



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2L

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS2L

Unit 2L: The Impact of Stalin's Leadership in the USSR, 1924–1941

General Comments

This examination attracted a large number of entries, in contrast to the very few candidates who entered the January examination. For what was effectively a new Unit, the candidate response was very encouraging, and there were large numbers of high-scoring scripts, demonstrating an impressive combination of knowledge and skills.

Despite the pressures of time, most candidates coped well. Answers were often very lengthy, sometimes too much so. Very few candidates did not finish answers or wrote very unbalanced scripts, so candidates were well prepared for the examination. There were also very few rubric offences, caused when candidates opted for unacceptable combinations of questions. Both Questions 2 and 3 in the optional section were equally popular as choices.

Question 1

This proved overall to be successful question, mainly because the great majority of candidates understood the sources well and used them intelligently. What was particularly pleasing was the way in which candidates had learned how to integrate the use of sources with their own knowledge, often in a very effective way.

Question 01

This question was often done well. Candidates picked out the obvious differences in interpretation between the two sources about the Stalinist Terror, and equally they were able to pick out the more subtle similarities. Own knowledge was used effectively to reinforce comparisons and contrasts.

Question 02

Answers to this question were more variable in quality. This was partly because numbers of candidates did not read the question carefully enough: they wrote at length about the 1920s period when Stalin was manoeuvring himself into power, rather than the post-1934 period which was the focus of the question. Fortunately, most candidates used all the sources as well as own knowledge, although the small minority who never used the sources did not achieve above Level 2. What was impressive was the number of candidates who knew about the different interpretations of the purges and were able to meaningfully discuss these interpretations and schools of thought, even though it is not necessary in this Unit to have studied historiography. Candidates could legitimately focus on the actual Terror, or bring in other factors such as propaganda and economic policy to help explain Stalin's dominance, and when they did so, the result was impressive, as long as candidates remembered that the main focus had to be on the use of the Terror. Many candidates got into Levels 4 and 5 because they were able to combine knowledge with analysis and sustain judgement throughout their answers or at key points of an answer.

Question 2

Question 03

This question was answered well. Most candidates knew the various motives for collectivisation. They could often break them down into different categories such as economic, political, ideological, personal (e.g. as part of Stalin's struggle against the Right) and social. Consequently many answers achieved Level 3 or 4, without candidates having to write at length.

Question 04

This question was also often answered well. There were many impressive, balanced answers. Candidates could often distinguish between on the one hand the tragedy of collectivisation, as evident in the destruction, the loss of life and liberty and the disaster of famine; and on the other, what were for the regime successes such as establishing the control of the countryside, gaining industrial labour and feeding the towns. The important thing was to address the issue of 'weakness', and many answers achieved this in a balanced and thoughtful way.

Question 3

Question 05

This question was answered well. Candidates understood the various motives for the Five Year Plans, linked to class warfare, the desire to industrialise the USSR, and the desire to introduce socialism, combined with the more personal motives of Stalin and his followers. Motives were generally linked well and therefore many answers scored highly.

Question 06

There were many good, knowledgeable answers to this question, although some other answers varied in quality. Weaker answers often focused too much just on describing the features of the three Plans, without addressing the actual issue of how well they prepared the USSR for the coming crisis of war. Better answers did not make this mistake, and analysed factors such as industrial strength, military preparation, the conditioning of the workforce and so on. This was an acceptable approach. However, other answers legitimately brought in other factors such as the purges and the situation of agriculture to help explain the extent to which the country **was** ready for war in 1941. These answers were often aware of the various interpretations. Overall there were many impressive answers, with candidates gaining Levels 4 or 5 because they combined extensive knowledge with the ability to analyse information and make informed, sustained judgements as the question required.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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