

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE History

Candidate Exemplar Work:

- Unit 1 – High Level Response



Unit 1 –January 2009 –high level script containing responses to:

- **HIS1E Absolutist States: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1661–1715**
- **HIS1H Tsarist Russia, 1855–1917**

HIS1E

1 (a) Explain why Louis ordered the construction of the Palace of Versailles. (12 marks)

At the start of Louis' reign Paris was 'the place to be'. It was the centre of fashion and art and the social centre of France. This drew French nobles to Paris away from Louis, and thus he needed a place large enough to house them all and be able to control them through the use of patronage – Louis expected favours in return for those he did for them.

The palaces Louis owned in Paris, such as Fontainebleu and the Louvre, made it very crowded when the court was gathered there. He wanted another palace to be able to house his court around him without being overcrowded, thus keeping 'court ritual' alive.

Louis wanted glory, to be respected, to be remembered. By building a vast palace he would certainly achieve this – for example he had a Hall of Mirrors, which was more expensive than gold, to show this. Once completed he boasted that Versailles was 'a triumph of man over nature'.

So it can be seen that there were three general reasons for Louis building the palace. However, the reason he actually chose to build at Versailles was because it was his favourite hunting place. Also, in Paris, Louis had painful memories of the 'Fronde' which haunted him, and this steered him to build instead at nearby Versailles

Examiners Comments:

Well focused answer with several clearly linked factors given. Differentiates between general and more specific reasons. Factors are backed by some good support.

Level 4 (12 marks)

1 (b) How successful was Louis XIV in maintaining the absolute authority of the monarchy in the years 1661 to 1685? (24 marks)

There are a number of views about how absolute Louis was as king. Some argue that he was 'overly powerful', others that he was 'not completely absolute'. As king, Louis' aims were simple, to achieve 'gloire', to fight glorious wars and to be able to live in comfort.

Louis needed to exercise absolute authority in order to secure his rule. When Louis came to the throne he needed to show he would use his power, so he made 'lettres de cachet' (which meant imprisonment without trial) and threw the most powerful man in France, Fouquet, into prison. This showed the power Louis could use against the high ranking upper class. Force was another way, for example the occupation of Marseilles and defeating an uprising in Brittany, along with the use of Dragonades on Huguenots showed that Louis would use force if necessary to enforce his authority. At Versailles he could control his court and nobles through the use of patronage, which avoided force, so the people had to go to the king for jobs/favours, rather than the king going to them.

However Louis was never entirely absolute as there were things he couldn't change. Louis was a king by law and had to rule inside the law otherwise he would look despotic, selfish and tyrannical. This prevented him from making major changes as he may face an uprising as Mazarin did before him because of the introduction of the Paulette Tax, so Louis had to keep a feeling of continuity with no major changes. Exemptions and privileges were another thing that Louis could not change, for example the clergy were exempt from the 'taille' land tax. If Louis had removed the exemption/privileges of a holder, others with such privileges would become uneasy, lessening their trust in the king. Venality also stood in Louis' way, as he could not get rid of people who had bought offices, as did the lack of a police force/poor communication in France, which allowed orders given by Louis not to be carried out for months which shows he did not have absolute power.

After looking at Louis' position, it is clear that he generally maintained absolute authority. The introduction of the 'capitation' and 'dixième' taxes can be seen as proof of Louis' absolutism, because no one was exempt from them. This shows the high level of power Louis had. He was not entirely absolute but was as close as he could get without being despotic.

Examiners Comments:

This approaches the question directly and shows range and balance. It carries an argument, although this is not fully developed and uses selected evidence in support.

Level 4 (20 marks)

HIS1H

1 (a) Explain why Alexander II decided on a policy of reform in Russia. (12 marks)

Alexander decided on a policy of reform for several reasons, some because of his moral conscience, some to progress Russia economically and some because of the situation in Russia at the time. All these reforms had the aim of strengthening Russia.

One reason why Alexander was a reformist Tsar is due to the failure of the Crimean War. He did not want to accept defeats and thus decided to emancipate the serfs. Linked to this is the incompetence of the Russian style of government and the limitations of the social structure, which were revealed by defeat in the Crimean War. Most of the Russian army was made up of serfs and peasants who were malnourished and hated the social system. In order for Russia to become a strong military power the serfs needed to be emancipated and other reforms introduced.

Another reason for Alexander's reforms was that he felt it to be his duty as a 'little father'. He was brought up in a more liberal way and this made him realise the benefits of reforming Russia: it would create a stronger and more flexible country.

Alexander also chose a policy of reform as he wanted Russia to progress industrially in order to compete with other European countries. Russia was seen as a backward nation as it still had serfdom and was not industrial. Serfdom limited the flexibility of the system as the peasants would not leave the countryside to work in urban areas to produce goods which Russia could sell; the multiplier effect. Also the peasants were uneducated, there was a corrupt legal system and little trade. Russia needed industrial, economic, social and legal reform to become stronger and one set of reforms could not work without the other.

Examiners Comments:

Focused and with some range. The links are stated at the outset and again in the conclusion.

Level 4 (12 marks)

1 (b) How successful were Alexander II's reforms in modernising Russia before his death in 1881? (24 marks)

Alexander implemented a number of important reforms that were to dramatically modernise Russia. Although industrialisation did not really take off until the reign of Alexander III, Russia did change as a consequence of Alexander II's reforms. However, his reforms never lead to the considerable improvements he expected as they were somewhat incomplete.

In terms of the Russian economy changing from an agricultural into an industrial one, Alexander's reforms were not that successful. Most of the population remained peasants. However, the political structure of Russia changed considerably which led to it adopting some of the ways of a developed, western European country. Prior to emancipation, the landowner had been responsible for controlling all aspects of the lives of the serfs. When this system was abolished, changes were needed to replace the landlords and the loss of the tied serfs. These included changes in the judicial, education and military systems, the setting up of the Zemstva and the powers given to the mir.

The 1864 judicial reforms made the legal system less corrupt and removed the bias towards the government that was 'behind the times'. The 1864 educational reforms required all to receive a primary education, which was important as Russia suffered from mass illiteracy and this would help Russia develop an educated workforce. The military reforms of 1874 also brought Russia more up-to-date with the armies of other major powers. Whilst these reforms might first be seen to have made a massive impact on modernising Russian society, there were limitations.

Following emancipation the serfs were given very little land and that which they received was of poor quality. In reality they had less land than when they were serfs. This was seen as unfair as they believed that, because they had worked the land for generations, it should now belong to them. This led to uprisings such as at Bezdna in 1863. The huge redemption taxes also meant that the peasants had to sell many of the crops they needed to eat and the mir kept the peasants tied to their commune and still controlled by rules. This reform was not as successful as intended and did not create a 'modern' society.

The reform of the zemstva also fell short as it had little funding from the government and significantly favoured the nobility. Alexander also dismissed the idea of a national assembly as a 'senseless dream'. The judicial reforms were moderately successful although they were tightened up after the Vera Zasulich case in 1878. The educational reforms also failed to have a significant impact of literacy as the zemstva did not provide the required finance.

Thus it can be seen that Alexander's reforms did not modernise Russia as they had been expected to do. The traditional mindset of the Russian people also did not change. The 'go to the people' movement in 1874 showed that the peasants were still conservative and very loyal to the Tsar. This led to some populist groups turning to terrorism and the eventual assassination by the People's Will of Alexander II in 1881.

In conclusion, the large number of reforms implemented by Alexander II were set to drastically modernise Russia. On the face of it they were rather successful but closer inspection reveals that in many cases they were empty, token reforms. He had given the impression of modernisation but failed to carry it out properly. It was not until the twentieth century that things began to change significantly.

Examiners Comments:

A well-balanced answer which comments on a range of reforms showing successes and limitations. There is some judgement here with a good attempt to address 'modernisation'. Just sufficient for Level 5.

Level 5 (22 marks)