



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel

In GCE History (8HI0/2C)

Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 2: Depth study

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

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

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates once more engaging effectively across the ability range in the summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2, 8HI0 2C, which covers the options *France in revolution, 1774–99* (8HI0 2C.1) and *Russia in revolution, 1894–1924* (8HI0 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 a separate source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of responses that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second-order concepts: cause, consequence, change/continuity, similarity/difference, and significance.

Most candidates managed their time effectively and answered all the questions. It is important to note that Section A and Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic. As a result, full coverage of the specification is essential. Some candidates struggled to deploy precise and accurate knowledge to support their responses. Handwriting remains a significant issue for examiners—this year, there appeared to be an increasing number of scripts that posed difficulties in this regard. Credit can only be given for what can be read, and some scripts were very challenging in the demands they made of examiners attempting to decipher what the candidate was saying. Abbreviations (e.g. *gov* instead of *government*) should be avoided.

Performance was broadly in line with previous series. Most candidates coped well with Section A. They demonstrated an ability to comprehend, select, and summarise from the source material. Most are able to make relevant comments using the information provided in the provenance. However, there appeared to be more candidates than usual who took the authors at face value or failed to recognise key figures mentioned in the specification. It continues to be the case that some candidates are not clear on what is meant by ‘value’ and ‘weight’ in the context of source analysis and evaluation. It is important to note that Questions 1a/2a focus on value, and no marks are awarded for examining the shortcomings of the source. Some candidates wasted valuable time by doing so. Performance in Section A was, in some cases, affected by the absence of the detailed knowledge base required to support or challenge points derived from the sources. In answering Questions 1b/2b, the best responses came from candidates who remained focused on the question and drew inferences supported by appropriate contextual knowledge.

In Section B, in this series, there were very few wholly descriptive responses devoid of analysis. The majority were soundly structured. However, candidates should be clear on which second-order concept is being addressed in the response attempted. The most common weakness in Section B was a lack of knowledge, particularly precise

knowledge applied directly to the question. There were also a number of responses in which candidates either only agreed or only disagreed with the question premise, limiting the range and substantiation of their judgements. It continues to be the case that some candidates go outside the chronological parameters of the question.

Candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Q1a

The majority of candidates were able to engage with the source and its context, commenting on Lamoignon's role in addressing the Parlement of Paris. Most candidates connected the speech with the idea of Divine Right of Kings, though fewer considered that it was delivered at a time when critics (including in the parlements) were questioning the monarch's position. There were relatively few responses that dismissed the source's value or focused on its shortcomings. As this is a value question, this is not required and garners no credit. Where candidates focused on the enquiry, supported inferences from the source and developed these using contextual knowledge, whilst also evaluating the value of the source, it was possible to reach Level 3.

Q1b

Candidates at all levels engaged with the source on the 'War of the Vendée' by General Trudeau. Most attempted to use his position to help assess weight. However, a number of candidates took the source and Trudeau's position at face value (i.e. he was a general and present, so would offer an accurate representation), rather than considering why Trudeau may have wished to portray events in the manner he did. Relatively few responses considered how Trudeau's account could be used to flatter his own efforts in suppressing the revolt. The extent to which candidates were able to apply their own knowledge to the question varied. Some offered fairly broad context regarding France's political position at the time. The best responses considered the relationship between conscription for the Revolutionary Army and the Vendée revolt. Candidates were able to access the question at all levels, with some very good responses drawing on developed contextual knowledge and considering the extent of threat posed by the Vendée rebels compared to the impression given by the source.

Q2a

Most candidates were able to explain why the source was of value to an enquiry into the impact of the Kornilov affair on the Bolsheviks. However, a surprising number either did not recognise that Kerensky was Prime Minister of the Provisional Government or misidentified him—some even suggesting he was a Bolshevik. Better responses were able to make use of Kerensky's position in assessing the value of the source. There were relatively few responses that merely regurgitated the source material as fact. Most candidates were able to offer some contextual knowledge around how the Kornilov affair helped the Bolsheviks. Stronger answers considered how the affair coincided with

increased support for the Bolsheviks, although some candidates simply used contextual knowledge with only limited reference to the content of the source.

Q2b

Most candidates made use of the source caption, recognising the position of Lenin, though the nature of the Petrograd Soviet confused some. Most did recognise Lenin's partisan interests in closing the Constituent Assembly. The best responses recognised the source's importance as a public decree but also acknowledged Lenin's role in shaping it. The extent to which candidates applied their own knowledge of events was more mixed. Better responses considered the threat Lenin perceived from the SRs, given their electoral success. More were able to recognise that closing the Constituent Assembly served Lenin's longer-term interests. A few strong responses tested the source's claim that the Assembly was dominated by the bourgeoisie, pointing instead to the dominance of socialist parties.

Q3

This question was relatively popular. Most responses recognised the need to present a balanced argument when considering the extent to which France was changed by the reforms of the National Assembly in the years 1789–91, with few straying outside the time period. Some weaker responses argued either for or against change, but did not offer balance. Most candidates were able to discuss the impact of the reforms on feudal rights and the tax system. Weaker responses dealt with change without explicitly addressing reforms—for example, discussing the role of Enlightenment ideas without showing how they influenced specific reforms. Some also merely asserted that the role of the monarch was unchanged, while stronger responses explored how the reforms may have deepened divisions within France.

Q4

This was the most popular question in this section of the paper. Although generally well attempted, a number of candidates confused the time frame, interpreting it as an invitation to discuss the causes of the revolution's onset rather than the collapse of constitutional monarchy. It is vital that candidates identify and respond to the specific dates given in the question. Some candidates also confused absolutism with constitutional monarchy. Fewer responses considered factors beyond Louis XVI's personal failings. Stronger responses addressed the significance of the dates and weighed Louis XVI's actions—such as the flight to Varennes—against alternative factors, including France's economic situation. These responses also reached reasoned judgements.

Q5

This was the least popular question in this section of the paper. Most responses reached Level 3 or above, weighing the role of Sieyès in the success of the coup of Brumaire against other figures such as Napoleon, Lucien Bonaparte, and Barras. The

few weaker responses confused success with causation, discussing the failures of the Directory as leading to the coup, rather than addressing why the coup itself was successful. The best responses offered range and depth in exploring how different individuals contributed to the outcome.

Q6

This was, by some distance, the most popular question in this section of the paper. Most candidates were able to explain how the government used force to ensure the survival of the Tsarist system during the 1905 Revolution. A number of responses did not offer counterarguments, and there was variation in the extent to which candidates provided depth in support of their judgements. Relatively few considered a wide range of supporting factors, including the role of the army, Stolypin's reforms, and the impact of the Russo-Japanese War. However, some very strong responses addressed all of these. Those that did include counterarguments often focused on the October Manifesto. Better responses also addressed the disunity of opposition to the Tsarist system.

Q7

This was the second most popular question in 2C.2. Most candidates were able to explain how Nicholas II's actions contributed to the collapse of the Tsarist system. Weaker responses were more limited in their counterarguments. Most were able to access Levels 3 and 4, weighing Nicholas's wartime leadership and court intrigues against other factors such as the impact of the war on the economy and the morale of the army. The best responses sustained their analysis and weighed multiple factors to reach a reasoned judgement.

Q8

This was the least popular question in this part of the paper. Some responses treated War Communism and the New Economic Policy (NEP) separately, offering limited comparison. However, most took an approach that addressed both similarities and differences. It was rare to find responses that considered only similarities. Some candidates placed greater emphasis on differences, focusing on the NEP as a retreat to a mixed economy and its ideological consequences. The best responses developed a balanced debate, recognising both the emphasis on state control in key sectors under both policies and the pragmatic motivations behind them.

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 make valid inferences rather than simply paraphrase the source
- Candidates should focus inferences, contextual support and explanations on the enquiry
- Candidates should be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source. It is not sufficient to repeat the knowledge that is contained in the source
- Candidates should 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
- Candidates should 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 and be aware of the values and concerns of that audience
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support or challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Candidates should 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
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, candidates should take account of the weight that can be given to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose.

Section B

Essay questions

- Candidates should take a few minutes to plan the answer before beginning to write the response
- Candidates must revise thoroughly and ensure that they have good knowledge to draw upon in addressing the essay question. Candidates must provide more precise factual details in support of their arguments. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Candidates are advised to pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for example) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Candidates should 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. Equally, candidates should be aware that simply restating the words of the question does not amount to an analysis

- It is a good idea to address the factor in the question, where given, first. This makes it easier to consider relative significance. It is also important to ensure, where appropriate, that a counter argument is provided
- Candidates should try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.