

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y219/01 Summer 2022 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

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Paper Y219/01 series overview

Most of the responses adhered to the correct convention and answered both questions from either Question 1 or Question 2. A few candidates selected one or more from both questions. Both questions were equally popular. There were some very good responses. However, many responses showed a level of supporting knowledge that was generalised. This was particularly evident in some of aspects of the (a) questions, such as in 1(a) the domestic policies of Tsar Nicholas II and in 2(a) economic problems.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understood the key issues in the questions knew the key events with reasonable depth of knowledge to be able to effectively support their arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not focus their responses on the question asked had a generalised knowledge rather than detailed knowledge did not manage their time effectively to be able to fully complete both answers.

Key point – study the question before answering

Candidates would enhance their performance if the wording of the questions was considered carefully, so that they are focused on the specific demands of the question.

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Which of the following was more important in causing the 1905 Revolution?

- (i) The Russo-Japanese War
- (ii) The domestic policies of Tsar Nicholas II

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

The purpose of this question was for candidates to provide a comparative analysis of these two issues in the relation to their importance in causing the 1905 Revolution. Although there were some good responses, many demonstrated generalised knowledge.

In relation to the Russo-Japanese War candidates were not fully aware of some of the events of the war in the context of the start of the Revolution. An example of this is the defeat at Tsushima which occurred after the start of the 1905 Revolution and, therefore, the defeat would have been better used as an argument against the importance of the war as a cause of the 1905 Revolution. The loss of Port Arthur would have been more appropriate evidence to support the argument that the Russo-Japanese War was important in causing the Revolution.

Some responses provided generalised knowledge of the economic and social problems in Russia before 1905 as their explanation of Tsar Nicholas II's domestic policies rather than specific knowledge of policies, such as the extension of the Russification policy or his policy of responding to protests with repression which caused the army's response to the protest on Bloody Sunday.

Exemplar 1

Nicholas II was an incompetent and ineffective ruler whose ~~is~~ policies caused unrest due to their reactionary and backward nature, ^{which is more important as a cause of the 1905 Revolution than the war.} This was seen with his continuation of his father's policy of Russification. With millions of the population ~~being~~ ^{being} national minorities this was a ~~so~~ particularly harsh policy and one that did not fit the times alongside Western Europe. For example Jews made up 5 million of the population and were all sent to gulags. This inevitably caused unrest. Nicholas II also made bad decisions as a ruler, such as ordering suppression of the Putilov steel workers strikes in 1905. Over 200 were killed with many more wounded. This destroyed the Tsar's image as the 'Little Father'. This Bloody Sunday Massacre became the spark for the 1905 revolution. However, the Putilov strike had occurred because of ~~unhappy~~ ^{discontent} over working conditions. Witte's attempts to modernise industry had led

to overcrowding in cities ^{and} poor living conditions with poor sanitation and rapid spread of disease. It was the failure of the Tsar ~~and his~~ ^{to give} concessions to workers due to his stubbornness and inability to effectively lead Russia that was the main cause of the 1905 Revolution. However, this may have been less damaging had ~~the~~ Russia not been simultaneously suffering defeat in the Russo-Japanese War.

Exemplar 1, taken from a Level 5 response, shows the use of some detailed knowledge of the domestic policies of Tsar Nicholas II at the same time linking the knowledge to the causes of the 1905 Revolution.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* How important were the actions of the Bolsheviks between March and November 1917 in bringing about the fall of the Provisional Government? [20]

The focus of this question was to analyse how important the actions of the Bolsheviks were in relation to the reasons for the fall of the Provisional Government in November 1917. Most candidates showed an understanding of the demands of the question and were able to analyse the given factor against the importance of other factors, particularly citing the failures of The Provisional Government. However, some candidates simplified their analysis of the 'actions of the Bolsheviks' by only focusing on the role of Lenin and not widening their analysis to Trotsky or Bolsheviks in general. Also, few responses considered if there was any importance of the fact that Lenin was in exile in Finland between July and October. Some responses referred to the failures of the Provisional Government but made little reference to actions and decisions of Kerensky in the events of 1917. The more accomplished answers also provided some analysis of the events in November 1917 leading to the Bolsheviks' seizure of power.

Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) Which of the following was more important in causing the Revolution of March 1917?
- (i) Economic problems
 - (ii) The leadership of Tsar Nicholas II

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

The focus for this question should be that candidates to provide a comparative analysis of the importance of these two issues as causes of the March 1917 Revolution. Most responses dealt more effectively with the leadership of Tsar Nicholas II using knowledge of his leadership during the World War 1, particularly his role as Commander-in -Chief of the army and the influence of Rasputin. Few answers referred to Tsar Nicholas' persistent refusal to form a 'Ministry of National Confidence'.

However, the issue of economic problems tended to be dealt by providing general descriptions of the economic and social problems in Russia. Some responses provided knowledge and analysis of government policies before 1914 with some going back to the policies of Witte. The better responses focused their knowledge and analysis of the economic effects of the war 1914-1917, as shown in Exemplar 2.

Exemplar 2

2a)	<p>Economic problems were important in causing the February ^{March} Revolution ^{of 1917} as they led to increasing peasant and worker unrest. WW1 had led to government expenditure increasing from 4 to 30 million roubles, this led to increased taxation on the peasants and the workers who still made up 82% of the population. This also was worsened by the severe hyperinflation, whereby wages although doubling prices quadrupled, these severe economic problems led to growing civil unrest as food also became a shortage as peasants refused to sell on the unprofitable market, which led to bread rationing becoming more severe as rations were reduced from 2.7 pounds to just 1.8 pounds. This was important in causing the revolution, as it was the combined unity between the majority of the population due to their combined economic problems which made them susceptible to revolutionary idea and the need to change. The growing urban workforce (1.8 to 2.4 million) were suffering from poor wages, poor conditions and long working hours, which coupled with peasant unrest caused by the economically backwardness of the agricultural industry united Russia in combined hatred towards the Tsar who they saw as being unable to deal with their economic problems</p>
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Exemplar 2, from a Level 5 response, demonstrates providing knowledge and analysis of the economic problems. However, the response missed the opportunity to enhance the reference to food shortages by linking it to the bread shortages and subsequent strikes and protests in Petrograd in March 1917.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* 'Stalin's control over the USSR in the years from 1929 to 1941 was due to his use of propaganda.' How far do you agree?

[20]

Most responses to this question demonstrated an understanding of the demands of the question, to analyse the part played by propaganda in enabling Stalin to control Russia. Most responses provided analysis of propaganda and compared it with other factors. However, there were varying degrees of success in this expected approach. There were a significant number of responses that gave generalised knowledge of propaganda, and some did not appreciate that knowledge of Stalin's Cult of Personality should be used as evidence for propaganda rather than making it a separate factor. This led to some responses having limited 'other' factors to analyse. Most responses included the Purges as a means of control with some providing accurate and detailed knowledge. However, a significant number of answers did not include the elements of control used in the 5 Year Plans, particularly collectivisation and elimination of the Kulaks. Very few responses referred to the fact that some aspects of Stalin's control were enhanced by the active and positive support from those in the cities who gained from his economic policies.

There were several responses that were not fully aware of the timeframe of the question [1929-41] and, therefore, provided knowledge and analysis of events from the mid-1920s.

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