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# A-LEVEL POLITICS

7152/3 Paper 3 Political Ideas  
Report on the Examination

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## General

Almost all students managed the demands of the paper and completed all sections. As in previous years there was an imbalance in the optional ideologies answered by students, with Nationalism and Feminism being popular topics and Multiculturalism barely being answered at all. Students generally had well-structured answers, providing three clear points in their 9-mark answer on the vast majority of occasions, setting them out in individual paragraphs. In both the extract questions and optional essay questions, stronger responses were balanced and focused on the debate in question, reaching a conclusion that reflected the preceding discussion in their answers.

## Question 1

Almost all students were able to give at least a basic account of Marxist class theory. Those students that scored high marks confidently gave three clearly different perspectives; Marxism, democratic socialism, social democracy or third way analysis of class. Students were in most cases able to accurately cite a key thinker in relation to a perspective. Weaker answers tended to either repetitively explain points that they had made (particularly for elements of revolutionary socialism related to the ideas of Marx and Luxemburg). There was also a tendency in many mid-level responses to explain socialist theory at length without focusing on socio-economic class.

## Question 2

Students were able to raise a wide range of points, typically referring to Locke's concept of property as a natural right, the economic disadvantage and discrimination that women face, and more modern conceptions of redistribution, fairness and justice. Responses that obtained higher marks avoided repetition and were able to give a more analytical explanation of why thinkers held a perspective, for example being able to accurately link redistribution to the veil of ignorance and the original position. Responses at lower levels tended to make assertions about the beliefs of thinkers without tangible examples, or tended to repetitively state liberal faith in the free market.

## Question 3

Students often cited Hobbes's justification for a Leviathan state by citing that the state of nature would "nasty, brutish and short." Answers that scored highly were able effectively explain the impact of Burke's organic view of society, Oakeshott's empiricism, or the new right's scepticism of authority. Weaker answers either tended to repetitively state that Conservatives in general approved of authority or demonstrated a degree of confusion between Burke and Hobbes in particular.

## Question 4

Most students were able to identify that Friedan was a modern liberal who focused on the social and economic constraints that Black Americans and Women faced, and that Mill was a classical or early transitional liberal who largely advocated for an absence of restraint (with many citing his harm principle). A meaningful discussion of the provenance of these extracts was much less common. Responses that reflected the reasons why Mill and Friedan held the views they did, often citing the historical contexts in which they became prominent, commonly scored well. Many students were able to identify that there was general agreement in both extracts regarding the

importance of individual freedom. Responses that achieved the higher levels were able to accurately analyse why, as presented in the extracts, the modern liberals often considered the need for an enabling state to provide positive liberty as well as the absence of restraint that Mill advocated for. Responses at lower levels either did not utilise information provided by the extracts or tended to drift into explanations of other thinkers that were not directly relevant to arguments in the extract. For example, answers which drifted into explanations of Locke's belief in natural rights rarely gained credit as they were infrequently used to analyse, evaluate, or compare the arguments made in the extract as the question demanded. Whilst the use of the thinkers other than Mill and Friedman were potentially creditworthy, responses that focused solely on the ideas of Mill and Friedman could, and did, achieve the highest marks.

#### Question 5

This answer was a popular optional question, and students gave a variety of responses in terms of quality and breadth. Most students were able to identify that nationalism is sometimes used to justify the superiority or exclusivity of some cultures, with the arguments of Maurras being cited. Responses that gave a more comprehensive account of the key thinkers' ideas typically were able to give an account of Rousseau and his ideas of equality between nations. Responses at higher levels provided a more sophisticated account of the ideas of thinkers and their relationship to equality, for example whether Garvey's advocacy for a pan-African state was a solution to prejudice or a potential source of inequality. Students that reflected on the reasons for the differing perspectives of equality amongst nationalist thinkers in their evaluation were typically rewarded at higher levels.

#### Question 6

Students typically opened their responses by identifying that all feminists were concerned with equality, and responses that score well often went on to give an accurate analysis of the meaning of legal equality and were credited for doing so. Students that referred to the work of Wollstonecraft as an example of first wave feminists were credited with making synoptic links as she is categorised as a liberal thinker in the specification. Most students discussed a wide range of thinkers, from radical, socialist and difference perspectives. Answers in higher levels often reflected that feminism has increasingly moved beyond legal equality, referring to concepts such as patriarchy, public and private spheres, exploitation, political lesbianism, and intersectionality. Answers at lower levels tended to simply assert key thinkers' ideas without reflecting upon the impact this had on legal equality. A frequent issue with responses that achieved lower marks was a lack of breadth, which meant that answers lacked balance. Answers that scored highly were often able to challenge the premise of the question, citing the works of De Beauvoir, Millett, Rowbotham, and bell hooks. Students that clearly dealt with the main thrust of the question; whether legal equality was the main aim of feminism, were rewarded highly for their evaluation.

#### Question 7

This question was done by a very small number of students. Lower-level responses for this question did not address the key thinkers with confidence, if they were mentioned at all. Stronger answers were able to reflect the tensions between key thinkers, with many citing the work of Charles Taylor.

#### Question 8

Most students were able to identify that many that anarcho-syndicalist thinkers saw capitalism as oppressive and needing to be removed. Many students were able to balance this with views of thinkers such as Stirner and concepts such as egoism. It is notable that many students tended to oversimplify Stirner's views, failing to consider his opposition to the use of laws that upheld private property rights, and the implications this had for capitalism as a system. Students who cited other libertarian thinkers were credited, and could receive higher levels if this was in addition to discussion of key thinkers. Responses that scored highly were able to provide a range of perspectives and discussed concepts such as communes. Responses that listed key thinkers, identifying their views on capitalism without dealing with the main thrust of the question, whether the state is a greater threat individual freedom than private property, did not often go beyond mid-levels. Students that did consider this (no matter what their conclusions) were typically highly rewarded.

#### Question 9

This topic continues to grow in popularity, although it was done by a small minority of students. Most students were able to identify that there was disagreement between ecologists about the status of human beings in relation to other life forms. Students who reflected on concepts such as anthropocentrism, the Gaia hypothesis, and sustainability were rewarded appropriately, especially when this was accurately linked to thinkers such as Carson, Merchant and Schumacher. At times, responses in middle and lower levels focused on a narrative account of each key thinkers' ideas rather than the extent to which nature should be preserved.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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