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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International  
Advanced Level In History (WHI02)

Paper 1A: India, 1857-1948: The Raj to  
Partition

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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 IAS Level Paper WHIO2 1A which covers the option: option India, 1857-1948: The Raj to Partition. 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)**

Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the seriousness of communal violence. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the lethal nature of the violence demonstrated by the fatalities caused by the train bombing, as well as inferring that the communal violence was not prevalent everywhere as demonstrated by the joint celebrations of Muslims and Hindus in Calcutta. However, some candidates did not pay attention to the focus of the question 'seriousness' and instead, for example, analysed the source for its value in explaining causes of communal violence. In other cases, candidates discussed the reasons for Partition rather than communal violence. These responses had limited focus on the task and achievement on the levels of the mark scheme was hampered.

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 religious differences, Jinnah's Direct Action Day and the violence meted out to refugees on both sides of the border to explain inferences about the extreme nature of the violence. 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 and target it appropriately. It was disappointing that some candidates had no context to offer, and this did have a depressing impact on the overall mark awarded.

Most candidates were also able to make good use of the provenance to explain the value of the source, citing the significance of the position of the author, who, in writing for an American newspaper, could take an impartial view and therefore would offer an insight that was not tainted by any personal allegiances or responsibilities. 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 impact of Lord Curzon on the government of India in the years 1898-1905. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that Curzon was an effective viceroy whose rule was beneficial for India, even though his reforms made him unpopular.

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 Curzon 'proved himself to be the best Viceroy that India has had' and challenging that with their own knowledge that Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 proved disastrous for the Raj. 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. Some candidates did not use any contextual knowledge in their evaluation or made irrelevant selections, such as suggesting the author had not considered that Mountbatten was a better viceroy.

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 is reliable value because he was there etc. Many candidates made good use of the date of the source and argues that the assessment of Curzon's career was at best a partial once since Lipsett left India in 1900 and published his work in 1903 which was two years before the partition and the end of Curzon's service as viceroy. This was used effectively to consider what weight 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, Lipsett's partiality for Curzon could be demonstrated by his reference to Curzon as a 'great Englishman and 'the best Viceroy that India has had'.

## **Question 2**

This was the least popular essay question on the paper. Most candidates were able to address the question of the significance of taxation in affecting the living standards of the Indian people in the years 1857-1914 and consider a range of factors, including a number of different taxes and the amounts levied, the impact of the railways in providing employment and boosting industry, communication and movement of goods, irrigation and developments in farming, the impact of goods imported from Britain on local employment and the impact of famine and food distribution policies. A number of candidates did not take note of the dates and extended their answers into the post-war period. These responses were not relevant to the question.

The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing the relative significance of the factors affecting living standards in order to reach a judgement as to whether taxation was most significant. When doing this, it is good practise to begin with the factor given in the question. This allows judgements to be made and supported throughout the answer.

## **Question 3**

This was the most popular essay question on the paper. Most candidates were able to address the question of the significance of the role of the INC in the growth of nationalism in the years 1880-1914 and to compare it with other factors that possibly had greater significance, including the role of the Muslim League, the partition of Bengal, the Ilbert Bill and its

consequences, the Morley-Minto reforms, the impact of the First world War and the Home Rule movements and the Lucknow Pact. Most candidates were able to draw on a good range of precise knowledge and some very fine answers were written with many candidates achieving level 4 for well-focused responses that established valid criteria and argued their case effectively. In a number of responses, candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the dates and wrote at considerable length on Gandhi's campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s. This material could not be rewarded as it was out of period, and overall, it did undermine the judgements that candidates were making. It is important when selecting an essay that candidates make sure they know what the question is asking them to do and that they focus on the exact date range. Careful planning is the key to success here.

#### **Question 4**

About a third of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to focus on what caused limited progress towards self-government in India in the years 1919-42 and to assess whether the use of repression was the main cause. Many candidates were well prepared and drew upon a wide range of knowledge to discuss a range of causes, including the use of repression, the limitations of Gandhi's campaigns, the division between the INC and the Muslim League, the failure of the round table conferences, the delaying tactic by viceroys and the impact of the outbreak of war in 1939. Many candidates achieved in level 4 by successfully establishing and applying valid criteria to judge the significance of alternative factors relative to the cause given in the question. Where candidates achieved in the lower levels, it was often the result of imprecise or insufficient knowledge and a failure to focus on the dates in the question which undermined the argument.

#### **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.

