



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson International Advanced Subsidiary  
PAPER 2: Breadth Study with Source  
Evaluation

Option 1B: China, 1900–76

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## **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 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 could 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. 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. 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. 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 dates set in the question. 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 responses to the Hundred Flowers Campaign. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the opportunity to remind the CCP that it depended on the support of the people for its power and the ability to criticise the Party enabled by the Campaign. 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 to discuss the reaction by Mao who had not expected personal criticism to develop their inferences. 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 a few 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, a newspaper editor belonging to a party that was in partnership with the CCP, and developing this by acknowledging that, with clear criticism in the content of the source, overall, it has a ring of truth about it. 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 reasons for the Boxer Rising in 1900. Candidates made good use of the source to infer that the Boxers were driven by religious fervour and hatred of foreigners.

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 develop religious causes with reference to the Boxers' belief in Buddhism and their animosity to Christianity and their interpretation of events as being determined by the gods and use this to interrogate the material in the source. In this way, many candidates did show an awareness of the values and concerns of the time and access level 4. 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. Many candidates referred to the propagandistic nature of the source and its anonymity and the impact this had on its validity. 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 subjective views, it is important that they refer to them specifically in their answer to support their evaluation.

## **Question 2**

This was the least popular essay question on the paper with just two responses. The best of these was well focused with good knowledge of both river traffic and railways and was able to consider their relative significance in the development of China's economy and reach a judgement.

## **Question 3**

Most of the responses to this question scored in level 3. These candidates were able to address the question with a focus on consequences of the Japanese expansion in China in 1931-45 and to consider whether the strengthening of the CCP was the main consequence. Most candidates contrasted this with the weakening of the GMD and some strong answers also considered other consequences such as those of the war, including the death toll. Some candidates wrote about civil war, but this was out of period and could not be rewarded. 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 the consequences of the Cultural Revolution and discuss whether the main consequence was the strengthening of Mao's control over China. Candidates considered the impact it had on Mao's position, including the development of the cult of personality, the removal of rivals, including Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, and the influence he held over the Red Guard. Answers achieving well in levels 3 and 4, contrasted the strengthening of Mao's power with other consequences, including impact on education and health care, the rise of the Gang of Four and the economic disruption. Where candidates achieved in the lower levels, it was often the result of imprecise or insufficient knowledge and a failure to address the focus of 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
- 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.

