

# **The ‘Evaluate the usefulness of...’ question**

**12 marks**

# The ‘Evaluate the usefulness of...’ question (12 marks)

What is it asking?

It is asking candidates to evaluate the usefulness of a source in relation to a particular aspect of the Course.

Candidates should

- ◆ comment on authorship, date and purpose.
- ◆ **interpret** points in the source.
- ◆ relate the source to their understanding of the **wider historical context**. Recall should include relevant **historiography**.

# Evaluate the usefulness of..

**Provenance - Author, Timing & Purpose (P) 2 or 3 marks**

1  
2  
3

**Interpretation: (I) 2 or 3 marks**

1  
2  
3

Total of 5 marks for Provenance and Interpretation – divided either 3/2 or 2/3

**Wider Contextual Development (WCD): 5 marks**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

**Historians' Views: 2 marks**

1  
2

Historians' views can be inclusive within context.



# Germany: From Democracy to Dictatorship, 1918-1939

**Source A** is from the *Spartacist Manifesto*, first published in the *Red Flag*, 26 November 1918.

## Source A

The revolution has made its entry into Germany. The masses of soldiers who for four years were driven to the slaughterhouse for the sake of capitalist profits, and the masses of workers have revolted. Prussian militarism lies broken, the Kaiser has fled. We do not say that all power has really been lodged in the hands of the working people.

There still sit in the government all those Socialists who for four years betrayed the German working class.

Germany is pregnant with the social revolution, but socialism can only be realised by the workers of the world.

**Evaluate the usefulness of Source A as evidence of the nature of the German Revolution, 1918-19?**

## Example of: Provenance: timing

The **timing** of Source A is useful because it is from 26 November 1918 **which was** 17 days after the abdication of the Kaiser and the proclamation of the German Republic **and so is** in the middle of the on-going revolution. (T)

## Example of: Provenance: Author

The **authorship** of Source A is also useful because it is from the Spartacist Manifesto and so was written by committed Bolsheviks. **This shows that** the revolution was marked by conflict because the Spartacists wanted a violent revolution as had occurred in Russia in 1917 whereas the SPD wanted parliamentary democracy. (A)

## Example of: Provenance: Purpose

The **purpose** of the source is to persuade people to support the Spartacists in their attempt to force a Bolshevik revolution. **This shows that** the revolution created an atmosphere of division between different socialist groups.  
(P)

## **Example of: Interpretation [of source content]**

**The source says** the masses of workers have revolted.  
**This makes it useful because** it suggests that the  
revolution was popular among the working classes in  
particular.(I)

# Interpretation [of source content]

(2)

The **source also states** “the masses of soldiers were forced into the slaughterhouse for the sake of capitalist profits”. **This makes it useful because** it shows the revolution was both a reaction to the war and was anti-capitalist in its nature.(I)

## **Interpretation [of source content]**

(3)

**The source says too** that ‘socialists who for four years betrayed the working class’. **This makes it useful because it shows** that those groups calling for revolution did not agree with one another about how the revolution should take place or the type of socialism that should be implemented.(I)

## Example of: Wider Contextual Development

(1)

However, the source does not mention a number of important points about the nature of the revolution.

The source does not mention that the revolution began as a revolution from above and was then followed by a revolution from below **showing that the revolution developed in stages.**(W)

# Wider Contextual Development

(2)

In addition the source does not highlight the fact that the new government had to move to Weimar **showing that the revolution was violent and disorderly.**(W)

# Wider Contextual Development

(3)

It does not mention that there was strong opposition to the revolution from the Old Elites and **this reflects the fact that the revolution was, politically, a cause of deep division between the left and right.(W)**

# Wider Contextual Development

(4)

Although Germany did change because of the revolution (from a monarchy to a republic, for example) in other ways it did not change at all. For example, as a result of the Ebert-Groener pact (10 Nov 1918) the army remained unreformed and still at the centre of politics. So during the revolution there was change but also continuity.(W)

# Wider Contextual Development

(5)

Finally, the source does not mention that the revolution from below was sparked by mutinies at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven which led to strike in the cities and the setting up of soviets across Germany. **This shows the revolution was led by workers and sailors, and that it was based on popular discontent and the demand for democratic change.**(W)

## Example of: Historians' views

(1)

**Lee argues** that the revolutionary was really evolutionary in nature **because** many of the changes that occurred had already begun before the war.(H)

## **Historians' views**

(1)

**Carr argues that the revolution was limited because much of the structure of Germany remained unaffected by the revolution.(H)**

# Russia: From Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914-1945

## SOURCE A from General Alekseev's Telegram to Nicholas II, 1 March 1917 (old style)

The danger that is growing by the minute of anarchy spreading all over the country, of the further disintegration of the army, and the impossibility of continuing the war in the present circumstances urgently demand the immediate publication of an Imperial Act of Abdication which could settle the situation. This is possible only by summoning a responsible ministry, assigning the President of the State Duma with its formation. The news which reaches us gives us reason to hope that the Duma politicians, led by Rodzianko, can still prevent general disintegration, and that it is possible to work with them. But the loss of every hour reduces the last chances to preserve and restore order and fosters the seizure of power by extreme Left elements. In view of this, with all my heart I implore your Imperial Majesty to agree to the immediate publication of such an Act from Stavka.

1. Evaluate the usefulness of **Source A** as evidence of **the reasons** for the overthrow of the Tsar in February 1917? 12  
(Adapted from 2015 QP)

## Example of: Provenance: Author

The **authorship** of Source A is useful as evidence of the reasons for the overthrow of the Tsar because the source was written by one of the Tsarist Generals, General Alekseev, a leading General in the Russian military who had the support of many. **This ensures the source is useful because** it was written by someone very **close to the Tsar** who would have been **well informed of the threats facing the Tsar**, thus meaning the source is likely to be accurate and useful.

## Example of: Provenance: Purpose

However, the **purpose** of the source may lead to it not being so useful in explaining the reasons for the overthrow of the Tsar **because** it is known that General Alekseev was possibly involved in a plot alongside Duma politicians to remove the Tsar from power. **This may limit the usefulness of the source because** it may exaggerate the threats posed to the Tsar in an attempt to increase the chances of the Tsar wishing to step down as leader as the factors stated in the source may in fact not be as bad as the source states.

## Example of: Interpretation of source content and Historians' views

Source A is again useful because **it states** within it that “the danger that is growing by the minute of anarchy spreading all over the country” and this is useful as due to the Tsar’s poor running of the nation, both as a political and military leader it can be said that his autocracy failed and that this is a significant factor leading to his overthrow. The threat of disorder as a result of the failure of the Tsar’s authority can be noted as a major factor, as Figes states “Nicholas was the source of all problems” as he ruled an “autocracy without an autocrat” therefore this aspect of the source proves to be useful.

## **Example of: Wider contextual development and Historians' views**

However the usefulness of the source as evidence of the reasons for the overthrow of the Tsar may be slightly limited as it fails to mention the increasing levels of social unrest in Russia as a result of the lack of food, as Figes states that the revolution was “born in the bread queues”. Due to Russia’s involvement in the war, most of the supplies were going to feed the army, leaving little food for the civilians in cities such as Petrograd and Moscow, as the unrest of these people also contributed to the overthrow of the Tsar, thus limiting the usefulness of the source.