



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2021

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in
History (4HI1 2A)

PAPER 2: Investigation Studies

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Paper 2A: Investigations

This paper was sat by a relatively small number of candidates.

Candidates were required to answer on one of five options:

A1 The origins and course of the First World War, 1905–18

A2 Russia and the Soviet Union, 1905–24

A3 The USA, 1918–41

A4 The Vietnam Conflict, 1945–75

A5 East Germany, 1958–90

In each option candidates were required to answer three sub-questions.

Question (a) addressed AO1 and required candidates to describe features of one of two alternatives given.

Question (b) addressed AO1 and AO2 and required candidates to consider the degree of support offered by Source A to the evidence in Source B.

Question (c) addressed AO3 and AO4 and required candidates to analyse and evaluate a historical interpretation using the two sources provided, a recent extract and their contextual knowledge.

The majority of candidates answered questions on the First World War, with a smaller number answering on Russia and the USA and a handful selecting Vietnam. There were no answers on East Germany.

General comments

An analysis of this year's performance suggests that candidates would benefit from further consideration of the following:

- Ensuring that in question (a) two features are being addressed. This can easily be achieved by candidates using terms such as 'one feature...' 'another feature...' or simply started another paragraph.
- Understanding that to score highest marks in question (b), candidates must do more than show support and lack of it. Once that exercise has been done, candidates need to reach an overall judgement on the extent of the support.
- Understanding that in question (c), if top marks are to be achieved, the response must reach a conclusion on the extent to which the interpretation is valid and the line of reasoning is logically structured and fully supported.

A1 The origins and course of the First World War, 1905–18

Most candidates chose to answer question (a) on Passchendaele and demonstrated excellent knowledge of the conditions in which the battle was fought, the strategy behind the battle and the heavy price paid for limited gains. Candidates who chose to answer on the naval race often provided accurate detail on the relative strengths of the two navies and the improved technology exemplified in the building of Dreadnoughts. However, a minority of candidates answered not on the naval race, but on the use of the two navies during the war. Such responses could not receive reward.

Question (b) was well-answered, with the vast majority of candidates noting agreement between the sources on, for example, the difficult nature of the terrain and the strong resistance offered by the Turks, whilst at the same time showing that there was not support in relation to the preparedness of the Turks or the inexperience of the Allied troops. However, very few candidates considered the extent of support and whether there was predominantly support in Source A or predominantly lack of it.

Question (c) produced a wide variety of responses. There were a number of excellent responses which drew upon the candidates' knowledge, the extract and the sources to produce arguments for and against the interpretation and then provided criteria by which an overall judgement could be made. Other responses explained arguments for and against the interpretation but failed to reach an overall conclusion and so received less reward. A minority of candidates based their answers solely on what the information provided and failed to use their own knowledge. Other less well-rewarded responses failed to address both sides of the argument and sought solely to prove the validity of the interpretation given.

A2 Russia and the Soviet Union, 1905–24

There were some excellent responses to the questions in this option. Both Stolypin and the Constituent Assembly were well-known and most candidates were able to describe two features of their chosen topic.

In Question (b) candidates were able to show similarities in terms of the appalling living conditions and growing opposition to the government, but also note that Rasputin was considered a major reason for discontent in Source A but did not get a mention in Source B. More candidates looked to consider the extent of support in this option, but they still constituted a minority.

Question (c) was particularly well-answered, with many candidates having substantial knowledge of the reasons for the abdication, though a few candidates provided solely contextual knowledge and neglected to bring evidence from the sources and extract into their response.

A3 The USA, 1918–41

Answers in this option were less secure than those in options 1 and 2. Candidates knew quite a lot about advertising, though there were many anachronistic references to television advertising. Hoover was less well-known and responses tended to concentrate on how he was an uncaring supporter of laissez-faire who took no action to alleviate the economic depression. Such a view is not historically valid.

Question (b) was generally well-answered, though some candidates failed to restrict their answers to considering the beliefs of the Klan and noted similarity and difference in attitudes towards them or in their impact.

Question (c) saw a thorough 'trawling' of the sources and the extract to show that in some sectors of society there was more support than in others (a very valid criterion for making a judgement) but contextual knowledge of attitudes to the Klan was sometimes missing. The fact that the Klan asserted great influence in some aspect of local government was taken as evidence of support, though that was not necessarily the case.

A4 The Vietnam Conflict, 1945–75

A very small number of candidates selected this option. Those that did were much stronger on university protests than the Geneva Conference. Candidates noted the agreement between Sources A and B that Operation Rolling Thunder caused widespread damage but was far from a complete success. Few candidates, however, explained how the sources differed or that there were elements

in Source A (such as how difficult it was to bomb certain targets) which Source B did not corroborate.

Question (c) produced some very good responses, with best answers focussing on the words of the 14 year-old girl to show how the morale of the North Vietnamese was not destroyed by the bombing. Some very good contextual knowledge was shown.

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