



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

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. In questions (a) and (b), candidates are reminded that making effective use of the source content is vital in accessing the higher levels of the mark scheme. Also the detailed knowledge that is required to add contextual material to support and/or challenge points derived from the sources is often of limited linkage to the source content or absent altogether. Finally, some candidates continue to make generic comments on the provenance of the sources though many, 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)

This question asked that candidates address Luther’s position following the Diet of Worms. A significant number of candidates, while knowing this element of the specification very well, chose not to engage closely with the content of the source in favour of writing knowledge-driven answers, with occasional quotes from the source thrown in. In contrast, many candidates were able to identify from the source that Luther’s position was in significant peril as a result of the Edict, in particular that he was placed in considerable danger of his life and his ability to continue his dispute with the Church authorities. Contextual knowledge was then added to the inferences drawn, perhaps to raise the matter of the Emperor’s dependence on German princes to enforce the Edict. In evaluating the value of the source to the enquiry,

many went on to note Charles' authority in Germany and the strength of the language used in the Edict.

Question 1 (b)

There were some good responses to this question. These were able to draw inferences from the source with regard to Erasmus' description of the state of the Catholic Church in Germany in the early sixteenth century, with regard notably to the levels of anticlericalism and anti-papalism suggested. Such answers were often able to use their own knowledge to expand upon these inferences, by referencing the corruptions of the Renaissance Popes for example, but also challenging the view depicted by Erasmus with regard to the education and dedication of many parish clergy. Some made valid comments on the weight that could be given to Erasmus' evidence, taking into account his demands, as a humanist, for fundamental reform of the Church, also the audience for his writings and his satirical style. Weaker responses tended to use the content of the source as a prompt for knowledge-driven answers on the abuses of the Church with scant attention to the content.

Question 2 (a)

There were only three responses to this question.

Question 2 (b)

There were only three responses to this question.

Question 3

There were very few responses to this question.

Question 4

This was overwhelmingly the most popular of the essay questions and it elicited responses from across the ability range. The best answers were able to discuss, in some detail, the impact of Luther's writings on the development of Lutheran beliefs, for example, how the three Reformation Treatises of 1520 expanded on key Lutheran messages such as 'sola fide' and the 'priesthood of all believers.' Many went on to evidence how Luther's writings remained key to Lutheranism throughout this period, with reference to the Catechisms or his translation of the Bible into German. Against this, the stronger candidates argued for the contributions of Melanchthon and Bugenhagen, whilst noting the decline in Luther's output as he got older. Weaker responses tended to lack detailed knowledge of Luther's writings, and sought to rely heavily on the Ninety-Five Theses or on his condemnation of the peasants in 1525, without seeking to explain how this impacted on Lutheran beliefs.

Question 5

There were very few responses to this question.

Question 6

There were very few responses to this question.

Question 7

There were very few 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 use of the content of the source, and make valid inferences from it rather than to paraphrase
- 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 must be more prepared to make use of the content of the source, and make valid inferences from it rather than to paraphrase
- They 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.