



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS1H

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS1H

Unit 1H: Tsarist Russia, 1855–1917

General Comments

Most students completed the paper within the time allowed and kept their answers to a sensible length in relation to the number of marks available for each question. (Those who did not penalised themselves quite badly, partly by providing a good deal of irrelevant material in response to the 12 mark questions and, worse still, by failing to develop adequately supported analytical answers to the 24 mark 'mini essay' questions.) The students' knowledge of 20th century developments was generally superior to that on the 19th century opposition movements, which meant that questions 2 and 3 were far more popular than question 1. One common observation which applied to all questions was the reluctance of some students to engage with the dates given and to show an accurate sense of chronology and relevant perspective in their answers. This is exemplified further in the specific question comments below.

Question 1

- 01** Most students who attempted this question had a reasonable idea as to what Populism was but they varied in the degree to which they were able to provide reasons for its failure. Sometimes reasons, such as the hostility of the peasantry to populist teaching, were lost in over-descriptive accounts and references to Tsarist oppression could be woolly and generalist. However, there were some excellent attempts to consider exactly what it was about Populism that failed to reach the peasants and some made much of the power of the Orthodox Church in explaining the peasants' negative attitude.
- 02** Although there were some good answers, there was also an all-too-frequent misreading of this question on the part of otherwise quite well-informed students. The question did not ask for an explanation of the growth of internal opposition, although that is what many students wrote about. Its focus was instead on the degree to which internal opposition posed a threat to the tsarist regime. Consequently, the best answers were those that got to grips with the idea of 'threat' and weighed up the extent, intent and success of the various opposition groups and movements. Those who differentiated between opposition groups produced some strong answers. Such saw the 'terrorist' groups which were to form the SRs and SDs as threats in theory but of limited consequence in practice, thanks to the autocratic Tsarist regime with its machinery of spies and repression. However, they were aware that liberal opposition – as seen in the Zemstva and town dumas – while less obviously threatening, was slowly chipping away at Tsarist authority and winning over those who might in the past have helped to prop up the autocracy. Dates caused a problem for some. A number of answers looked at developments pre-1881 and rather more went beyond 1904.

Question 2

- 03** This was a very popular question and, for the most part, students were well able to identify a number of factors leading to the outbreak of revolution in 1905. There was some slight divergence as to when the actual 'outbreak' was. Most saw Father Gapon's march as the 'trigger', but others tried to include the events of 1905 as contributors to the revolution in government which, in their view, actually occurred in 1906. Such answers were marked on their merits. Perhaps the greatest problem for students was knowing where to start in explaining causes. Some went back to the Crimean War and reigns of Alexander II and Alexander III, listing everything that was wrong with Tsardom. Such answers usually became excessively long and ran into the danger of never explaining why the revolution occurred in 1905 and not sooner. Better answers focused on events such as the Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday, together with a summary of the broader 'underlying' problems – politically (perhaps referring to Nicholas II's own weaknesses as ruler) and socially, such as the conditions in which the industrial working class of St Petersburg lived and worked. It was surprising how few were able to comment on the links between such factors, however, and students may need reminding that an appreciation of how different factors work together is essential for high marks.
- 04** Many students showed a good grasp of Stolypin's policies and were aware of their strengths and limitations. However, rather fewer were able to step back from 'success' to consider 'stability', which is what the question asked about. Those that managed to focus on stability saw developments from a slightly different perspective, noting that Stolypin's agrarian reforms might be considered to have undermined stability by creating a new kulak class and causing resentment among the dispossessed peasants, for example. Similarly Stolypin's 'necktie' and his management of the dumas, whilst generally condemned, were put forward as beneficial to the interests of stability. Obviously, students could adopt whatever arguments they wished, but the degree to which they considered stability – together with their knowledge of not only Stolypin's agrarian concerns but also his political role – determined the level and mark they received.

Question 3

- 05** This question challenged students to look at the Bolsheviks from a slightly unusual perspective. Many rose to that challenge and commented effectively on the nature of Bolshevism and the effectiveness of repression – most particularly the exile of leaders such as Lenin. The best answers also seized upon the year – 1914 – to point to the rise in patriotism and tsarist loyalty that occurred with the outbreak of war. As in 01 and 03, there needed to be links between the various factors for the highest marks and connections between the anti-democratic and internationalist nature of Bolshevism, which placed it at a disadvantage during the era of the dumas and the swell of support for war were mentioned by some of the best students. Others saw links between the limited state of Russian industrial development in 1914 and the Bolshevik reliance on the proletariat, which suggested the movement was a lost cause.
- 06** Most students were able to put forward a range of general reasons as to why the Tsardom came to an end (or, perhaps 'deserved to come to an end' – which was not quite what the question asked about). However, as in 03, a number tried to explain the demise of Tsardom by describing the inadequacies of the system in general and/or the mistakes of Alexander II and Alexander III. For the most part, those that focused on the period from 1914 to February/March 1917 provided the most convincing answers, while those that ignored the actual circumstances of the abdication could only give partial incomplete explanations. Another issue for weaker students was an inability to distinguish between

'military problems' and other factors. Some regarded anything to do with the war (including the economic conditions in Petrograd and the 'rule' of Alexandra and Rasputin) as 'military problems' when this is clearly not the case. Others ignored 'military problems' altogether and wrote in a generalist way, whilst those who tried to address problems at the front, struggled to get beyond Nicholas becoming Commander-in-Chief (although not everyone knew when), a shortage of weapons and the problem of desertions. The best answers were the more precise responses which not only balanced military problems against other 'themed' factors, such as economic, social and political, but were also able to produce some precise evidence to back the views in their answers. Finally, it must be pointed out that a few students erroneously believed that Lenin and the Bolsheviks provoked the abdication.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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