



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel
In GCE History (8HI0/2B)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2B.1: Luther and the German
Reformation, c1515–55

Option 2B.2: The Dutch Revolt, c1563– 1609

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AS paper 2B, which covers the options of the German Reformation (2B.1) and the Dutch Revolt (2B.2) again saw responses from across the ability range. The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question each based around one source and assesses 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.

In general, candidates again found Section A, the compulsory two-part source question, the more challenging largely because many were not clear what was meant by ‘value’ and ‘weight’ in the context of source analysis and evaluation (AO2). In question (a), some candidates still waste time by attempting to address how the source is not valuable to the enquiry which is not relevant to this question. More generally, the detailed knowledge that is required to add contextual material to support and/or challenge points derived from the sources was often absent. Also, some candidates continue to make generic comments on the provenance of the sources though more, taking their nature, origin and purpose into consideration, were able to evaluate the use of the sources to the enquiry in each question.

Section B, the section in which candidates were given a choice of three essays in order to assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1), still tends to be done better. There were few wholly descriptive answers with most candidates attempting to engage analytically with the demands of the questions. The majority of answers were soundly structured and clearly expressed. They also made some effort to come to a judgement. Lack of detailed knowledge of the material continues to be an issue for some as is a tendency not to engage fully enough with the specific focus of the question. Also, there is still a significant number of answers which lack balance in their response to the questions – candidates are reminded that, at this level, there is a requirement that as well as developing the stated factor in essay questions, they also require some development of a counter-case.

Question 1 (a)

A few candidates were able to identify from the source that the relics contained in Duke Frederick’s collection were a means for those visiting to attain grace and mitigation of their time in purgatory. However, many fastened on the word ‘indulgence’ in the source to describe the course of Luther’s attack on the indulgence sold in Germany during 1517, without specific reference to the long-standing reverence shown to relics in the Church in Germany for many years before this. Few answers went beyond an assertion of utility, usually with reference to the year the document was produced.

Question 1 (b)

There were some good responses to this question. These were able to draw inferences from the source with regard to Luther’s qualities as a preacher and theologian, or to his personal bravery in the face of the Church’s attempts to stop him. Such answers were often able to use their own knowledge to expand upon these inferences, by referencing the growing support Luther received for his challenge in the years following the Ninety-Five Theses for example. Some made valid comments on the weight that could be given to Durer’s evidence, taking into account his clear support for Luther’s cause. Weaker answers tended to use the content of the source to recount the course of Luther’s challenge to the Catholic Church.

Question 2 (a)

There were no responses to this question.

Question 2 (b)

There were no responses to this question.

Question 3

This was a popular question and elicited some good responses. Candidates generally had some knowledge of Luther's translation of the Bible into German and used this to expand on its importance, for example in allowing ordinary Germans to develop their individual relationship with God and/or to be able to challenge key teachings of the Catholic Church. Against this, some were able to assess the importance of the translation against other of Luther's writings, the 1520 pamphlets for example, or the catechisms. Weaker candidates often wanted to bring in the Ninety-Five Theses somehow, despite this being difficult given the time frame specified in the question.

Question 4

The best answers to this question provided sound and detailed evidence of Luther's condemnation of Carlstadt, Muntzer and the Peasants' Revolt, and were able to use this to assess how this may have both damaged and strengthened the Lutheran cause. Weaker responses tended to focus only on the damage of Luther's 1525 pamphlet against the peasants, knowing little else of the Radical Reformation.

Question 5

The stronger answers to this question included precise and detailed knowledge of the princes and their motivations for opposing the Emperor from across the time frame specified in the question, from the Diets of the 1520s to the events following the defeat of the Schamalkaldic League in 1547. They were, therefore, able to delineate between the various motivations of the leading princes, from Frederick the Wise to Maurice of Saxony. Weaker answers were unable to do this, and tended to focus more on individuals, such as Philip of Hesse, or treated the princes as a singular mass.

Question 6

There were no responses to this question.

Question 7

There were no responses to this question.

Question 8

There were no responses to this question.

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

Section A – Question (a)

- Candidates must be more prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Focus inferences, contextual support and explanations on the focus of the enquiry

- 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 limitations of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

Section A – Question (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
- Consider omissions from the source material only where it is apparent that there is a deliberate decision to exclude something, or the ignorance of the author has led to omission
- 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.

Section B

- Questions can be asked on any element of the Key Topics in the specification
- This is a Study in Depth so it is vital to have precise and detailed knowledge of the issues to score well – candidates are required to have both range and depth in their answer to access the higher levels
- Questions can be asked by targeting any of the five second order concepts – cause, consequence, continuity and change, similarity and difference, significance
- Pay full attention to the stated focus of the question – aim to explain this fully before considering alternatives to give the answer balance and enable you to come to a judgement
- Be sure to respect the time frame in a question – make sure that the material you use is both relevant and covers the chronology as fully as possible
- Try and show links between the issues raised in your answer, especially in coming to a judgement
- Use subject-specific terminology precisely and accurately.