



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

Option 2C.1: France in revolution, 1774-99

Option 2C.2: Russia in revolution, 1894-
1924

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Introduction

GCE A level paper 9HI0 2C deals with France in revolution, 1774-99 (2C.1) and Russia in revolution, 1894-1924 (2C.2).

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory question which is based on two linked sources. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and there was little evidence of candidates being unable to attempt both answers within the time allocated. Examiners did note that more scripts than has been usual posed some problems with the legibility of handwriting. Examiners can only give credit for what they can read.

In Section A, the strongest answers demonstrated an ability to draw out reasoned inferences developed from the sources and to evaluate the sources thoroughly in relation to the demands of the question on the basis of both contextual knowledge and the nature, origin and purpose of the source. It is important that candidates appreciate that weight is not necessarily established by a discussion of what is missing from a source. 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 omission in reaching a conclusion regarding the use that a historian might make of the sources. However, comments on all the things that the sources might have contained, but failed to do so, is unlikely to contribute to establishing weight. The question requires candidates to use the sources 'together' and it was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were aware of this instruction and achieved it using a variety of different approaches.

Candidates are more familiar with the essay section of Paper 2 and in section B most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question, although weaker candidates often wanted to engage in a main factor/other factors approach, even where this did not necessarily address the demands of the conceptual focus. Candidates do need to formulate a plan so that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; many candidates lacked any counter argument at all. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands 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.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Question 1

On Question 1, stronger responses clearly considered the sources together (e.g. both sources state/suggest that the French absolute monarchy had considerable power), although treatment of the sources may have been uneven. Such responses also analysed the source material in relation to the enquiry with a sense of interrogation which went beyond selecting key points and made reasoned inferences (e.g. Source 1 implies that the authority of the French absolute monarchy was being challenged by the *Parlement*). Knowledge of the historical context was used to discuss limitations/what can be gained from the content of the source material (e.g. in reality, there were practical limits to the king's 'absolute' power, e.g. he relied on advisers and ministers for guidance, he was bound by French law and customs, and needed the co-operation of the noble elite) and revealed an awareness of the values and concerns of the society from which it was drawn (e.g. Louis XVI's role as an absolute monarch rested on the widely accepted belief that the king's power was total and bestowed by God, according to the concept of divine right). Furthermore, high-scoring candidates evaluated the source material relevantly in line with the specified enquiry and considered matters of provenance confidently (e.g. the Princes of the Blood, as relatives of the King and prominent members of the French nobility, could potentially offer an informed view on the power of the French monarchy in the years immediately before 1789). The weight of the evidence was taken into consideration when coming to a judgement (e.g. the Princes of the Blood acknowledge that the key features of the power structure based on the French absolute monarchy (royal, estate and feudal rights) are being questioned in Source 2).

Weaker responses began to consider the sources together (e.g. both state that the King is accepted/respected by the nation). In addition, such responses showed some limited understanding and analysis of the source material through the selection of key points relevant to the question (e.g. only the monarch has the power to convene the Estates-General) and valid inferences (e.g. *Parlement* was challenging the authority of the French absolute monarchy). However, these valid inferences had only limited support or remained undeveloped. Knowledge of the historical context was mainly used to expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail with some attempt to support inferences (e.g. Enlightenment thinkers challenged the power of the French absolute monarchy). Lower-scoring candidates tended to evaluate the source material with some relevance regarding the specified enquiry and noted some aspects of source provenance to draw conclusions about reliability or utility. At this level, judgments often lacked support and could be based on questionable assumptions (e.g. Lamoignon, as Minister of Justice, would give an unbiased account of the power of the French monarchy).

Question 2

On Question 2, stronger responses clearly considered the sources together (e.g. both sources suggest that open foreign intervention (either in the abstract or in reality) benefited the Bolsheviks), although treatment of the sources may have been uneven. Such responses also analysed the source material in relation to the enquiry with a sense of interrogation which went beyond selecting key points and made reasoned inferences (e.g. large-scale foreign intervention would have galvanised anti-communist opposition in Russia and demoralised the Bolsheviks). Knowledge of the historical context was used to discuss limitations/what can be gained from the content of the source material (e.g. only 200,000 foreign troops were sent to Russia and since these were deployed defensively across three main areas, the intervention did little to strengthen anti-communism in Russia) and revealed an awareness of the values and concerns of the society from which it was drawn (e.g. open foreign intervention would provide the Bolsheviks with a pretext to abandon the wartime alliance and hand over military resources to the Germans). Furthermore, high-scoring candidates evaluated the source material relevantly in line with the specified enquiry and considered matters of

provenance confidently (e.g. a confidential diplomatic document (Source 3) is likely to be candid and informed in its assessment of the problems surrounding foreign intervention). The weight of the evidence was taken into consideration when coming to a judgement (e.g. Bruce Lockhart's account (Source 4) maintains that small-scale foreign intervention in 1918 was a mistake, thereby endorsing the author's own critical stance).

Weaker responses began to consider the sources together (e.g. both suggest that open foreign intervention (either in the abstract or in reality) had a negative impact on Russia). In addition, such responses showed some limited understanding and analysis of the source material through the selection of key points relevant to the question (e.g. the small-scale nature of foreign intervention did not pose a real threat to the Bolsheviks) and valid inferences (e.g. no certainty that foreign intervention would mobilise anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia). However, these valid inferences had only limited support or remained undeveloped. Knowledge of the historical context was mainly used to expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail with some attempt to support inferences (e.g. the temporary, limited and dispersed presence of foreign troops did little to hold the disparate White forces together or mobilise popular support - most British, French and US soldiers left in 1919). Lower-scoring candidates tended to evaluate the source material with some relevance regarding the specified enquiry and noted some aspects of source provenance to draw conclusions about reliability or utility. At this level, judgements often lacked support and could be based on questionable assumptions (e.g. the diplomatic report (Source 3) is an official explanation and so will be unbiased).

Question 3

On Question 3, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the significance of external threats in sharpening divisions within France in the years 1791-94. Such responses explored the significance of external threats (e.g. the Pillnitz Declaration (1791) and the presence of émigré troops under the Comte d'Artois on France's north-eastern border hardened attitudes against Louis XVI, the Brunswick Manifesto (1792) and poor French performance in the war strengthened public opposition in Paris to the king and divided France more sharply between republicans and moderates, the war led to domestic violence, as Parisians were encouraged by radical orators to deal with the 'enemy within' in the face of foreign invasion, e.g. the September Massacres of 1792) and the significance of other factors/developments (e.g. religious issues had a divisive impact during these years, e.g. Louis XVI's use of royal vetoes (1791-92), the unofficial policy of dechristianisation (1793-94) and Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being (1794), Louis XVI's reluctance to assume the role of constitutional monarch created deeper divisions by encouraging the growth of republicanism, e.g. the flight to Varennes and his proclamation to the French people in 1791, the role of Robespierre and the sans-culottes in radicalising the revolution through the Terror (1793-94) led to resistance, e.g. the federalist revolts and opposition from other revolutionaries). High-scoring candidates also demonstrated an understanding of the conceptual focus of the question (significance), deployed sufficient knowledge and established criteria to make a judgement (e.g. the extent of social and political polarisation). Such responses were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly limited analysis of the significance of external threats in sharpening divisions within France in the years 1791-94. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on significance or were essentially a description of the period under scrutiny. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth (e.g. limited comments on the Brunswick Manifesto or the September Massacres). Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 4

On Question 4, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of whether economic and financial problems were the primary reason for the collapse of the Directory in 1799. High-scoring answers weighed this stated factor (e.g. by writing off two-thirds of the debt it owed to its creditors, and compensating them with bonds that soon became worthless, the Directory also angered debt holders, due to the wartime deficit, the Directory revived indirect taxes (e.g. the octrois was reintroduced) which eroded popular support, the 1799 decree imposing a forced loan of 100 million livres on the rich to cover war costs alienated many and led to non-compliance in some local areas) against others (e.g. in an attempt to preserve a non-Jacobin majority, the Directors interfered with elections (e.g. Law of 22 Floreal) which undermined respect for the political system, challenges to the Directory eroded its political authority, e.g. Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals (1796), the coup of Fructidor (1797), the coup of Floreal (1798) and the coup of Brumaire (1799), the Directory's increasing reliance on the army (e.g. the coup of Fructidor in 1797) made a military takeover more likely, as happened in the coup of Brumaire (1799)). These responses included an analysis of the links between key issues and a focus on the concept (causation) in the question.

Judgements made about the relative importance of religious issues were reasoned and based on clear criteria (e.g. the nature, extent and degree of opposition due to economic and financial problems). Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to describe key events that took place in France during the years 1795-99 with limited focus on causation and/or the stated factor (economic and financial problems). Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it lacked range/depth (e.g. limited comments on the widespread economic discontent caused by food shortages and supply problems due to poor harvests, the British blockade and the Directory's policy of requisitioning domestic produce for the French military). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 5

On Question 5, stronger responses targeted how accurate it is to say that Tsarism remained a fundamentally stable system of government in the years 1894-1914. High-scoring answers included an analysis of links between key factors and a clear focus on the concept (change/continuity). Strong responses weighed 'remained' (e.g. throughout the period, Tsarism was able to rely on repression to maintain control and preserve the stability of the system, e.g. the Okhrana's use of infiltration tactics and Stolypin's 'pacification' policy in 1906-09, the autocratic government structure remained largely intact during these years, e.g. the lack of reform before 1905, the Fundamental Laws of 1906 and the impact of the 1907 electoral law, revolutionary parties committed to the overthrow of Tsarism, such as the Social Democrats, Populists and Social Revolutionaries, lacked support, were internally divided and failed to cooperate) against 'did not remain' (e.g. widespread disturbances among the peasantry, workers and nationalities in 1905 destabilised Tsarism and forced it to make concessions, e.g. the October Manifesto and the scrapping of redemption payments, the reforms that followed the 1905 Revolution meant that Tsarism had to operate in a much more overtly critical political environment, e.g. creation of the Duma, the legal right to form political parties and a freer press, attempts to modernise the Tsarist system did little to alleviate socio-economic tensions and increased popular discontent, e.g. Witte's industrialisation programme and Stolypin's agrarian reforms). Judgements made about the extent to which Tsarism remained fundamentally stable were reasoned and based on clear criteria (e.g. the level of opposition, the survival of autocratic government). Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to offer limited knowledge of the stability/instability of Tsarism and often took the form of a patchy narrative of the main events of 1894-1914 in Russia or else drifted into the 1914-17 period. Alternatively, lower-scoring candidates provided a limited analysis of Tsarist government during these years which offered little development on the focus of the question. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or only offered one aspect related to the demands of the question (e.g. limited comments on Nicholas II as a source of instability because he was inconsistent and unsuited to the role of a leader, e.g. he held the Duma in disdain and wanted to pass undiluted autocratic power to his son). Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 6

On Question 6, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the statement that the differences between the revolutions of February 1917 and October 1917 far outweigh their similarities. High-scoring answers weighed differences (e.g. February 1917 represented a large spontaneous popular protest against the failures of Tsarism, whereas October 1917 amounted to a seizure of power by a small group of organised revolutionaries, February 1917 resulted in the Dual Power arrangement that constrained the authority of the Provisional Government; October 1917 led to the establishment of one-party government, February 1917 produced a cautious interim body that was to hold power only until the election of the Constituent Assembly; October 1917 led to a government determined to hold on to power and implement radical change) against similarities (e.g. both revolutions in 1917 were fuelled by the economic and social consequences of Russia's involvement in the First World War, e.g. rising inflation, deteriorating living conditions and industrial dislocation, neither the Tsar in February 1917 nor the Provisional Government in October 1917 offered much resistance at the critical point when their authority was being directly challenged, in both revolutions, the army was not prepared to defend the government under threat, making its downfall virtually inevitable, e.g. the military in Petrograd effectively abandoned the Tsar and the Provisional Government). Treatment of key issues may have been uneven with greater focus given to certain similarities/differences. Sufficient knowledge was deployed to demonstrate an understanding of the conceptual focus of the question (similarity/difference) and to meet most of the demands of the question.

Judgements made about similarity and difference were reasoned and based on clear criteria (e.g. the nature/extent of popular participation in the two 1917 revolutions). Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly limited analysis of the extent of difference/similarity regarding the February and October Revolution, often with fairly extensive descriptive passages (e.g. the main events of 1917 in Russia). Supporting knowledge was mostly accurate and relevant but some knowledge was insecure (e.g. the level of popular support in the two revolutions). Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth (e.g. limited comments on Petrograd being central to events in both revolutions). The conceptual demand (similarity/difference) of the question was generally understood but often lacked development and attempts to establish criteria (e.g. the economic/social roots of both revolutions) was limited.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

Candidates should aim to develop valid inferences supported by the arguments raised in the sources, not merely paraphrase the content of the sources.

Inferences can be supported by reference to contextual knowledge surrounding the issues raised by the sources.

Candidates should move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source by, for e.g., looking at and explaining the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer.

Candidates should use the sources together at some point in the answer.

Section B

Spending a few minutes planning helps to ensure the second order concept is correctly identified.

Candidates must provide more precise contextual knowledge as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range here.

Candidates should avoid a narrative/descriptive approach; this undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels.

Candidates need to be aware of key dates as identified in the specification so that they can address the questions with chronological precision.

Candidates should try to explore the links between issues in order to make the structure of the response flow more logically and to facilitate an integrated analysis.

