



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level in History

Unit 2: WHI02 Paper 1A: India, 1857-1948:  
The Raj to Partition

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## **Introduction**

It was pleasing this January to see a number of well-informed and well-written responses from candidates on 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 can comprehend, select and summarise from the source material. Most can 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 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. Referring to limitations in the source deviates from the question focus and make it difficult for candidates to reach a secure judgement. Too many candidates insist on looking at the 'extent of value' rather than 'reasons for value' as asked in the question. It is in question 1b) that candidates need to address extent. Here they need to consider both the strengths and limitations of the source, in the light of their contextual knowledge, and then use this as the basis to attribute weight to the source. For some candidates, performance in Section A is limited by the absence of the relevant detailed knowledge base required to add contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. Most candidates did use their time effectively this January and, although some 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 allowed all abilities to be catered for. Furthermore, in Section B, many responses had an analytical focus, and few responses were wholly descriptive essays that were devoid of analysis. For the most part, essay responses were soundly structured. The most common weakness in Section B essays was the lack of a sharp focus on the precise terms of the question and/or the second order concept that was targeted. This meant that some candidates wrote at length on topics that were only peripherally related to the question, or which did not cover the whole time period.

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 parameters 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 nature of communal violence in India in 1946. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the complete breakdown of relations between Hindu and Muslim communities. 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. Some candidates used their contextual knowledge of the Day of Direct Action and Jinnah's role. 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. Some candidates, however, focused on the partition of Bengal in 1905 and thus paid little attention to the question focus and therefore achieved little on bullet point 2 of the mark scheme. It is important that candidates do consider the relevance of the contextual knowledge that they use and target it appropriately.

Most candidates were also able to make good use of the provenance to explain the value of the source, citing the official nature of the report from the headquarters of the Indian Army in Bengal made just a few days after the rioting to give an accurate and immediate account. 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 reasons for the famine in India in 1943. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that the British system of government in India failed to achieve an effective distribution of food and that food production had failed to keep pace with the expansion of the population. However, many candidates remained in level 2 for bullet point 1 of the mark scheme because they did not move beyond the comprehension and summarising of the details in the source.

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 support the claims in the source and in some cases to carry out a thorough interrogation of the evidence. The establishment of weight is very dependent upon candidates using their contextual knowledge to test the claims in the source and to establish therefore the validity of the author. 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, and this limited their achievement.

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. Most candidates noted that as a leftwing source, Dutt would inevitably criticise the British handling of the famine and a few were able to go beyond this to look at the range of reasons Dutt referred to in his account – indicating that it was not just the problem of government handling. This helped them to reach judgements about weight. A minority, however, did little more than copy out the details of the caption without providing any analysis.

### **Question 2**

About a quarter of the candidates answered this question. Most of these candidates were able to address the question as to whether the key features of the Government of India changed in the years 1857-76. Some candidates were well prepared and were able to draw on a range of evidence to formulate their response. Candidates referred to the changes from the East India Company to direct rule by the Crown, the change in the independence of the Princely States, the developments brought in with the 1861 Indian Councils Act and the change into the Raj ushered in by the 1876 Royal Titles Act. Some referred to the inconsistencies in the period seen in the role of the Viceroy and the difficulties in Indians achieving any role in government. Some candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the dates in the question and covered details such as the Government of India Acts 1919 and 1935 and described events such as the Amritsar massacre. Candidates are reminded that it is beneficial for them to plan their answers briefly before writing. This not only ensures focus on the question, including the dates, but also helps candidates to pick the question best suited to them.

The best answers were able to establish criteria for assessing the relative significance of the benefits accruing to each side and used this as the opportunity to reach a measured and supported judgement.

### **Question 3**

This was the least popular essay question on the paper with just 5 answers. Candidates who selected it were able to address the question of whether the main consequence of the formation of the Indian National Congress was challenge to British rule in the years 1885-1914. Candidates considered the INC's call for the widening of the basis of the Indian government, the role of radicals like Ben Tilak and the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 and contrasted it with the original purpose of the ICN as a discussion forum for elite and educated middle classes, the role of moderates like Gokhale and cooperation between the INC and the Government of India during the period. Most of the answers achieved in level 4 with candidates drawing on a good range of precise knowledge to produced well-focused responses that established valid criteria and argued their case effectively.

#### **Question 4**

This was the most popular question. Most candidates were able to focus on whether Gandhi was more significant than Jinnah in campaigning for Indian independence in the years 1920-45. Many candidates considered Gandhi's campaigns, the civil disobedience campaign of 1920-22, the salt march and civil disobedience campaign of 1930 and 'Quit India' in 1942 and contrasted those with Jinnah's contribution in establishing the Muslim League, his support for campaigns in the 1920s and his role in gaining British attention his campaigns for a separate Pakistan. Candidates should make sure that they always note the date range of questions – those who focused on the period 1945-47 were writing out of period and could not be credited for that part of their answer. Many candidates achieved in level 4 by successfully establishing and applying valid criteria to judge the two factors to reach a judgement on 'more' significant. Some candidates did not maintain a clear focus on the specific wording of the question and instead treated it as a multi-factor debate and sometimes concluded that an alternative factor was most significant. This did impact achievement by undermining judgements as well as using up valuable time on material that was not relevant to the question.

#### **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

##### **Section A**

##### **Value of Source Question (1(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))**

- 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
- Where you are asked to debate the relative significance of two factors, keep focused on them – there is no reward for coming up with an alternative
- 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.

