



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In History (Modular) (4WHI1)
Unit 1: Depth Studies

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Paper 1 : Depth Studies

The assessment requirement was that candidates answer a set of questions from **two** options from a choice of eight. The most popular options were:

Option 3 : Germany: development of dictatorship, 1918-45

Option 6 : A world divided: superpower relations, 1943-72

Option 7 : A divided union: civil rights in the USA, 1945-74

Option 5: Dictatorship and conflict in the USSR, 1924–53

The most popular combination of options was:

Option 3 and 6

Option 3 and 7.

All eight options required candidates to answer three sub-questions on the option topic. Each question had a different focus and tested a range of assessment objectives. Question (a) required candidates to identify the impression given by an author based on a small written extract and tested AO4. Question (b) required candidates to explain two effects and tested AO1 and AO2. Question (ci) and (cii) required candidates explain, analyse and make judgements about key features, events, causes, effects and significance and tested AO1 and AO2.

General comments

Across all eight options the following generic comments in relation to each sub question should be noted:

In question (a) selecting information to support the impression will limit the answer to marks within level 2; to move into level 3 the answer requires analysis of how the impression has been created by consideration of the author's selection of evidence, tone, emphasis or omission.

In question (b) knowledge of the effect is not in itself sufficient, there is a requirement to explain the effect in terms of how the given issue in the question has led to/brought about the outcome(s).

In question (c) knowledge needs to be used to develop an answer that considers the issue raised by the question and a criteria-based judgement is made. As well as the precise issue the question is focused on, candidates should pay careful attention to the requisite second-order concept (i.e. causation, consequence, significance), and the given date range.

Option 3: Germany: development of dictatorship, 1918-45

This option was attempted by many candidates and on the whole was answered well.

In question (a) most candidates were able to identify the impression given by the author about the reorganisation of the Nazi Party, typically focusing on something along the lines of it having been successful, or was well-planned to allow Hitler complete control. Candidates who scored marks in level 2 (3-4 marks) were able to support their inference of the impression by selecting examples of language used by the author. Those candidates who moved into level 3 (5-6 marks) also considered the author's treatment, emphasis and selection of material in order to explicitly show aspects of how the author created the impression that was inferred. Many candidates attempted to ensure higher level marks by considering both the use of language to create an impression, and the inclusion/omission of material (generally the latter), and most were successful in this.

In question (b) most candidates were able to offer material to explain the effects of the Nuremberg Laws. What differentiated candidates was the relevance/accuracy of the information they used (AO1) and the extent of the explanation in relation to the outcome (AO2). With regards to the former, most were able to draw upon relevant issues, e.g. the impact on marriage or citizenship, although a number did include material concerning the treatment of Jews which was not part of the Nuremberg Laws, e.g. Kristallnacht, the treatment of Jews in the Second World War, or more generalised aspects of persecution. Other responses were effective in achieving high marks by clearly demonstrating how the Nuremberg Laws established legal distinctions in the status of Jews, which in turn had secondary effects which further increased discrimination.

In question (c) candidates who clearly focused material towards the question from the start of points tended to do better. The strongest responses were able to sustain a focus on the demands of the question, deploying knowledge to discussion of the appropriate second-order concept, e.g. significance or causation. Some responses included effective judgements at the end of each point, e.g. explaining the relative importance of the point under discussion.

On (ci), most students were fairly secure in their knowledge of hyperinflation, and the majority of these were able to focus this sufficiently to the question's demands and demonstrate how it was a problem for the Weimar Republic. Candidates chose a range of other points, e.g. the Treaty of Versailles, Ruhr Occupation, threats from left and right, and the weaknesses of the Weimar Constitution. A good number really began to analyse the relative importance of these reasons.

On (cii), most candidates were able to offer material on allied bombing, along with other aspects of the German Home Front, most typically rationing and the role of women. A small minority strayed beyond the focus of the home front, e.g. attempting to discuss the Eastern Front or other aspects of the wider war, although the majority offered a range of relevant material. Those who did so and were able to focus this on an analysis of significance were more likely to secure marks in level 4.

Option 5: Dictatorship and conflict in the USSR, 1924–53

In question (a) most candidates were able to identify a valid impression, typically along the lines of the changes to education being a failure or chaotic. Many supported this by selecting the author's language, and those who explicitly considered how the author's choice of words or selection of material helped form this impression moved into level 3 (5-6 marks).

In question (b) most candidates were able to offer material focused on the effects of the Cult of Personality, although a minority did demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of this part of the specification. The majority were able to show knowledge of and explain relevant issues, e.g. Stalin's portrayal as a heroic saviour.

In question (ci) candidates generally had good knowledge of collectivisation and its various consequences, although in general, candidates tended to be stronger on factors other than the given issue of living conditions. That said, the majority did manage to offer some focused explanation and analysis on the given consequence, as well as other consequences, most typically the removal of kulaks, the impact on grain production, and to a lesser extent, political control.

In (cii) many candidates showed good knowledge and a clear analytical focus, with precise and well-reasoned argument. Candidates seemed secure on the purges, and most were able to link this as a cause for the difficulties faced in 1941-42. Most also dealt well with Stalin's leadership as a reason for setbacks in the initial part of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Second World War, although a minority offered generalisations about Stalin's leadership that were less securely linked to the specific question. The most commonly considered other factors were the nature / effectiveness of German forces in Operation Barbarossa, and weaknesses resulting from the preparedness of the Soviet economy.

Option 6: A world divided: superpower relations, 1943-72

This option was attempted by many candidates and on the whole was answered well.

In question (a) most candidates were able to identify a valid impression, typically along the lines of the SALT talks having been difficult or largely ineffective. Many supported this by selecting the author's language, and those who explicitly considered how the author's choice of words or selection of material helped form this impression moved into level 3 (5-6 marks).

In question (b) most candidates demonstrated understanding of the arms race, and were able to offer effects of this. Many candidates emphasised how it increased tension, or that it made direct conflict less likely. What tended to distinguish between the success of responses was the extent to which explanations were clearly focused on the effect on the Cold War in the 1950s, and the quality of supporting knowledge related to this. Some candidates wrote about the arms race in the 1940s or the Cuban Missile Crisis. The majority were able to reference relevant examples, such as the development of hydrogen bombs, or the emphasis on delivery systems.

In question (ci) candidates generally had good knowledge of relevant issues, with candidates typically writing about issues such as the blockade of Berlin, or the expansion of Soviet influence in the satellite states to support explanation and analysis of the given reason. In terms of other factors, bizonia and the actions of the Western Allies in the Western zones of Germany, Marshall Aid, and the initial decisions made concerning Germany in 1945 were commonly cited. Most candidates were able to thus offer a good range of material, and those who were able to shape this to the demands of the question consistently, and reach clear judgments the importance of these reasons, were best placed to achieve the highest marks.

In (cii) many candidates showed good knowledge and a clear analytical focus, with issues covered including a reduction in Cold War tension, ending, or at least it significantly reducing, the refugee crisis and its impact on East Germany, humiliation for the communist powers, the impact on the population of the German states, and relations between the two countries. A small minority of responses did conflate or confuse material relating to the first Berlin Crisis.

Option 7: A divided union: civil rights in the USA, 1945-74

In question (a) many candidates were able to identify an impression given by the author regarding the Ku Klux Klan, such as it was violent or brought fear in others. The vast majority of candidates were able to support these using evidence from the extract, and many demonstrated how this had been created by emphasising the language used by the author, or with reference to selection of material.

In question (b) most candidates were able to write about relevant effects of Martin Luther King's contribution, with common points being that his efforts brought support, led to legislative changes, or increased media attention. Some candidates strayed into material from the 1950s, but most were able to offer material to the specified period in the question, the 1960s.

In question (ci) tended to well answered, with most candidates being able to offer focused reasons for the downfall of McCarthy. Alongside the given points of the role of the media and the army, candidates typically covered increasing repugnance at McCarthy's manner and methods, and how the lack of credible evidence demonstrated the exaggerated nature of the red scare. A minority of less successful responses lacked secure material on McCarthy's attack on the army and the hearings, or how the media increasingly opposed him and exposed his methods. Stronger responses, whilst also being secure on such issues, tended to explore the interaction between different factors.

In question (cii) most candidates were able to cover a range of consequences of the women's movement. Most tended to illustrate and examine the given consequence of opposition via consideration of Phyllis Schlafly and Stop-ERA, and or the reaction to more radical aspects of the women's movement. Most candidates were able to offer material on other issues, e.g. legal, social and economic changes, or active membership of women's groups. Stronger responses, as well as offering more specific detail, were more likely to analyse the relative importance of these changes.

Sample scripts:

The answer for question (a) saw the candidate identify an impression with some support, to achieve a level 2 mark. In question (b) the candidate was able to identify two effects. The response attempts to use knowledge to explain how Potsdam brought about these effects, but does not fully develop these, and so achieves a lower level 3. In question (c) the candidate understands the question's analytical demands and attempts to develop the consequences of the Berlin Crisis, producing a response which achieves secure level 3. The explanation is mainly directed at the demands of the question, and sound accurate and relevant material is used, although it could be more precisely selected and developed.

The answer for question (a) saw the candidate identify an impression and support it with detail from the extract and consider emphasis and selection and achieve a top level 3 mark. In question (b) the candidate was able to identify two effects support them with knowledge and show how they led to an outcome and so satisfied fully the requirements of level 3. In question (c) the candidate accessed the top of level 4 as there was analytical explanation, accurate and precisely selected information and a judgement. Criteria for the judgement were offered and justified.

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Summary

- In general, candidates who used their time effectively did best, e.g. through not writing excessive amounts for the a) and b) questions, to ensure sufficient time for the c) essay questions
- For a) questions, candidates do not need to demonstrate multiple impressions – it is better to clearly explain one, and try to demonstrate how it has been deliberately created, e.g. via the author's use of language or selection of material
- Responses which focused carefully on the precise demands of the question were more successful, e.g. for the b) question, ensuring that they write about not just the event or issues behind the effect, but the effect on what exactly
- Similarly for the c) question, ensuring the response is consistently focused on the appropriate second-order consequence, e.g. cause, consequence or significance
- For c) questions, candidates who reach and explain judgements at the end of the paragraphs in the main body of their essay (e.g. each reason or consequence), are generally best placed to give a conclusion which weighs these up.

