



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In History (8HI0/2G)

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2G.1: The rise and fall of fascism in Italy, c1911–46

Option 2G.2: Spain, 1930–78:
republicanism, Francoism and the re-
establishment of democracy

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Summer 2023

Publications Code 8HI0_2G_2306_ER

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2G which covers the options The rise and fall of fascism in Italy, c1911-46 (2G.1), and Spain, 1930-78: republicanism, Francoism and the re-establishment of democracy (2G.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. and draw inferences, explain and support this 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. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and note the time period 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)

The vast majority of candidates were entered for 2G.1 and answered this question. Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the aims of fascist foreign policy. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about Mussolini's aims to build an empire in Africa whilst maintaining a diplomatic relationship with the western powers. The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. Candidates would do well to remember that contextual knowledge does need to be used to explain and develop the inferences drawn from the source and not just to provide free-standing knowledge. Many candidates used their contextual knowledge of Italy's defeat at Adowa in the late 19th Century to explain inferences about Mussolini's specific aim to target Abyssinia as well as their understanding of Mussolini's desire to emulate the Romans by conquering a great empire. These responses accessed level 3 for both bullet points 1 and 2 of the mark scheme. Contextual knowledge used to confirm or expand on the source material can access level 2. It is important that candidates do consider the relevance of the contextual knowledge that they use. Lengthy descriptions of events during the invasion of Abyssinia were not well targeted on 'aims' and add little to the response.

Most candidates were also able to make good use of the provenance to explain the value of the source, in particular citing the significance of the position of the author, Badoglio, and the particular insight that he could offer both Chief of the General Staff, and therefore the man responsible for launching the invasion of Abyssinia, and as a close confidant of Mussolini who would therefore have an insight into Mussolini's own intentions. It is important that candidates go beyond the stereotypical claims of a source being produced by someone who was 'there at the time' and therefore a 'primary source'. These comments do not in themselves provide any explanation of value and do not achieve out of level 1. In addition, those candidates who discussed the limitations could not be rewarded for that part of their answer as it is not the focus of part a) responses.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates understood the source material and were able to select from it to develop some inferences about the reactions to Matteotti's criticisms of the fascist regime in 1924. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that Mussolini reacted aggressively – not only with the ominous growling during the speech, but in the threats made by his henchmen subsequently and in Matteotti's murder that could be linked to the fascists. It is important that candidates do address the question set. There was a noticeable proportion of candidates who focused on reactions to Matteotti's murder rather than what was asked in the question (reactions to his criticisms) and in doing this, own knowledge used to develop and interrogate was not always well applied.

There were some effective answers that weighed up the strengths and limitations of the source and used this as a basis to reach a judgement about the weight that should be attached to the source for the enquiry. Although some candidates attached free-standing knowledge to the response, many did use secure knowledge, particularly to challenge the claims in the source and in some cases to carry out a thorough interrogation of the evidence. With this source, candidates were able to construct successful interrogations, for example, by considering the claims made by the author that 'Mussolini had used [the murder] to consolidate his regime by force of terror' and challenging that with their own knowledge that the use of terror was limited in the fascist regime if actions by OVRA and their outcomes are considered. The establishment of weight is very dependent upon candidates using their contextual knowledge to test the claims in the source. Candidates who only use knowledge to expand on the content of the source remain in level 2 for that bullet point.

In the most effective answers, candidates were able to use the provenance of the source in conjunction with the content of the source to develop criteria to judge the weight of the source as test this with claims in the source. A minority of candidates made some questionable assumptions about the source and presented them in a very stereotypical way, e.g., source doesn't have value because he wasn't there etc. Most candidates correctly identified the ideological differences between the author (a socialist vs. the fascists) and therefore a possibility of bias. However, many candidates failed to pick up on the fact that the source did actually present socialist and fascist responses and that this could be used to consider what level of objectivity could be ascribe to the source. In level 4, bullet point 3 requires candidates to use criteria that are 'justified and applied' to evaluate the source. Where candidates identify bias or subjective views, it is important that they refer to them specifically in their answer to support their evaluation. In this response, Garret's partiality for the socialists could be demonstrated by his reference to Matteotti's heroic sacrifice, while his ability to be objective could be demonstrated by his references to the inadequacy of the Socialist Party.

Question 2 (a)

A small minority of candidates were entered for 2G.2. Most were able to select and summarise points from the source. Candidates did not offer any relevant contextual knowledge. Some candidates confused this with the 1931 Constitution. It is important to remind candidates to read the caption to the source carefully to avoid such errors. This source, on the 1978 Constitution, came for the very end of the content of the course. It is important that centres cover the whole period.

Question2 (b)

Most candidates understood the source and could select some relevant points but did not offer any contextual support to interrogate the source.

Question 3

This was by far the most popular essay question on the paper with more than two-thirds of candidates choosing it. Most candidates were able to address the question of reasons for the weakness of the liberal governments in the years 1919-21 and consider a range of factors, including the impact of the 'mutilated victory', the impact of the extension of the franchise and the rise of socialism, the political power of the newly formed Catholic Party (PPI), the rise of fascism and the social and economic problems of the post-war years. A notable number of candidates did not take note of the dates and focused their answers on events and issues prior to the First World War, such as the invasion of Libya. These responses were not relevant to the question.

The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing the different reasons and to consider the relative importance of the 'mutilated victory' in weakening the liberal governments in comparison to other causes of weakness. Some candidates had good knowledge that they used effectively to support their response. However, there were too many candidates whose knowledge was limited and imprecise.

Question 4

This question drew a number of responses from candidates who were able to display some relevant knowledge on the fascist economy in the years 1925-40. Few candidates accessed level 4 because most did not pay sufficient attention to the second order concept – change and continuity. Instead, most focused on assessing the successes and failures of the economic policies and tended to achieve in level 3 where there were implicit links to change. It is important when selecting an essay that candidates make sure they know what the question is asking them to do and not to write an answer to a previous question that they may have tackled as part of their studies. Careful planning is the key to success here.

Question 5

This question focused on the causes of the collapse of fascism by 1946. In level 4, candidates looked at a range of causes including the Allied invasion, Italy's failures in the war, the role of the Grand Council of Fascism, the impact of Mussolini's rule in the north under Nazi control and the final defeat of Italy and Germany in the war and considered their relative significance in order to address 'main cause'. However, for most candidates, the depth of knowledge and range of causes was lacking. Many candidates possessed very little knowledge of how the war progressed and the reasons for the collapse of fascism.

Question 6

There were just 3 answers to this question. Responses did show some knowledge of the Spanish civil war and the progress of the Nationalists.

Question 7

There were just 2 answers to this question. Candidates were not well informed on Franco's personality cult and other methods of controlling society in the years 1938-56.

Question 8

There were no answers to this question.

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
- 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 must 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 your answer before you begin to write your 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
- It is a good idea to 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.