

History

Paper 2R (AS) Additional Specimen Question  
Paper

Question 03 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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## Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Paper 2R (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

**03** 'Credit for the peaceful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis should be shared equally between Khrushchev and Kennedy.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

**[25 marks]**

#### Student response

Credit for the peaceful resolutions of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 should be shared equally between the two Khrushchev and Kennedy. However some historians may argue that it was more of a success for Kennedy, as the US removed their missiles without public knowledge and Khrushchev was overthrown for his efforts. Others may argue that Kennedy surrendered too much money for him to be seen positively.

In terms of peaceful resolution, both leaders made attempts at calmly solving the crisis without aggression, giving them equal credit. Firstly, Khrushchev sent two telegrams to suggest methods of peacefully ending the huge threat of nuclear war. The second of these telegrams demanded the USA removed their Jupiter missiles from Turkey, which was in fact the solution which ended the crisis. This clearly illustrates Khrushchev's determination to avoid military action and his success in doing so. However, Kennedy's role was also key to the peaceful resolution. On the night in late October when the US cabinet received the two telegrams, Kennedy set up a meeting between his brother, Robert Kennedy, and a representative member of the Russian government. In secret, the two agreed that the Cuban missiles were to be removed and five months later the USA were expected to evacuate their Jupiters from Turkey. This was the meeting which ended the crisis peacefully, so ultimately Kennedy setting up this meeting sealed the agreement. Therefore each leader was responsible for the peaceful resolution of the crisis as they both agreed on a conclusion to cease nuclear threat, so credit should be shared equally between the democracy of the two leaders.

In essence, the conclusion of the crisis brought about similar consequence for each leader: the removal of their missiles from near to the other country's border. The fact that both leaders followed his agreement meant by spring the following year each country felt more safe in their own national security. This contrast of brinkmanship and peaceful coexistence proved the success of both leaders in the 1962 crisis, as well as their determination to stick to the peaceful resolution. This is another reason credit should be shared equally, as both Khrushchev and Kennedy removed their missiles, showing mutual trust upon which the peaceful resolution was made.

Finally, the aims of both leaders were the same entering the peace negotiations: neither wanted nuclear war. The USA had built up an extensive Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe which they were not prepared to be destroyed. They also knew America has nuclear superiority, so they were likely to be beaten in a nuclear war. Similarly, Cuban missiles could have wiped out almost all of America bar Seattle, so Kennedy would have been keen to avoid this event so both leaders aim was peaceful existence. Evidence of their commitment to this is in the Test Ban treaty of 1963, which proves both

can take credit for the peaceful resolution of the crisis, and both even took precautions so it would not reoccur.

On the other hand, it is clear that there could be some imbalance perceived between the two leaders. Firstly, the financial burden to the US was a great deal more than Khrushchev's. This could be interpreted as Kennedy putting more effort into a peaceful conclusion, however much of this money went towards the blockade (or quarantine which can be perceived as an act of war, therefore steering in the appropriate direction to peaceful resolutions. Either way more economic effort was put in by Kennedy, so perhaps credit should not be shared equally.

Furthermore, after the crisis Khrushchev was overthrown from power due to his actions in war, whereas Kennedy was seen as a hero who prevented world destruction. These two perceptions of the leaders may be an indicator of the true leader responsible for peaceful resolution, after all it was Kennedy who finally organised the peace meeting, and Khrushchev was contradictory perhaps showing weak leadership. These ideas mean Kennedy comes out on top, as he won more certain and proactive in his role in peaceful resolutions, hence his country's reaction to his dealings.

Finally, Kennedy ignored the U-2 plane which was shot down by Cuban soldiers in order to continue peaceful negotiations, this sheer determination to avoid war and resolve the crisis show Kennedy to be truly devoted to the cause, whilst Khrushchev appeared less interested and ambiguous in what he wanted to gain from the crisis.

To conclude I agree that each leader should receive equal credit for the peaceful resolutions of the crisis. Although Kennedy may appear more involved, Khrushchev was clearly just as devoted to a non-military outcome, hence his allowance for the US to remove their missiles from Turkey without it being public knowledge – he had the chance to make America look less like heroes, but chose to opt for this option in order to bring the crisis to an end after just 13 days. This is on par with Kennedy's ignoring of the U-2 spy plane showing the two leaders to be equal in their efforts for a peaceful resolution.

#### **Commentary – Level 4**

This is a well-controlled response which is generally relevant and focused. Assessment and argument are supported and generally persuasive. The answer does become somewhat too general towards the end and whilst the points made may be relevant, they are not explicitly made to appear so. It demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding for Level 4.