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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In History (4HI1) Paper 2R

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This was the first examination of the new specification and candidates appeared to have been prepared thoroughly and demonstrated a good understanding of the demands of the new question types. There were some excellent scripts from what is obviously a very capable candidature.

There were, however, a number of errors in technique which will have led to some candidates scoring less-well than they would have hoped. It may, therefore, prove beneficial to centres to be reminded of the particular demands of the specific questions to ensure their candidates do themselves justice in the examination.

Paper 2 offers an unusual challenge in as much as its two separate Sections test different assessment objectives with significantly different question types.

Section A focuses on Assessment Objectives 3 and 4 with candidates asked to consider two historical sources and a modern extract before answering questions based on cross-reference and evaluation of a historical interpretation. There is also a question on AO1 testing knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the period they have studied.

Question (a) asks for a description of two features of the period named in the specification. Candidates have few problems with this type of question, but they should take care to make it clear to the examiner that they are addressing two features (i.e. 'aspects') and not just writing all they know. It is not necessary to write at great length to achieve the 6 marks, and if candidates are writing beyond the allocated space provided in the answer booklet, they are probably using up valuable time which should be spent on other questions.

Question (b) asks 'how far' Source A supports what is said in Source B about a given aspect of the topic. Students of history are aware that the use of 'how far' always invites a 'two-sided' answer. Therefore, no matter how much the sources may appear to be in agreement, candidates must look for both agreement and disagreement. Once 'both sides' have been addressed, then the best responses will consider the extent of the agreement and disagreement. Is one more prevalent than the other? Are there different 'moods' or tone in the sources? However, such explanation of the extent of support must go further than repeating 'they agree about x, but disagree about y', which candidates will have already explained earlier in their response.

Question (c) ask the candidates to consider a historical interpretation and the extent to which they agree with it, based on what the sources and extract tell them and their own contextual knowledge. Centres should make sure their candidates are aware that marks are awarded according to the following criteria:

- A consideration of the interpretation; at higher levels candidates should be able to explain and evaluate alternatives to the interpretation given.

- Analysis of the provided materials; candidates should be using information from both the sources and the extract to support their arguments.
- Use of contextual knowledge; examiners are looking for the candidate to provide precise contextual knowledge (i.e. information that they have not been given in the question) to support their explanation.
- An overall judgement; to score in the highest level, candidates must take a view on the validity of the interpretation and follow that position through to the conclusion. The awarding of marks specifically for this aspect of the response is something new in this syllabus. Centres should be aware that the judgement is something which is best not left to a concluding paragraph, but instead inter-woven into the response. Very best responses will adopt a line of reasoning which is 'coherent, sustained and logically structured'.

Common errors which limit reward on Q (c) are:

- not using the sources, the extract and contextual knowledge in their response;
- considering only the interpretation given and not providing alternatives;
- failing to reach a developed overall judgement, but instead writing a final short paragraph along the lines of 'so there you are, that shows...'

Section B focuses on Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 with an emphasis on change and causation. Candidates should be aware that where they are deploying historical information in their responses, it must be to support an explanation about change or causation. Narrative of historical events will not, in itself, be rewarded.

Question (a) asks for a candidates to explain two ways in which an aspect of a country's history in one period was different from (or similar to) another period. In this year's examination, some candidates chose to describe events related to the aspect in the first period, and then described events in the second period. Following this, they drew conclusions on similarity or difference. This approach can be successful, but a much better way of answering this type of question is to select the criteria for judgement and then use historical knowledge to support the claim being made. For example 'blood transfusions in 1920 were very different from blood transfusions in 1905 because they were much safer...'

Question (b) is a type of question with which candidates should be very familiar. Almost all candidates were able to find reasons for the events outlined in the question. However, they must take care that they link the cause they have given to the outcome they are asked to explain. So whilst it is undoubtedly true that a cause of the 1911 Revolution in China was the spread of revolutionary ideas, to achieve the top level candidates need to explain why those ideas led to the revolution, rather than just stating that they did.

Question (c) focuses on change. Candidates are asked how far something changed or how significant an event or person was in bringing about change. The comments made in discussing Section A are relevant to this question as well, though the criteria are different. Responses are judged against:

- the quality of explanation in answering the question
- the use of contextual knowledge in supporting the explanation
- an overall judgement which is justified with sustained support.

Unlike in Section A, candidates are given two stimulus points to assist them in their response. They do not have to use these stimulus points, but it is obviously to their advantage to do so. The points are given because information about them could be used to support an answer and candidates must take care not to treat this guidance as an invitation to just write everything they know about the stimulus points.

Individual Questions

In Section A, there were very few responses to the questions on Topic A5, with most candidates having been prepared for The First World War (A1), Russia and the Soviet Union (A2) and the USA (A3).

In A1 part (a), there was a preference for the Triple Entente, though there were some excellent responses on the poor organisation, but successful evacuation, at Gallipoli. Almost all candidates found similarity and difference between Source A and B in part (b) with some good use of quotations. In part (c), most candidates blamed Germany for the outbreak of the war, but there also well-supported arguments for Serbia, Britain, Austria-Hungary and Russia also bearing responsibility.

In A2 part (a), the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was very well-known, with Russia's losses and Bolshevik's need to leave the war often explained in detail. In part (b) there were a number of candidates who confused the events of 1905 with the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917, but most were able to see similarity and difference in the two sources. Economic hardship was generally considered to be the main cause of the 1905 Revolution with some very astute responses in part (c) explaining how other causes were exacerbated by the general feeling of discontent brought on by poverty and food shortages.

Responses to A3 revealed gaps in some candidates' knowledge. In part (a) there were some explanations which showed candidates had little idea of what the Monkey Trial was, and some suggestions that Hooverilles were so called because Hoover built them. However responses to parts (b) and (c) were much stronger, with some intelligent analysis of the impact of the New Deal.

In Section B there were hardly any responses to the questions on Topics B1 and B3, with most candidates answering on The Middle East (B7), China (B4) and Medicine (B2).

The causes of improvements in surgery (part (b)) were well-known in B2, though some candidates wrote about the use of anaesthetics from an earlier period. The question on Fleming proved popular, showing a good understanding of the reasons for improvements in medical treatment in the period 1920-48.

There was some confusion in part (a) on B2 about the impact of the events of 1926-35 on support for the Chinese Communists. The party may have become more popular, but membership declined as many Communists died in the Long March. Causes of the 1911 Revolution were explained well (part b) and there were some perceptive comments on the extent to which the lives of peasants improved after the Civil War.

The Middle East was the most popular topic and presented few problems for the candidates. There was good knowledge of similarities between the proposals made by the Peel Commission and the UN and an excellent understanding of the causes of increased Jewish immigration after 1917. Whilst candidates did not always explained

the role of the USSR in part c(i), the role of Arafat (and the limitations of his impact) was very well covered in part c(ii).