



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1E: Russia, 1917-91: from Lenin to

Yeltsin

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Introduction

The 9HI0 1E paper is divided into three sections. Both sections A and B comprised of a choice of essays – from two in each – that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates, in the main, appeared to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated. A number of scripts posed some problems with the legibility of handwriting. Examiners can only give credit for what they can read.

Of the three sections on 9HI0 1E, candidates are generally more familiar with the essay sections, and in sections A and B most candidates were well prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept(s) that was being targeted by the question. A minority of often knowledgeable candidates wanted to focus on causes and engage in a main factor/other factors approach, even where this did not necessarily address the demands of the conceptual focus. On the whole, candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections in terms of the depth of knowledge required: section A questions targeted a shorter period and section B questions covered a broader time span.

Candidates do need to formulate their planning so that there is an argument and a counterargument within their answer. Some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

In section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer comparative analysis of the merits of the different views. Higher scoring responses explored the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence; both from within the extracts and the candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, make assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence or drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider-taught topic.

Question 1

On Q1, stronger responses offered an analysis of whether the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was the main reason for the survival of the Soviet regime in the years 1917-28. There was reasonably even coverage between the introduction of the NEP (e.g. the NEP, by abolishing grain requisitioning and removing the ban on private trade, offered rural Russia economic incentives, which reduced peasant opposition to the Bolshevik regime, the new class of 'NEP men' also assisted the regime in the short term by linking the towns with the countryside and by undertaking many economic tasks beyond the cumbersome and inefficient state planning system, economic recovery under the NEP, in the years 1921-24, helped to consolidate the regime by improving living standards, e.g. by raising food production and increasing average wages for urban workers actions/attitudes) and other factors (e.g. the Bolshevik regime relied heavily on coercion and repression to survive in the years 1917-28, e.g. Red Terror, crushing of the Tambov revolt, attacks on the Church,

propaganda and censorship were used extensively in the years 1917-28 to win over 'hearts and minds' and remove critics of the regime, e.g. Glavlit introduced pre-publication censorship and the cult of Lenin, the weakness of the anti-Bolshevik opposition helped the Soviet regime to survive during this period, e.g. the White forces were divided during the civil war and the Kronstadt and Tambov revolts were isolated).

There was some balance in arguments for/against, although valid conclusions could be reached either way. More importantly, the focus remained largely on causation with consistent analysis exploring this second order concept. Judgements were well-reasoned and thus considered criteria, and high-scoring responses were clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to offer limited knowledge of the reasons for the survival of the Soviet regime in the years 1917-28, or a largely narrative account of the period with little focus on the impact of the NEP. Some low-scoring answers dealt mainly with one aspect of the NEP, e.g. the policy enabled the Soviet regime to retain control over the 'commanding heights' of the economy, so the communists continued to dominate important industrial sectors, but where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far. Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 2

On Q2, stronger responses targeted how accurate it is to say that government policy failed to modernise Soviet agriculture in the years 1928-64. These high-scoring answers gave reasonable chronological coverage and focussed on both 'failed to modernise' (e.g. collectivisation failed to modernise Soviet agriculture because it had a disastrous impact on food production and livestock levels and caused widespread rural famine, in the immediate post-war period, government policy failed to modernise Soviet agriculture, e.g. in 1952 grain production was still below 1940 levels and the farming sector remained extremely labour intensive, Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Scheme, introduced in 1954, experienced serious setbacks in the drive to increase efficiency and output, e.g. uncertain crop yields and reliance on imported grain from the West) and 'did modernise' (e.g. collectivisation modernised Soviet agriculture in the sense that the farming sector was made part of the centralised command economy and party control was imposed over the rural population, Soviet policies saw farming incomes double between 1952 and 1958, over the 1953-58 period, Soviet food production increased by 51 per cent). There was some depth on the issue of 'failed to modernise', and a consistent analysis exploring the interaction and/or weighing of these factors. Judgements were well-reasoned and thus considered criteria. Stronger responses were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to offer limited knowledge or limited analysis of government failure (or otherwise) to modernise Soviet agriculture, or a narrative of the 1928-64 period. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or only offered one narrow aspect related to the demands of the question, e.g. collectivisation in the 1930s. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 3

On Q3, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the view that the Soviet leadership's hostility to religion remained remarkably consistent in the years 1917-85 and were focused clearly on change/continuity. These high-scoring answers offered reasonably even coverage between

'remarkably consistent' (e.g. the Soviet leadership remained ideologically opposed to religion and its institutions throughout this period because such belief systems potentially threatened to undermine socialist values and communist control, the Soviet leadership engaged in the persecution of religious personnel throughout the period, e.g. the targeting of priests and other religious figures under Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the Soviet leadership attempted to dismantle the infrastructure of organised religion during this period, e.g. the destruction or conversion of churches under Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev) and 'not remarkably consistent' (e.g. under Lenin, the Soviet authorities funded Islamic schools and encouraged Muslims to join the party; Lenin's regime was less hostile to Islam because there had been no official link between Islam and the Tsarist system, Stalin made a pragmatic alliance with the Orthodox Church during the Second World War to strengthen the war effort, e.g. anti-religious censorship and propaganda was ended and 414 churches were reopened, under Brezhnev, the Soviet leadership was more tolerant of the Orthodox Church, aware that religious persecution alienated Western opinion and complicated the conduct of Soviet foreign policy).

Sufficient knowledge was applied to develop an analysis and there was a clear range and balance (across the period and arguing for change and continuity regarding the Soviet leadership's hostility to religion) in order to examine and explore key issues. Judgements made about change/continuity regarding the Soviet leadership's hostility to religion were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and often described aspects of the Soviet leadership's policies on religion in the years 1917-85 with limited focus on how these policies demonstrated/did not demonstrate 'remarkably consistent' hostility. Some low-scoring responses devoted virtually all attention to one particular aspect, e.g. government policy towards religion under Stalin or focused on part of the period, e.g. up to 1964, thus restricting range. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 4

On Q4, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the view that that the status of women in Stalinist society was essentially similar to that of women in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. These high-scoring answers offered reasonably even coverage between similarity (e.g. although women had greater employment opportunities during these years, most females worked in relatively unskilled, low paid jobs, e.g. routine factory work and agricultural labour, throughout the entire period the 'double burden' put considerable pressure on women – the entrenched expectation that women should combine employment with family responsibilities, throughout, women were underrepresented at all levels in the Communist Party, e.g. in the 1930s only 16 per cent of party members were women and the first female Praesidium member was appointed in 1957) and difference (e.g. under Khrushchev and Brezhnev greater emphasis was placed on the provision of social benefits, such as healthcare, maternity arrangements and childcare, to improve conditions for women, women were given access to abortion once again in 1955, thereby allowing females greater control over their own bodies; Stalin had made abortion illegal in 1936, Brezhnev's Family Code of 1968 gave women greater protection by making it illegal to divorce a woman who was pregnant or with a child under the age of one).

A clear range and balance was evident here too (across the period, and arguing for/against 'essentially similar') in order to examine and explore key issues. Judgements made about the

similarity/difference of the status of women were reasoned and based on clear criteria. Higher scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a limited analysis of the similarity/difference of the status of women under Stalin and Khrushchev/Brezhnev. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on similarity/difference or were essentially a description of the status of Soviet women during the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth, e.g. little coverage of the status of women under Khrushchev or Brezhnev. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Question 5

On Question 5, stronger responses developed a clear extract-based analysis of the extent to which the USSR collapsed in 1991 because of the challenge posed by Boris Yeltsin. Such responses explored most of the arguments raised within the extracts (e.g. Yeltsin was a polarising figure because he opposed Gorbachev's domestic measures by supporting the union republics, criticising the Soviet authorities and asserting Russian sovereignty, Yeltsin was central to negotiations for a Union Treaty (1990-91) that would have undermined the integrity of the USSR by establishing a confederation, Gorbachev's reform programme and decisions, specifically concerning perestroika and democratisation, made the collapse of the Soviet Union more likely, the events following the failed August 1991 coup attempt led to the collapse of the Soviet Union during the autumn of that year). Contextual knowledge was also used effectively to examine the merits/validity of the views put forward in the extracts (e.g. with Yeltsin's approval and backing, the parliament of the Russian Republic declared that its sovereignty took precedence over that of the Soviet Union – in short, it stood above the authority of the USSR, Yeltsin's encouragement of the nationalist movements of the non-Russian republics was deliberately designed to undermine the authority of the central Soviet government, Gorbachev's economic initiatives, such as perestroika and market reforms, undermined the unity of the USSR by failing to produce adequate supplies of food and consumer goods for the Soviet population, Gorbachev's moves towards democratisation and political reform, notably the abolition of Article 6, effectively ended the communist one-party state and permitted other parties to be set up and contest elections). Stronger responses were also clearly focused on the precise terms of the question (the USSR collapsed in 1991 because of the challenge posed by Boris Yeltsin) and put forward a reasoned judgement on the given issue, referencing the views in the extracts.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the extracts but tended to select quotations, paraphrase or describe, without proper reasoning. At this level, material from the extracts was used simply to illustrate (e.g. Yeltsin opposed/criticised Gorbachev (extract 1), or Gorbachev's reforms made the situation worse (extract 2)). Such responses often revealed limited recognition of the differences between the two extracts and sometimes drifted from the specific question to the wider controversy surrounding the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Low-scoring candidates also relied heavily on the extracts as sources of information. Alternatively, they made limited use of the sources, attempting instead to answer the question, relying almost exclusively on their own knowledge. Here, too, candidates' own knowledge tended to be illustrative (e.g. 'tacked on' to points from the extracts) or drifted on to less relevant points. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice.

Features commonly found in section A/B responses which were successful within the higher levels were:

- Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question.
- Careful consideration of the issue in the question (main factor) as well as some other factors.
- Candidates explaining their judgement fully – this need not be in an artificial or abstract way, but demonstrate their reasoning in relation to the concepts and topic they are writing about in order to justify their judgements.
- A careful focus on the second-order concept(s) targeted in the question.
- Consideration of timing to enable the completion of all three questions (approximately the same time being given over to each response).
- An appropriate level, in terms of depth of detail and analysis, as required by the question, e.g. a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions.

With regards to the level and quality of knowledge, candidates and centres should recognise the expectation of Advanced Level. In short, it is a combination of the knowledge candidates are able to bring to the essay, married with their ability to effectively marshal this material towards the analytical demands of the question. It is fair to say that on Paper 1, where candidates study a range of themes across a broad chronological period, the expectations regarding depth of knowledge will not necessarily be as great as in the more in-depth periods studied. As well as offering more depth of knowledge, candidates who have engaged in wider reading tend to be more successful as they are able to select and deploy the most appropriate examples to support analysis and evaluation.

Common issues which hindered performance in section A/B were:

- Paying little heed to the precise demands of the question, e.g. writing about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempting to give an answer to a question that hasn't been asked (most frequently, this meant treating questions which targeted other second-order concepts as causation questions).
- Answering a question without giving sufficient consideration to the given issue in the question, e.g. looking at other causes, consequences, etc.
- Answers which only gave a partial response, e.g. a very limited span of the date range, or covered the stated cause/consequence, with no real consideration of other issues.
- Failure to consider the date range as specified in the question.
- Assertion of change, causation etc. often with formulaic repetition of the words of the question, with limited explanation or analysis of how exactly this was a change, cause, relating to the issue within the question.
- Judgement not being reached or explained.
- A lack of detail.

Across the units, there was some evidence to suggest that, as might be expected, candidates were somewhat less confident when dealing with topics that were new to the reformed Advanced Level.

Features commonly found in section C responses which were successful within the higher levels were:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question (as opposed to preprepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification).

- Thorough use of the extracts; this need not mean using every point they raise, but a strong focus on these as views on the question.
- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, e.g. consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits.
- Careful use of own knowledge, e.g. clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources, confidently using this to examine the arguments made, and reason through these in relation to the given question (selection over sheer amount of knowledge).
- Careful reading of the extracts to ensure the meaning of individual statements and evidence within them were used in the context of the broader arguments made by the authors.
- Attempts to see beyond the stark differences between sources, e.g. consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or an attempt to reconcile their arguments.
- Confident handling of the extracts, seemingly from experience in reading and examining excerpts (and no doubt whole books), allied to a sharp focus on the arguments given, recognising the distinct skills demanded by A03.

Common issues which hindered performance in section C were:

- Limited or uneven use of the extracts, e.g. extensive use of one, with limited consideration of the other.
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations.
- Using the extracts merely as sources of support.
- Arguing one extract is superior to the other on the basis that it offers more factual evidence to back up the claims made, without genuinely analysing the arguments offered.
- Heavy use of own knowledge, or even seemingly pre-prepared arguments, without real consideration of the arguments in the sources.
- Statements or evidence from the source being used in a manner contrary to that given in the sources, e.g. through misinterpretation of the meaning of the arguments, or the lifting of detail out of context from the extract.
- A tendency to see the extracts as being polar opposites, again through expectation of this, without thought to where there may be degrees of difference, or even common ground.

