



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

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

Paper 2: Depth study

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

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

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AS paper 2C, which covers the options of France in revolution (2C.1) and Russia in revolution (2C.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)

Many candidates were able to identify from the source features of the nature of the White Terror, for example, its opposition to the Jacobins. To this was often added sound contextual knowledge, concerning the nature of the Terror or the character of the *jeunesse doree*. Weaker answers tended to focus on the degree of violence used by witnessed under the White Terror. In coming to a judgement on the utility of the source to the enquiry, few answers went beyond an assertion of weight, usually with reference to the position of the author.

Question 1 (b)

There were some good responses to this question. These were able to draw inferences from the source with regard to the popularity of the Directory, such as its apparent failure to establish economic stability or its authoritarian pretensions. Such answers were often able to use their own knowledge to expand upon these inferences, by referencing the difficulties the

difficulties it inherited. Some made valid comments on the weight that could be given to source's evidence, taking into account its origin as a police report from Paris. Weaker answers, on the other hand, tended to use the content of the source to recount the events preceding the life of the Directory.

Question 2 (a)

Many candidates were able to make good use of the source to examine the weaknesses of the Provisional Government. Stronger answers included inferences concerning the circumstances in which it was formed or the unpreparedness and inexperience of its members and often, sound contextual knowledge was added to expand on these. Weaker responses tended to neglect the content of the source entirely, and/or to make assertions of the utility of the source to the enquiry based largely on the author's position as an eye-witness.

Question 2 (b)

There were many good responses to this question that focused on the changes brought about by the NEP, making inferences concerning the economic boost it gave Russia in contrast to war communism, or the deep divisions it engendered in the Bolshevik ranks. With regard to weight, such answers often commented convincingly on Serge's insight, given his position. Weaker answers were often able to select and summarise information from the source relevant to the enquiry but lacked precise knowledge and/or made generic statements regarding its utility.

Question 3

This was by far the most popular of the essay questions on Paper 2C.1 and there were many strong answers. These candidates used their knowledge of the impact of the American Revolution, for example, the financial burden it placed on the monarchy or the ideas that fed back to France from the participation of French soldiers, and were able to make judgements with regard to other causes of the collapse of absolutism in France, the weaknesses of the king himself most notably. Weaker answers most often lacked the precise and detailed knowledge of the material necessary to make a convincing argument.

Question 4

There were fewer answers to this question. Some did have the knowledge and understanding of the constitutional monarchy to be able to judge the accuracy of the statement. There were a number of responses however, that lacked knowledge at all of the war against Prussia and Austria and/or were unable to focus their answers on the years 1791/92.

Question 5

This was the least popular question on Paper 2C.1. A number of the weaker answers knew little of St Just and tended to focus only on the role of Robespierre during the Terror. There were some however, that built more convincing answers with reference to the role of St Just, his role in the National Convention and as a leading Jacobin for example, and of others before coming to a judgement.

Question 6

This was a highly popular question and was often done very well. Stronger candidates built good responses with reference to the impact of Bloody Sunday in triggering the 1905 Revolution, particularly with reference to the way many Russians perceived the Tsar. Against this, they often considered the role of the Russo-Japanese war and more long-standing political, economic and social problems, the poverty of the masses for example. Weaker candidates often merely described the events of Bloody Sunday and/or lacked precise and detailed knowledge of the Revolution.

Question 7

Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Better answers were able to focus on the nature of Tsarist government, and the degree to which it changed in the years between the 1905 Revolution and the outbreak of the war. However, many of the weaker responses lacked the understanding of the scope of the question, and/or knew little of the nature of Tsarist government beyond the institution of the dumas.

Question 8

A number of candidates tackled this question very well with detailed and well-focused responses on the reasons for the Bolshevik victory in the civil war, the role of Trotsky in particular. However, many score less highly because of their neglect of Trotsky's role in favour of more generalised responses with regard to Bolshevik strengths and/or White weaknesses while the weaker responses again lacked the precise and detailed knowledge needed to construct a convincing essay.

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.