



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

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

Paper 2: Depth study

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

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Publications Code 8HI0_2G_2406_ER

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8H10 2G Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range in summer examination series of the AS Level Paper 2- 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 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)

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 relationship between the fascist state and the Catholic Church. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the extent to which the Catholic Church was able to exercise full and unfettered authority in religious matters and the levels of control that the fascist state held over religious appointments. 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 the dominant position of the Catholic faith in Italy, Mussolini's decisions to drop the anti-clerical stance in 1921 and his subsequent moves to woo the papacy, and the row over Catholic Action to explain inferences about the relationship between Church and state. 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 without linkage to the source material were not well targeted on 'relationship' 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, citing the significance of the official nature of the Concordat, which was legally binding, and the importance attached to it by both Church and state as evidence in the length of time spent on negotiations. It is important that candidates go beyond the stereotypical claims of a source being produced '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 seriousness of the post-war crisis in Italy in 1919-22. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that there were significant economic problems as well as growing violence across the whole of the country. Many candidates analysed the developing fear that Italy was on the verge of a Bolshevik-style Revolution and drew out inferences about the fascists acting as saviours of the Italian state. It is important that candidates do address the question set. Some candidate wandered from the focus of the question and, sidetracked by source references to the victory at Vittorio Veneto and the March on Rome, lost focus on the question and discussed the events of the First World War and Mussolini's rise instead of keeping tightly focused on the post-war crisis.

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 'Without the Fascist revolution and the March on Rome, Italy would have fallen prey to communism, anarchy, bankruptcy and poverty' and challenging that with their own knowledge that the use of violence by the fascist squads was a major contributor to the anarchy in post-war Italy and helped to destabilise the country. 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 and 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 is valuable because he was there etc. Many candidates correctly identified the ideological issue arising in a source authored by an ex-army officer and fascist supporter commenting on the post-war crisis involving the working class, handled by a liberal government and written after attending a Mussolini speech, and used this to discuss how objective the source could be. However, many candidates simply fell back on claims of bias. 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, Palamenghi's support for fascism and his condemnation of liberalism could be demonstrated by his reference to 'the weakness of the governments at that time' and 'Without the Fascist revolution and the March on Rome'. The very best responses were able to explain weight in terms of what the source could be used for, in particular considering it holding weight as a prime example of the attitudes of the right wing, ex-military and middle classes at that time while considering it more limited in considering the true seriousness of the crisis.

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 offer any relevant contextual knowledge that was added to the source material and typically scored in level 2.

Question2 (b)

Most candidates understood the source and could select some relevant points which they supported by adding some contextual knowledge. but did not use it to interrogate the source.

Question 3

About a third of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to consider the threats posed to Giolitti's government by the Catholics and by the nationalists, including the support for Catholicism in the Italian population, the cross-class support for both Catholics deputies and nationalists, the impact of the Libyan War, the aggressive nature of nationalist supporters and the impact of the Gentiloni Pact. The greatest problem candidates faced was in achieving a tight focus on the question. The questions asked candidates to consider whether the threat posed by the Catholics was different from the threat posed by the nationalists. Therefore, candidates needed to organise their responses to look at the similarities and differences in the threat in order to reach a judgement. However, many candidates treated the question as a significance question and discussed which group was the greater threat without a true comparison. This did affect how far the response could be rewarded, particularly in the highest levels. The best answers did produce focused comparison, discussing the similarity in the threat where both Catholics and nationalists opposed Giolitti's attempts to appeal to socialism, whilst explaining the difference in their propensity to cooperate with Giolitti with the Catholics being prepared to cooperate in return for concessions whereas the nationalists resisted all attempts to be absorbed by Giolitti's *trasformismo*.

The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing how different the threats were. 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. In particular, too many candidates, even in otherwise well-focused responses, undermined their answers by writing about the power of the PPI, unaware that the party was not established until 1919.

Question 4

This question was the least popular on 2G.1 but it did draw some very effective answers. The best responses were tightly focused on both change and continuity and were able to demonstrate the extent of change effectively. Candidates looked at a range of groups within the PNF, including the squads, the *ras* and the party membership, and discussed the extent of change, e.g. the change from the pressure put on Mussolini by the squads to seize power in 1922 and the impact of their violence in the aftermath of Mussolini's appointment to the curtailing of their powers with the creation of the MVSN; the power of the *ras* in pressurising Mussolini to declare a dictatorship in 1925, the reduction in their powers in the Grand Council of Fascism and then their overthrow of Mussolini in 1943. Considering continuities, many candidates referred to Mussolini's role as head of the PNF and head of government, his control over appointments and ability to rule by decree. Some candidates were unable to access level 4 because they did not pay sufficient attention to the second order concept – change and continuity and wrote more generally about Mussolini's rule in Italy. It is important when selecting an essay that candidates make sure they know what the question is asking them to do. Careful planning is the key to success here.

Question 5

This was the most popular question on the paper, focusing on the consequences of Mussolini's attempt to build an Italian Empire in the years 1935-40 and requiring candidates to assess his success. The best responses considered the positive results from the invasion of Abyssinia and the takeover of Albania (from the fascists' point of view) in the expansion of territory, the gain of raw materials and the status given by expanding the Empire and counteracted that with the heavy costs, in human lives and lire, the guerrilla warfare that continued for the rest of the decade, the collapse of the Stresa Front and Mussolini's increasing dependence of Nazi Germany. Some candidates did not focus sufficiently on Empire and instead assessed the successes and failures of Mussolini's foreign policy with significant focus on the Spanish Civil War, the Pact of Steel and performance in the Second World War. Where related to Empire, these events could be used effectively but often there was no attempt to use them to address the question, and this made accessing level 4 in particular very difficult.

Question 6

There were no answers to this question.

Question 7

All candidates entered for 2G.2 answered this question. Candidates showed some knowledge of the reasons for the Republican defeat in the Civil War. The best responses were able to consider the relative importance of foreign support for the nationalist side with the impact of non-Intervention on the Republican side, together with issues of leadership and coordination of forces.

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 (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.