



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel  
In GCE History (8HI0/2C) S  
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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## **PE Report 8H10 2C June 2024**

### **Introduction**

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2C, which covers the options of France in revolution (2C.1) and Russia in revolution (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.

Performance compared favourably to previous series with most coping well with Section A. Candidates demonstrated that they are able to comprehend, select and summarise from the source material. Most are able to make relevant comments using the provenance. However, some candidates are still not clear on what is meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. It is important to note that Question 1a/2a focuses on value and no marks are awarded for examining the shortcomings of the source. Candidates are well advised to avoid wasting time on this. In this series, performance by some candidates in Section A was affected by the absence of the detailed knowledge base required to draw upon contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. In answering Question 1b/2b, some candidates concentrated their use of contextual knowledge on what was missing from the source. This is a legitimate approach where there is reason to judge that there is a deliberate omission or an omission through ignorance, but it is not legitimate where a candidate refers to the omission of events that had not happened at the time of the production of the source. The best responses come from candidates who have concentrated on the focus of the question, for example 'significance', 'reasons', 'seriousness' etc. drawing relevant inferences and supporting these inferences with contextual knowledge. A significant proportion of candidates evaluate the sources in a vacuum and draw inferences and support with context that is not related to the focus of the enquiry. Sharper focus will help candidates to make the most of their time and produce effective answers. Most candidates did use their time effectively and, although a few responses were quite brief, there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions both sections. The ability range was diverse, but the design of the paper catered for all abilities.

In Section B, in this series, most responses had an analytical focus and there were very few that were 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 and especially precise knowledge applied to the question. Some candidates did not focus on the time period set in the question. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and note the specified dates before planning and writing their answers. This avoids mistakes that undermine performance. It is also 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

### **Question 1 (a)**

There were slightly more candidates entered into 2C.1 this year with over ninety answering question 1. Most candidates understood question 1 (a) and were able to comprehend the source, commenting on what it revealed about attitudes towards Marie Antoinette in the years before 1789. Many candidates were able to infer from the source that its author, Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, felt negative public attitudes had the potential to undermine the status of the French Monarchy. Most candidates were able to add contextual knowledge, including discussion of the Diamond Necklace affair and Marie Antoinette's reputation as 'Madame Deficit'. Weaker responses developed knowledge without considering 'attitudes' towards the Queen.

Most candidates attempted to use the source provenance, with the best responses recognising that Mercy-Argenteau's position, as the Austrian ambassador to France, allowed him a position of privilege from which to comment on events. However, weaker responses made assertions around the author's vested interest that were not fully supported, given the recipient was Marie Antoinette's mother. It is important that candidates read the source captions included carefully, considering the position of authors in their historical context. Generic commentary on the nature of sources is unlikely to access marks beyond L 2. Candidates discussing limitations of the source material cannot be awarded for this, as limitations are not a focus of the part a responses.

### **Question 1 (b)**

There were some strong responses to this question. However, its focus was on the reasons for the King's Flight to Varennes in 1791; some candidates used the source as a means to discuss the event of the Flight and its controversy rather than reasons why the King attempted to flee Paris. It is important that candidates read questions carefully, ensuring they are aware of the question focus. Candidates did have to do a little more work to get 'reasons' from the source. A number of good answers considered the author's accusations that the king was 'against liberty' and by extension revolutionary sentiment, as well as exploring the extent to which Louis XVI was attempting to secure military support. Most candidates were able to work with the source provenance, using the idea that the author, Henri Grégoire, was a radical Jacobin to explain why he took a negative view of the King's reasoning. Stronger responses also considered Grégoire's role as a clergyman and member of the National assembly to make sense of his opposition. Weaker responses used Grégoire's anti-Royalist position only to dismiss his views.

### **Question 2 (a)**

Around eighty candidates answered questions on 2C.2 this year. Most candidates were able to use the source provenance, the Act of Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, to demonstrate the value of source 3 for an enquiry into the Tsar's abdication. Stronger responses went beyond merely stating it was the word of the Tsar, considering the Act's role as an official document meant for public consumption. Weaker responses offered little knowledge to support inferences about what prompted the Tsar's abdication, beyond war. Better responses did consider the role of others, including politicians such as Guchkov and the army high command, in the Tsar's decision to abdicate.

### **Question 2 (b)**

Whilst most candidates attempted to integrate source provenance into their responses, not all were able to make use of General Graves' privileged position to comment on the reasons for the defeat of the Whites in the Russian Civil War. Better responses did consider the fact Graves only offered insight into Kolchak's actions in Siberia rather than over the conflict as a whole. Candidates were often able to comment on what they knew about criticisms of Kolchak's leadership to support points in the source. In weaker responses this knowledge lacked precision and was largely used to support source comments around abuses that took place under the Whites 'Floggings and shootings'. Stronger responses considered the fractional nature of the White forces.

### **Question 3**

This was the most popular non-stimulus question on the 2C.1 paper option. Most candidates were comfortable in producing thematic responses that weighed economic pressures against other factors in assessing the main reasons for the onset of the Terror in 1793. Strong responses used statistics and knowledge of issues such as the rising costs of goods and the falling value of the assignat to support the importance of economic factors. Weaker responses were more assertive and sometimes dismissive of the role played by economic factors. It is important that students develop the question premise, in this case 'economic factors', in order to weight this against alternative factors. Strong responses did offer range, considering the political climate at the time and the role of the perceived foreign threat in creating division in France.

### **Question 4**

There were relatively few responses to this question, which invited candidates to consider similarities and differences between the Terror of 1794-84 and the White Terror of the mid-1790s. The best answers focused on the comparative element of the question, drawing comparisons in terms of political violence. However, there were weaker responses that simply rejected the comparison to focus on differences. Whilst there were some obvious

differences in terms of brutality and personnel, candidates do need to seek balance before reached their judgments to access L4.

### **Question 5**

About a third of the candidates on paper 2C.1 chose to answer this non-stimulus question, which asked how accurate it is to say that the Directory had little success in the years 1795-99. Most candidates recognised the need to find balance in their answers, if there were still responses that offered relatively little material on the successes of the Directory. Better responses were able to produce a range of accurate knowledge that considered the Directory's attempts to build political stability and deal with economic problems weighing both successes and failures before reaching a judgement. The best responses considered change over time, highlighting episodes of success and failure, with events, such as the Coup of Brumaire, representing tipping points.

### **Question 6**

There was an even split in responses to questions 6 and 7 on 2C.2. Question 6 invited candidates to discuss the similarities and differences in Tsarist rule between 1906-14 and 1894-1905. Few responses neglected the comparative focus of the question, but commentary on the 1894-1905 period was often limited to towards the end of the period. In some cases, candidates were more confident in suggesting differences, focusing on the establishment of the Duma, than they were in highlighting similarities. Better responses offered differences while also focusing on similarities in the autocratic nature of Tsarist rule throughout the period.

### **Question 7**

This question invited candidates to consider how accurate it is to say that problems in agriculture were the main reason for the weakness of the Provisional Government in 1917. Candidates produced a number of very good responses that weighed problems in agriculture against a range of other factors, including the impact of World War I and political incidents (such as the Kornilov affair) that weakened the Provisional Government's standing. Some responses that did offer a thematic approach were more limited in offering supporting evidence in their discussion of the problems in agriculture. Such answers were unlikely to reach L4. It is important that candidates do offer some focus and development on the given theme (problems in agriculture) in their responses to questions such as this.

### **Question 8**

There were few responses to this question, though it was generally tackled well by those that did answer it. Candidates did demonstrate knowledge of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and its impact on the Russian economy in the years 1921-24. They were also able to demonstrate both the limited positive impact of the NEP and where it had some successes, in its attempts to stabilise the economy after the Civil War.

## **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
- 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.

#### **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
- 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 (avoid criticising sources for not mentioning events that had not happened at the time the source was produced)
- 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**

### Essay questions

Candidates should

- Revise thoroughly and ensure that they have good knowledge to draw upon in addressing the essay question. Candidates must provide more factual details in support of their arguments. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan answers before they begin to write their 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
- Address the factor in the question where given. This makes it easier to consider relative significance
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.