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# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

## Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
In History (WHI03) Paper 1B  
Thematic Study with Source Evaluation  
The British Experience of Warfare, 1803–1945

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## Principal Examiner Report

WHI03 1B 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 candidate 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. However, this was not the case with all and 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 and ill focused answers. Difficulties were 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.

Section B responses generally scored higher marks as there was much greater focus and engagement with the stated issues in the questions. Many responses showed good knowledge of the periods studied and were able to develop arguments which crossed the key topics being considered. 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 and were able to draw out inferences from them which related to the abilities of Douglas Haig as a military leader. 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. Buchan worked closely with Haig and was clearly trusted by him as he drafted his military communiques). 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. Therefore some students focused successfully on the extent of criticism as shown in the Hudson source or the praise for the personal qualities and style of leadership as shown by Buchan. 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. 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 a valid criteria for judgement. Candidates are asked to evaluate what is there rather than what is not.

However, 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. In other instances, where utility was addressed through the provenance it was often based on either stereotypical judgements or questionable assumptions such as Buchan was writing in 1940 and so had forgotten what really happened or Hudson had fought at the Somme and so knew Haig personally.

## Question 2

This was the most popular of the two questions. The question considered whether the candidates agreed with the statement that the ability of the British army to fight successfully in both the Crimean and Boer wars was compromised by poor military leadership and inadequate government support. Stronger responses clearly weighed up the two issues in both periods, established criteria such as success on the battlefield or supply line considerations to judge success and even considered the impact of individual politicians such as Palmerston or Chamberlain. Key areas such as supplies, taxation and difficulties experienced in developing winning tactics were explored and discussed using valid criteria to judge success.

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 often only considered one of the time periods in any depth and so made it difficult to address all its demands and to make supported judgements relevant to the question.

## Question 3

There were fewer responses to this question in which candidates had to consider whether the significance of the female contribution to the war effort was greater in the years 1914-18 or 1939-45. Strong answers successfully considered the female contribution both at home and abroad during both periods to make judgements about the significance of their contribution. The best answers considered, weighed up and linked such issues as the contribution of females in the workplace, in recruiting and in maintaining morale. Judgements made were clear, well supported and based on clear criteria such as economic or psychological.

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 bring in supporting examples from across the two periods and this made it harder to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses showed little understanding of the female contribution and so limited severely their ability to score highly.

Students are offered the following advice for the future:

### Section A

- Candidates need to draw from the sources inferences that are 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.
- Candidates need to consider the weight the evidence has in helping them reach judgements relevant to the enquiry.
- 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 from which it is drawn.
- 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 criteria such 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.

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