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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In History (WHI03/1C)

Paper 1C: Thematic Study with Source Evaluation

Option 1C: Germany: United, Divided and
Reunited, 1870–1990

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Principal Examiner Report WHI03 C

There was a relatively small entry for this series for WHI03 1C. Most candidates were able to finish the paper and knowledge was generally focused appropriately. WHI03 1C is divided into two sections. Section A comprises a compulsory source based question and assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B consists of two essay questions of which the student is expected to answer one of them. They will assess the knowledge and understanding of the period in breadth (AO1). Questions, in this section, will be set so that they connect two or more of the key topics in the specification and will target a range of concepts which might include cause, consequence, significance, similarity/difference and change/continuity.

The time available for the paper did allow candidates the opportunity to plan their work and many took advantage of this as evidenced by the plans included. Also this helped to keep the candidates focused more clearly on the task in hand. Most plans were of a reasonable length and detail so as to outline the overall argument but occasionally they became so lengthy that they constricted the time available to actually write the response. However, it would be advisable for candidates to spend a short while getting their thoughts in order before writing their answers. This would be relevant to both sections of the paper.

In general, it was section A that seemed to present the greater challenge to the candidates as they had to consider two primary sources and their use to the historian in investigating an historical issue. There was some evidence that greater familiarity with this type of question was resulting in less very weak, generalised and ill focused answers. However, difficulties were still encountered in moving beyond surface comprehension of the sources and evaluation which was little more than either stereotypical judgements or, at best, questionable assumptions drawn from the sources. This was particularly the case when dealing with the provenance of the sources where unsupported references to the bias in a source continue but with little reward. Those that were more successful drew inferences from the sources and interrogated the evidence with support from relevant contextual knowledge that was applied to illuminate the points being made. The question requires candidates to use the sources 'together' and it was pleasing to see that some of the candidates continue to be aware of this requirement. It can be achieved using a variety of different approaches. However, a significant number treated the sources separately making it much more difficult to access the highest levels.

In section B centres do need to be aware that questions can address the same time periods from the specification and that there is no requirement to always

cover all key topics in an individual paper. Section B responses generally scored higher marks as there was much greater development and engagement with the stated issues in the questions and a clear awareness of the conceptual focus. Many responses showed good knowledge of the periods studied and were able to develop arguments which crossed and linked the key topics being considered. However there were still some answers which only dealt with part of the time periods being questioned about, making it difficult for these to score highly. Although some essays remained predominantly narrative they were in a minority. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-points which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these descriptors progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

Comments on Individual questions.

Question 1.

For question 1 stronger responses showed a clear understanding of both sources, used them together and were able to draw out and support inferences from them that related to the reasons why Bismarck introduced the Anti-Socialist Law (1878). Both sources were full of possibilities to draw inferences and to link these to the utility of the sources to the historian in the context of the enquiry, e.g. It implies that the proposals before the Reichstag are entirely limited and reasonable ('The Anti-Socialist Law we propose has a precisely defined purpose'). Moreover, the best answers produced thoughtful observations concerning the provenance of the sources to help judge how far the historian could make use of them to consider the enquiry. Good contextual knowledge was deployed to discuss the strengths of the evidence and some consideration was given to interpreting the material in the context of the values and concerns of the society from which it was derived, e.g. Bismarck frequently used the threat of either real or imagined Reichsfeinde to rally the support of the German people. The very best interrogated the evidence and made clear supported judgements which weighed up the strengths or otherwise of the material in relation to the enquiry under consideration. The latter point is important as the focus of responses needs to be directly on the area of enquiry asked in the question.

Weaker responses appeared in a number of different forms. There were those where paraphrasing of the sources dominated and very few, if any, inferences relevant to the stated issue were made. In these types of responses contextual knowledge was often limited and, if evident, used to simply expand, confirm or

challenge matters of detail in the sources. On occasions the answers drifted away from the focus on the reasons for Bismarck introducing the Anti-Socialist Law(1878) to the detriment of the overall mark. Moreover many responses focused too much attention on what the sources left out and used this as the basis for their evaluation. Unless candidates can show that omissions are deliberate, this line of argument carries little value. Source material cannot be expected to include everything, so observing that the source does not mention a specific point, unless being used for an example of deliberate omission is unlikely to be valid criteria for judgement. Candidates are asked to evaluate what is there rather than what is not. If the author of the source has omitted something intentionally in order to modify meaning or distort the message of the source, then it will be relevant to discuss that in reaching a conclusion. However, discussion of all the things that the sources might have contained but failed to do so is unlikely to help in developing the argument. This approach was still evident this year, although less so than previously.

Furthermore, in some responses there was considerable knowledge displayed and focused on the specified enquiry but with almost no or exceptionally limited references to the sources. As this question is targeting AO2 (analysis and evaluation of source material) these kinds of responses cannot score highly. Moreover, in a number of cases knowledge displayed didn't relate to the sources but explored Bismarck's Germany more generally. In other instances, where utility was addressed through the provenance it was often based on either stereotypical judgements or questionable assumptions. This often took the form of undeveloped comments such as Helldorff-Bedra was a conservative and so was a friend of Bismarck (Source 1) or Bebel was a socialist and so untrustworthy (Source 2).

Question 2

This was the most popular of the two questions. The question considered how accurate it was to say that the most important factor explaining how the Nazis achieved power during 1933 was the features of the Weimar Constitution (1919). Stronger responses clearly addressed the question across the whole period and often engaged with clear criteria to highlight points made. However there were very few of these. Stronger answers assessed the importance of the features of the Weimar Constitution, focusing on areas such as the voting system and the use of Article 48. This was then weighed up against other issues such as the role of Hitler and others, the role of economic circumstances and the part played by effective propaganda. The very best answers were wide-ranging in the evidence they assembled and sustained in their argument.

Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also found it harder to outline the key difficulties experienced and so struggled to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses only engaged with one side of an argument or focused on material predominantly from outside the dates in the question. This limited severely their ability to score highly.

Question 3

This question was less popular and asked candidates to look at how accurate it was to say that political repression was more effective in Nazi Germany than it was in the GDR. Stronger answers discussed and compared the effectiveness of the methods used to repress across both periods focusing on areas such as dealing with political opponents, police and security networks and the overhauling of the respective political systems. Counterarguments considered the limitations to repression including the use of populist economic policies to maintain support in Nazi Germany and the more overt forms of opposition in the GDR, especially after 1985. The very best answers were discursive, wide-ranging in the evidence they assembled and sustained in their argument.

Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also found it more difficult to bring in supporting examples from across the whole period and this made it harder to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses only engaged with one side of an argument or focused on material predominantly from events outside the dates in the question. This limited severely their ability to score highly.

Candidates are offered the following advice for the future:

Section A

- Candidates need to draw from the sources inferences that are both supported and relevant to the enquiry in the question. These inferences should be developed through the use of contextual knowledge which is relevant to the enquiry in the question
- Candidates need to move beyond stereotypical judgements or assumptions that are questionable and unsupported when engaging with the provenance of the source. References to the biased nature of sources must be explained and supported in the context of the enquiry in the question
- Candidates need to consider the weight the evidence has in helping them reach judgements relevant to the enquiry. This needs to move beyond simply stating it carries weight to an explanation as to how
- Candidates should consider the stance or purpose of the author of the source and be aware how this might be affected by the values and concerns of the society at the time it was produced
- Sources should be interrogated with distinctions being made between such things as claims and opinions. The sources should be used together at some point in the answer
- Candidates must avoid engaging with the enquiry simply from their knowledge. The answer needs to be focused on how the sources help the historian and knowledge used to discuss the inferences or points arising from the sources.

Section B

- Candidates need to read the question carefully so as to fully understand the time periods being considered and the full range of issues that they are being asked to consider
- Candidates would benefit from taking some time to plan their answers. As the examination is quite generous in its time allocation this would still allow plenty of time to write the answers

- Candidates should consider what criteria might be used to shape or reinforce the judgements being made. For example in a continuity/change question such criteria as political, social or economic, if relevant, might help to provide a framework
- Candidates need to avoid description and develop analytical responses which make clear and supported judgements relevant to the question
- Candidates should try to establish links between the arguments being made and, if relevant, weigh up the relative importance of them.

