



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International  
Advanced Level In History (WHI02)

Paper 1B: China, 1900–76

## **Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications**

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).

## **Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere**

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

Summer 2023

Publications Code WHI02\_1B\_2306\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2023

## **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 1B which covers the option: China, 1900–76. 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 the Boxer Rebellion for foreigners in China in 1900. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the threats made to foreigners as Boxers chanted 'Kill! Kill! Kill!', and the fear felt by foreigners that meant they would 'feel safer' if they had 'a machine gun'. Some candidates made good use of reference to the captives taken by the foreigners to infer that they were not completely paralysed by fear. 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 a vacuum with no consideration of what it might be useful for. 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 animosity felt by the Boxers to foreigners, particularly a rejection of Christianity, and the encouragement they had from the Qing which motivated their attacks on the foreigners' compound as well as the death of the German diplomat to explain inferences about the nature of the threat to foreigners and its seriousness. 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 in a diary, could provide an immediate reaction of a foreigner targeted by the Boxers and therefore would offer an insight that was not affected by knowledge of the event that she acquired later. Some of the best answers were able to refer to some balance in her account as she claimed that not all the angry noises belonged to the Boxers. 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 role of the USA in the outcome of the Civil War in the years 1946-49. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that the GMD was dependent upon American aid and that its withdrawal was a major cause of the defeat of Chaing's regime.

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. 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, 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. 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 authorship of the source and argued that as a reporter for the Comintern, Peng would inevitably support communism against 'American imperialism' but that there was a measure of balance because Peng had been expelled from the CPP over a decade earlier and therefore could not be classed as an agent of Mao. 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, Peng's anti-American and anti-GMD credentials could be demonstrated by his reference to how 'the US plotted' a compromise and its focus on Chiang's corruption.

## **Question 2**

This was the least popular essay question on the paper with just 3 responses. These candidates did not display a firm grasp of the topic and would have neem netter serve by selecting from the other two essay question on the paper.

## **Question 3**

A small number of candidates selected this question. Most of the responses scored in levels 3 and 4. These candidates were able to address the question with a focus on the extent to which cultural influences in China changed in the years 1900-49. Candidates considered changing political influences such as ideas about democracy, the influence of the May the Fourth Movement and the rise of nationalism and Marxism, social changes that affected women including foot binding, western influences such as increased access to western education and changing religious influences such as Confucianism and Christianity. A few candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the dates and wrote at considerable length on changes under Mao. 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**

The great majority of candidates answered this question. Most candidates were able to focus on Mao's control over the governing of China and assess whether he was able to establish complete control in the years 1949-76. Many candidates approached the question by considering the extent to which Mao devised and directed policy and assessed the extent of his control. Candidates referred to his role in the Three and Five Antis Campaigns and the Hundred Flowers Campaign, his influence over the Great Leap Forward, its disastrous outcome and his decision to step back in 1962, his role in launching and directing the Cultural Revolution as well as the positions he held in the party and government. Candidates contrasted Mao's control with the influence of leading communists such as Liu Shaoqi, Zhou En-lai, Deng Xiaoping, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing. Many candidates drew secure judgements in level 4 by successfully establishing and applying valid criteria to assess whether Mao had complete control. Where candidates achieved in the lower levels, it was often the result of imprecise or insufficient knowledge and a failure to address the focus on the question – often considering success or failure rather than extent of control.

#### **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.

