and the constitutional monarchy, continued social divisions, abolition of feudal rights and the nobility, reform of the tax system and the Church, a more enlightened legal system). Judgements made about the extent to which the reforms of the National Assembly (1789-91) changed France 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, 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 reform of the tax system). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

8H10_2C_Q05

Stronger responses targeted the reasons for the Terror in 1793-94 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 (external threats) and a range of other factors (e.g. response to the federalist revolts, economic discontent, the Jacobin victory in 1793 and Robespierre's pursuit of the 'republic of virtue'). Judgements made about the relative importance of external threats 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 Terror in 1793-94. 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. war with the First Coalition created internal tensions and suspicions). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

8H10_2C_Q06

Stronger responses targeted the extent to which Stolypin's policies restored stability to Russia in the years 1906-14 and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (change-continuity). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop both sides of the debate (e.g. change/continuity regarding agrarian reforms, ending redemption payments, the new electoral law of June 1907, repression after the 1905 revolution) Judgements made about the extent to which Stolypin's policies restored stability to Russia in the years 1906-14 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, 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 impact of Stolypin's land reforms). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

8H10_2C_Q07

Stronger responses were targeted on the view that the collapse of the Provisional Government in 1917 was due to the Kornilov affair and included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (consequence). Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the stated factor (the Kornilov affair) and a range of other factors (e.g. the Provisional Government's failure to solve economic and land redistribution problems, the impact of continued Russian participation in the war, actions taken by the rival Petrograd Soviet, the Provisional Government's interim status). Judgements made about the collapse of the Provisional Government in 1917 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 Kornilov affair strengthened the Bolshevik threat to the government). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

8H10_2C_Q08

Stronger responses targeted the significance of the impact of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the Bolshevik consolidation of power in the years 1918-24. 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 – the impact of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (e.g. Brest-Litovsk prevented a German invasion and the collapse of Bolshevik government, the Bolsheviks were delivering on a pledge to take war-weary Russia out of the conflict, Brest-Litovsk gave the Bolsheviks a breathing space and enabled them to focus on internal enemies) and/or the significance of other events or developments in the years 1918-24 (e.g. Bolshevik reliance on coercion and repression, the impact of the NEP, the role of Bolshevik propaganda and censorship, the draconian terms of Brest-Litovsk galvanised anti-Bolshevik resistance in Russia) was demonstrated. Judgements made about the relative significance of the impact of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the Bolshevik consolidation of power 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 the impact of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the Bolshevik consolidation of power. Low scoring answers often lacked focus on significance or were essentially a description of events in Russia in the years 1918-24. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it lacked range/depth (e.g. the harsh terms of Brest-Litovsk hardened anti-Bolshevik opposition in Russia). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly 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.