
A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1H- Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855-1964
Report on the Examination

7042
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Comments

As might be expected in this popular option, a wide range of responses was received and the questions were approached in a variety of ways. Most were valid but occasionally, perhaps because of a misreading or through a determination to write what the student knew rather than what was asked for, they were not. As always, credit was given to the students who genuinely engaged with the question asked, paid due heed to its key words and date range, and tried to construct a coherent argument backed by historical evidence. The award of levels and marks within levels depended rather less on how much a student knew, as to how students used what they knew. Clearly, those that had revised thoroughly and were able to be more selective in the evidence they put forward to support their arguments were likely to score rather more highly than those who could only repeat one or two relevant supporting facts or, in some cases, only offer assertion devoid of supporting evidence. Nevertheless, the ability of students to consider events and developments from different angles, to make judgements with respect to the historical context and to show that they had taken time to think about the issues raised was crucial in the assessment of answers.

Section A

Question 01

This question elicited some very good responses from students who readily understood the arguments in the three given extracts and were able to use their knowledge of the development of the Soviet economy to evaluate these effectively. Awareness of Stalinist developments through the Five Year Plans was stronger than that of the Leninist years, which some omitted altogether, but the majority were able to address the extract references and say something about the successes and failures of the NEP as the foundation of economic development in the 1921-41 period.

The argument of strong growth in Extract A was, for the most part, clearly identified, supported and questioned. A few students ignored the references to change before 1928 and some spent too long discussing agriculture and collectivisation at the expense of industrial development. However, most were able to assess the overall view that the economy had been considerably strengthened by 1941 with reasonable contextual awareness.

Extract B's more nuanced argument that growth masked significant problems within the economy was also well addressed. Some students were better at explaining the issue of the 'lop-sided' economy than others, with the best showing a very good understanding of the problems of the command economy and central planning. Students found it harder to criticise the overall argument here and this was quite acceptable provided they offered some balanced evaluation across all three extracts. Indeed, perfunctory criticisms that all too often fell back on bland references to what had been 'forgotten' were rarely of much worth.

The argument in Extract C, which emphasised that economic growth took place at the expense of the labour force and was unpredictable and dependent on coercion, caused problems for some. Good answers drew the inference that this type of economic development was unsustainable. However, weaker responses suggested that the extract argued that economic development 'was a failure' or they ignored economic development altogether, showing an imperfect understanding both of the extract and the question demands. Many, for example, suggested that the extract was convincing (or, in some cases, unconvincing, given the Stakhanovite campaign) in its description of

the treatment of workers but failed to link this to the broader issue of how this affected economic development.

Overall, the best responses engaged closely with the arguments about change, continuity and the means of Soviet economic development across the period of the question. Where answers were focused on those arguments rather than simple extract statements, usually taken line-by-line, they invariably scored much more highly. Although students who worked their way through the extracts sometimes produced competent answers, the best usually offered an appraisal of the key arguments first and proceeded to address each of these in turn, assessing both the strengths and weaknesses of what was being suggested. This avoided the lengthy explanations of reasons for Soviet wartime victory (Extract A), details of 'suffering' and purges (Extract B) and discussions about the popularity of the NEP (Extract C) which threatened to detract from a focus on economic development in the work of the more literal students. Finally, it is worth reiterating that students are not required to comment on the authors or dates of publication, to compare the extracts, or offer an overall conclusion at the end of the whole question.

Section B

Question 02

This proved a popular question and provoked a wide range of answers varying from the highly analytical to the more descriptive and less discerning. Most students could say something about the outcome of the emancipation edict, although some wasted time explaining the reasons for, rather than focusing on the results of, the measure. Unfortunately, a large number of students also saw this question as an opportunity to write all they knew about the reforms of 1861-81 or to describe the whole reign of Tsar Alexander II.

Good responses linked Alexander's other reforms to the emancipation edict, explaining how freedom for the former serfs in turn necessitated reform of, for example, local government, the military and education. However, some merely recounted these measures without any link to the question. Others tried to answer a different question - 'To what extent was emancipation responsible for bringing profound social change?' Such students explained the results of Alexander's other reforms as alternative factors promoting social change, but this was to misread the question which clearly asked for the evaluation of a single measure.

Those that kept closely to an evaluation of serf emancipation in relation to social change wrote more fully about the measure and were able to assess its effects for the land-owning nobility, the urban working class and the growing middle class, as well as the landless labourers, mir-tied peasants and the more prosperous kulaks. Many such answers showed an impressive understanding of Russia's social hierarchy, highlighting elements of change and continuity and questioning the profundity of the social change that had occurred by 1881.

Question 03

The best answers to this question showed an understanding of the importance by size, social standing and opportunity for influence, as well as the aims, of liberal and radical groups. They then applied this information to an assessment of the opposition's activities during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II to 1914. The effectiveness of the differing groups was thus judged in accordance with their own aims and assessed according to the Tsar's reaction in accepting or repelling the challenges they posed.

Some who knew rather less about the differing political groups still produced quite reasonable answers which considered 'opposition' as a whole. These identified the various ways in which the Tsar's authority was challenged across the period and offered a sound assessment of opposition success. By identifying the pressure from the zemstva in the 1890s, the activities of the peasantry in the years of the Red Cockerel, the opposition posed by workers, unions and 'extremists' through Bloody Sunday, strike activity and assassinations before and after 1905 and the position of the opposition in the State Dumas to 1914, these answers could show a good deal of understanding even if there was some confusion in their identification of liberals and radicals.

The weakest answers were usually more descriptive and much more selective in their coverage of the time period. Many did not address any opposition before 1905, others kept solidly to 1904-6 and did not look at the position by 1914, while a few muddled 1914 with 1917. It must be stressed that this is a breadth paper and some breadth knowledge of the full period of the question was essential for strong marks here.

Question 04

Adherence to the dates of the question was as important for question 04 as for question 03. Students were asked to compare Stalin and Khrushchev in the years 1941 to 1964, but many ignored the starting date and compared Khrushchev more generally to Stalin, giving examples from the 1930s or from his rise to power in the 1920s.

Another common mistake was to ignore the words, 'as Soviet leaders'. There were many comparisons of circumstances and policies that were unrelated to the position of these two men 'as Soviet leaders', even when students tried to add 'this shows their differences as Soviet leaders' to the ends of their paragraphs.

Policy differences were, of course, relevant when related to leadership. Khrushchev's attempt to decentralise economic planning, for example, could be used as an example of his less authoritarian approach; his obsession with peasant agriculture and seeming concern for the Soviet quality of life might be seen as the mark of a rather different leader from the war-driven Stalin whose blatant disregard for individual welfare continued in the years after victory. However the closer the links to 'leadership' the better the answers became and the greater the range of comparisons -perhaps embracing government, party, opposition, terror, the police, ideology, personality and style –seen in the stronger the answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.