



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS1H

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1H

Unit 1H: Tsarist Russia, 1855–1917

General Comments

The quality of response from candidates was generally good. Most candidates used the available time efficiently, providing answers of appropriate length to the essay questions – although it was surprising that so many answers to Question 3 05 that offered no more than a brief plan. A number of candidates produced work that was directly argued, fluently written and supported by confident knowledge. It was pleasing that most answers, at all levels of ability, showed willingness to respond to the specific wording of the questions; unrelated factual description for its own sake was relatively rare.

There was, however, a substantial minority of scripts that revealed limited language skills and poor preparation. An adequate essay technique is a key requirement for success at this level; answers marred by basic errors and relying on generalised assertions inevitably fared badly in comparison to the rest. Another apparent cause of under-achievement was that many candidates had covered the earlier part of the specification much more thoroughly than the later period. Many answers to Question 2 04 stopped suddenly at about 1907 and ignored the crucial end date of 1914. Although there were many capable responses to Question 3 06, on the events of 1917, too many candidates showed an uncertain grasp of the course of events between the fall of the Tsar and the Bolshevik seizure of power. A secure sense of chronology is a key requirement for success in this subject. These shortcomings should not be overstated. The work of many candidates was highly creditable.

Question 1

- 01** Answers to Question 1 01, on the reasons why the serfs were emancipated, were mostly good. Many candidates produced answers that were substantial, well-informed and well-directed, covering an extensive range of factors and showing good understanding of the context of 1855–1861. There was a tendency, however, for the relevant factors to be listed at length, without sufficient attempt at differentiation or evaluation. Superior answers were often marked by depth of comment about the Tsar Liberator's deeper motives in protecting the autocracy. Less successful answers tended to spend too much time on background issues before 1855, or strayed into irrelevant material about the consequences and impact of the Emancipation edict after it had been passed.
- 02** In Question 1 02, on the extent to which Russia had been transformed by 1881 as a result of Alexander II's reforms, many answers were based on solid knowledge of the reforms. Many good quality answers showed a solid understanding of the 'twin-track' policies followed by Alexander, alternating between periods of liberalisation and reform and periods of retrenchment and return to repression. The majority of answers attempted to make balanced assessments of the varying degrees of success and failure of the reforms. It should be noted, however, that the key word 'transformed' needed to be addressed directly. The best answers focused on the situation of Tsarist Russia in the last years of the reign, especially 1878–1881, and discussed the overall extent of change since the beginning of Alexander II's drive for reform.

Question 2

- 03** The response to Question 2 03, on the reasons why Russian Liberals criticised the Tsarist regime in the years 1894 to 1905, was very disappointing. All too many answers relied almost exclusively on material relating to Alexander III – or on developments that took place from 1906, such as the Fundamental Law. Only a minority of answers showed any knowledge or understanding of liberal ideas. There was a tendency to lump together uncritical statements about any and all forms of opposition, including the Bolsheviks. The contrast between the level of answers to this question and those to Question 1 01 was stark.
- 04** Answers to Question 2 04, on the extent to which Nicholas II fulfilled his promises between 1905 and 1914, were of mixed quality. A number of candidates produced direct and convincing evidence about the four Dumas and about the policies of Stolypin, leading to balanced assessments of the positive and/or negative outcomes of Nicholas II's rule by 1914. Many answers, however, began with a reasonable account of the October Manifesto and the constitutional developments in 1905 and 1906 but could offer nothing beyond the end of the second Duma. The developments from 1906 to 1914 as the Tsarist regime attempted to restore stability after the 1905 revolution are vitally important and should be better known.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to Question 3 05, on the reasons for Lenin's return to Russia in 1917, differed widely in quality. Many candidates wrote crisply and effectively about key factors such as the role of Germany in assisting Lenin's return, and Lenin's desire to assert his authority over the Bolsheviks. These impressive answers based on confident knowledge and understanding of the issues contrasted sharply with the many other answers that were disappointingly vague and uncertain. A significant number of candidates barely attempted an answer, offering no more than a brief plan. Many candidates revealed a weak grasp of basic chronology, suggesting that Lenin 'wanted to overthrow the Tsar', or including events that took place well after Lenin's return, such as the July Days.
- 06** In Question 3 06, on the downfall of the Provisional Government in the October Revolution, many successful answers provided analytical evidence about the increasing strain of the war and the difficult problems faced by Kerensky's regime. Such answers were able to assess the relative importance of the continuation of the war compared with a range of other relevant factors. A substantial number of weaker responses revealed a shaky grasp of chronology, often describing the impact of the war in the most generalized terms and including irrelevant references to the events of 1914–1916 and the reasons for the fall of the Tsar.

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