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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
History(WHI03) Paper 1D

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Introduction

There was a reasonably large entry for this series for WHIO3 1D. Most candidates were able to finish the paper and knowledge was generally focused appropriately. WHIO3 1D 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. 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 many candidates are 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 better 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 one of the time periods being asked 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.

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 which related to the reasons why Barack Obama won the presidential election in 2008. Both sources were full of possibilities to draw inferences and to link these to the utility to the historian in the context of the enquiry, e.g. It implies that McCain was unlucky but also misread the mood of the nation ('economic collapse... the middle of the general election campaign.', 'pledged not to leave Iraq without a victory'). 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. Obama's use of new social media platforms allowed him to portray himself as the candidate representing the younger generation. 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 why Barack Obama won the presidential election in 2008 and concentrated on him winning the Democratic party nomination instead, 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 doesn't 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.

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 American politics 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 comments such as the author is writing for a newspaper so he could be making things up (Source 1) or Politico was an online magazine and the internet lacks reliability (Source 2).

Question 2

This was quite a popular question. The question considered whether the main problems facing black Americans, in the years 1865–77 and 1883–1900, were economic rather than political. Stronger responses clearly compared the two time periods and considered key areas such as the economic policies of the reconstruction and Jim Crow eras as well as their effectiveness. Counterarguments relating to the political problems across the two periods focused on such issues as the continuing racial tensions at the heart of politics, the role of southern Democrats in influencing policy, white supremacists, and limited progress in breaking down segregation in the face of Supreme Court rulings. These were often discussed well and in great detail. The very best 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 clearly the difference between economic and political policies and so simply became a narrative of policies across the periods of time which didn't really address the issues as problems. These responses struggled to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses only engaged with one side of an argument and so limited severely their ability to score highly.

Question 3

This question was also popular and asked candidates to look at whether Martin Luther King made the most significant contribution to improving the lives of black Americans in the years 1933–68. Strong answers successfully discussed in detail the contribution of Martin Luther King and weighed this up against other groups, individuals or factors. Other issues considered ranged from the work of other campaigning groups such as NAACP, SNCC and CORE, the work of campaigners like Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt and Malcolm X, Presidents and the rulings of the Supreme Court. However some good answers didn't address the earlier period after 1933 and so candidates need to be reminded to consider the whole period. The very best 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 more difficult to bring in relevant supporting examples from across the whole period and this made it harder to make supported judgements related to the question. In some responses knowledge of the work of Martin Luther King seemed to be lacking and so 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.

