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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in  
History (WHI02/1B)

Paper 2: Breadth Study with Source Evaluation

Option 1B: China, 1900-76

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January 2024

Publications Code WHI02\_1B\_2401\_ER

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## **Examiner Report: WHI02 1B China, 1900-76**

### **Introduction**

It was pleasing this January to see a number of well-informed and well-written responses from candidates on IAS Paper WHI02 1B which covers 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.

Although the January entry is much smaller than the summer entry, performance had much common with previous series. Candidates continue to find Section A more challenging than Section B. Some candidates are still not clear on what is meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. Candidates do need to be aware that in addressing question 1a) 'value' means that they need to focus on the strengths of the source, in the light of their contextual knowledge, which give it value and that there are no marks available in the mark scheme for consideration of limitations, whereas in addressing question 1b 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 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 allowed all abilities to be catered for. Furthermore, in Section B, many responses had an analytical focus and fewer 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.

It remains important to note that Section A topics are drawn from highlighted topics on the specification whereas 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. There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

### **Question 1a)**

Most candidates produced answers that achieved at good level 2 and into level 3. Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the impact of the Cultural Revolution on families. At level 3, candidates were able to draw out valid inferences from the source evidence, including the evidence of the damaged relationships between children and parents and the suggestion that Mao's ideology was more influential than the beliefs of family members. The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. Candidates were most likely to achieve level 3 by drawing out inferences and commenting on provenance. Fewer candidates applied secure contextual knowledge to develop inferences. Some candidates did include free standing knowledge about the Cultural Revolution, often about education but less often about family relationships. Candidates need to remember that they must consider value in the light of the content and their contextual knowledge as well as the provenance of the source. Many candidates made good use of the provenance of the source to explain its value, referring to the personal experience and time to reflect as well as the candid views expressed in the source. Those candidates who discussed the limitations could not be rewarded for that part of their answer as it is not the focus of 1a responses.

### **Question 1 (b)**

Candidates understood the source material and were able to select from it to develop some inferences about the impact of the Great Leap Forward. Most candidates achieved in level 3 and level 4. Most candidates considered the strengths and limitations of the source, and many used this to comment on the weight that should be attached to the source for the enquiry. Many referred to the expert knowledge that would be possessed by Kissinger as a leading US statesman and expert in foreign affairs, who had visited China and met with Mao. Some contrasted these strengths with weaknesses noting that his visit took place a decade after the Great Leap Forward and that as an American he was bound to be critical of a communist economic policy. Less effective answers tended to evaluate by referring to adding and subtracting weight, whilst the most effective developed criteria for judgement. Some candidates were able to draw out inferences from the source, such as the deterioration of relations between China and the USSR, and use their contextual knowledge to interrogate the evidence and inferences and then use that as a basis to distinguish between fact and opinion when reaching an overall judgement on weight. This is a very effective way of tackling the part b question.

## **Question 2**

This was the most popular question on the paper with more than half of all candidates selecting it. Most candidates achieved in levels 3 and 4 and showed that they understood the focus of the question and its second-order concept – causation – and were able to draw on knowledge of a range of reasons why China was weakened in the years 1900-19. Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of why the Boxer Rebellion weakened China, including the financial damage of the Protocol, the foreign concessions and the spreads of revolutionary ideas, and contrasted this with weaknesses caused by the role played by Yuan Shikai and the intervention of the Japanese in China, including the Twenty-One Points and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and used this as the basis to reach a judgment as to which was the main reason why China was weakened in the period. The best candidates were able to develop secure criteria to develop and support their judgement.

## **Question 3**

A small number of candidates selected this essay question. Whilst some candidates were well prepared for this topic, some were not and achieved in level 1. Well-prepared candidates were able to focus on the second-order concept – consequence- and could draw upon a range of knowledge to consider whether Chiang Kai-Shek succeeded in restoring order in the years 1927-37. Candidates referred to Chiang's success in subduing the warlords, his expulsion of the Communists from the Jianxi Soviet and his initial restoration of finances and contrasted this with his failure to deal with the Japanese invasion and the survival of the CCP under Mao. Some candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the dates and wrote at length about the civil war 1945-49 and/or about the relationship between Chiang and Sun Yat-sen in the early 1920s. This material was outside of the parameters of the question and could not be credited.

## **Question 4**

A small number of candidates selected this essay question. For those candidates who possessed very little knowledge of religion under Mao's regime, this was not a good choice. Those candidates who were well prepared for assessing whether the Communist regime was successful in suppressing all religions between 1949 and 1976 were able to focus effectively on the second-order concept – consequence – and consider the success of the ban on Buddhism, the denunciation of Confucianism, and the attacks on the Christian and Muslim religions compared to the failures in terms of the survival of Buddhist practices, the continued influence of Confucian ideas and the necessity to allow mosques to remain open in areas bordering the Soviet Union and Pakistan. It is beneficial for candidates to plan their answers briefly before

writing. This not only ensures focus on the question but also helps candidates to pick the question best suited to them.

### **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
- 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 deficiencies 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
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- Knowledge should be integrated with the source evidence, to discuss the inferences drawn and their validity in the light of the contextual understanding 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
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source. However, simply stating that a source is limited because it does not cover certain events or developments does not establish weight since no source can be comprehensive.

## **Section B**

### Essay questions

- Candidates must provide more factual details as evidence. 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
- Pay careful attention to the date range in the question. Plan the answer with a focus on this range and avoid lengthy exploration of events outside of the time period set
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.

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