



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2L

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2010 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres 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 centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Unit HIS2L

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

General Comments

The overall candidate response to this examination was very positive. There were many high-scoring scripts, demonstrating both knowledge and analytical skills.

Most candidates coped well with the pressures of the examination, writing sometimes lengthy answers, sometimes concise ones. There were very few unfinished scripts. Many candidates seemed better prepared for the examination than last year, the first year of this examination, particularly when answering the 12 mark questions.

Question 1

- 01** This question was answered successfully by many candidates, and the quality of response was better overall than last year. It seemed that candidates were better trained in the skills of answering this style of question. For example, many candidates looked for areas of similarity as well as difference between the sources. The level of comprehension was generally very good: candidates understood all three sources well. Moreover, most candidates were knowledgeable about the rise of Stalin and therefore had a good appreciation of the context of the sources, and were able to apply background knowledge to inform the comparison between Sources A and B. Candidates often integrated the use of sources with their own knowledge effectively. Answers invariably developed the contrast between the negative portrayal of Stalin in Source A and the positive interpretation in Source B, whilst also acknowledging that there were areas of agreement, for example the fact that both sources recognised that Stalin had power, and also did not give his trust easily. Considering the provenance of the sources was also a way of demonstrating knowledge, but this part was often not done well: too many candidates made simplistic responses about the superiority of one type of source over another or analysed reliability, which was not the focus of the question.
- 02** This question was answered well. Candidates showed good knowledge of the 1920s power struggle, often impressively so. Most remembered to use both the sources and their background knowledge to address the question. As intended, candidates did discuss the extent to which Stalin was underestimated, but also brought in other relevant elements such as luck, Stalin's own qualities and the weaknesses or mistakes of the other contenders. Many candidates achieved Levels 4 or 5, because they did evaluate the evidence and make informed judgements about the main reason for Stalin's successes in the struggle for power and influence.

Question 2

- 03** This question was answered well. Most candidates were able to briefly develop the motives for the Show Trials. Some answers wrote about the purges generally, for example including the action against the kulaks, but did not focus enough on the specific motives for the Show Trials. Candidates were generally good at explaining the range of motives, such as Stalin's desire for revenge, his insecurity and paranoia, his desire to display scapegoats, his desire to highlight 'dangers' to the regime, and so on. Candidates

were often good at explaining the differences between motives, or the links between them, and thereby earned good marks.

- 04** This question produced very varied responses, probably more so than other questions on the paper. This was because although candidates clearly understood the question, many wrote quite generalised accounts of propaganda, sometimes just a list of types, giving the impression that they had not really studied this topic, although it is clearly part of the specification. Many candidates wrote more about other factors which helped keep the regime in control, particularly economic developments and the role of Terror and the Party. This was an acceptable approach, and could lead to well-balanced answers, but what this question did not allow was what some candidates did, which was to mention propaganda briefly, only to dismiss it as a factor and centre their answer almost exclusively around another aspect such as Terror. This gave the impression that candidates were answering a question that they wanted, not the one in front of them. Nevertheless, there was a pleasing amount of analysis, evaluation and judgement, and not just description. The best answers were invariably those which addressed the actual question set.

Question 3

- 05** This question was answered well. Most candidates had a good understanding of why the kulaks were persecuted, and were able to identify, prioritise or link a range of factors – ideological, political, economic, personal and so on. Answers did not have to be overlong, but simply identify and briefly develop a number of factors. Some candidates simply wrote too much.
- 06** There were many good answers to this question, but also many that were less effective. This was less to do with the amount of knowledge, but rather how well it was directed at the question. Weaker answers were usually those that focused on collectivisation and industrialisation, and were an account of the processes of both from 1928 onwards, but sometimes these answers barely mentioned 1941, and therefore did not directly tackle the issue of the readiness for war. Better answers were more wide ranging, and also discussed other factors such as the psychological state of the people, and the impact of the terror, both on civilians and the military. These answers were more likely to assess the state of the USSR in 1941 and get into Level 4 or 5. The level of argument was often good, and showed balance. Candidates were generally aware of debates, for example how weakened the Soviet military actually was by the purges (some candidates exaggerate the number of soldiers killed and are unaware of facts such as that many of the purged were rehabilitated by 1941). As with Question 4, the key was to answer the actual question set.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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