

Examiners' Report

June 2013

GCSE History 5HA02 2B

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June 2013

Publications Code UG036174

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Introduction

As in previous years, this option saw the largest number of high quality scripts. This was particularly noticeable on Question 3 where sophisticated explanation was often built upon with well-supported prioritisation to produce excellent responses. Candidates now have few technical issues with this extended writing question and this is seen in the confident way many of them shape their answers.

Although candidates generally answered the paper well, there were some areas which disappointed.

Question 1b asked about censorship, but many candidates failed to see how this was different from propaganda. There were, therefore, some detailed accounts of the Cult of Stalin, but these could not be rewarded as examiners were looking for restrictions on expression, not how the media could be used positively.

Question 1c did catch out a number of candidates who did not know what was meant by the 'decrees passed in 1917 by the Bolshevik government'. This was disappointing as the specification lists 'the early Bolshevik decrees' in the amplification of content.

Question 1d highlighted one of the issues when studying any period of history. The specification begins in 1917, but to understand the events of 1917 candidates have to be familiar with events before that date. When asked why the Tsar was unpopular in 1917, however, candidates should not be relating events from as far back as the Russo-Japanese War. There is plenty of material from close to February 1917 which explains the loss of popularity and it is not necessary to highlight long-term causes. Candidates will not be rewarded for discussing events before 1917, but will be rewarded for 'issues' which exist in 1917 and have their roots before that date (incompetent leadership, poor performance in the war etc.).

Question 1 (a)

Although some candidates mistakenly made inferences about Stalin or the Soviet Union in general, this question presented few difficulties for candidates and most talked about how women were not treated as equals under Stalin. Consequently, many answers reached Level 3 by supporting inferences that women were second-class citizens, that the promises of the revolution were not fulfilled, or that they were not given the same opportunities in government as men.

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I can learn from source A that women were discriminated by society under Stalin. I can tell this because in source A it tell me that women were under the impression of being seen to do certain domestic chores and not having a post in high office when Stalin is in power.



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Examiner Comments

The answer reached Level 3 by immediately making an inference ('*women were discriminated against*') and supporting this with a paraphrase of the source (women had to '*do certain domestic chores.*') It showed good technique by avoiding irrelevant introduction or detail.



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Examiner Tip

This is a question which does not require extended writing. Make your inference straight away and then quote or paraphrase to support it.

Question 1 (b)

This answer revealed a misunderstanding on the part of some candidates. What examiners were expecting to see was detail of Stalin's control of the general media and of education through censorship. Many responses used those two areas as their two 'features' and provided supporting detail to score well in Level 2.

However, there was a significant minority of candidates who failed to understand the difference between censorship and propaganda. Giving details of the propaganda Stalin used to boost his popularity was not rewardable as a response to this question. Explaining how Stalin prevented negative messages being propagated was.

This question revealed a general misunderstanding by some candidates, who failed to grasp the difference between censorship and propaganda. What examiners expected to see was detail of how Stalin controlled the message that was portrayed of communist rule both in education and in the media in general. Many candidates did so and used the media and education as their key features. A significant minority, however, wrote of Stalin's positive use of propaganda to build his image. This was not rewardable; showing how he built his image by preventing negative messages was rewardable.

Under Stalin art, poetry, music and writing was carefully censored there was a committee who controlled the publishing of material and carefully censored it. Writers and artists were expected to use an idea of 'social realism', where they gave simple clear and optimistic messages about life in the Soviet Union. They had to give positive messages about communism.

Culture was carefully censored as all composers had to write music that could be understood by all. So anything abstract was frowned upon, ^{that is why changes in the west are not reflected in any Soviet work.}

Stalin also censored education as he decided what subjects children were taught. He also taught children his changed version of history, where he showed himself playing a key revolutionary role. He had photographs edited to show himself closer to Lenin and ensured children were taught from his book 'A short history of the USSR', which

reinforced and showed his forged version of history - Stalin also made communist ideology teaching compulsory, to ~~ensure~~ brain children publically that communism is the right way, but not allowing the idea of capitalism in.



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Examiner Comments

This is a good answer, covering a number of features (publishing, culture, education) and providing sufficient detail to earn reward towards the top of Level 2.



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Examiner Tip

Remember that this question is your opportunity to provide detail on a topic and to do so by developing two features. So go straight in with '*One feature of censorship was...*', give detail and then move on to the second feature.

Question 1 (c)

This was a question where some candidates were unable to provide a satisfactory response because they did not know what was meant by the 'decrees passed in 1917'. That was a little surprising as the Bolshevik decrees are outlined in the specification. Where the decrees were not known, there was often reference to the July Days, to the work of the Cheka and to the Kronstadt Mutiny. Fortunately 'Peace, Bread and Land' or details of Brest-Litovsk often produced material relevant to the question and gained some reward.

Where candidates knew their material, there was often good detail on the Land Decree, the Peace Decree and the Workers' Decree. This was rewarded in Level 2. Where candidates were able to show the effects of the various decrees, perhaps in increasing or decreasing support for the Bolsheviks, or perhaps in making civil war inevitable, Level 3 was achieved.

One effect of the decrees passed is that the Bolsheviks gained support.

This came about because the decrees fulfilled what the Bolsheviks had been promising, proving that they were the only trust worthy party who was dedicated to change. For example, the Land Decree gave the peasants their own land to farm, causing a rise in support for the Bolsheviks in peasant communities. While, in reality, the peasants had already started taking the land, it still proved the Bolsheviks were true to their word.

However, while decrees caused a rise in support for the Bolsheviks in some areas of society, they angered other people. This came about because decrees, such as the Land decree, would redistribute wealth, meaning that the richest and most powerful in society had the most to lose, therefore ~~losing~~ the Bolshevik support. For example, the Treaty of Brest-

Litovsk was signed as a result of the Peace decree, and this angered ex-Tsarist army generals as well as patriots as Russia was greatly weakened, for example, they lost 80% of their industry



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Examiner Comments

This is a good answer which showed an understanding of the effects of the Land Decree and the Peace Decree. The answer went beyond the immediate impact of the measures and explained how the Land Decree increased Bolshevik popularity, but the Peace Decree led to the Treaty of Brest Litovsk and an element of resentment at giving so much away. This took the answer into Level 3.



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Examiner Tip

Don't forget that on a question about effects, the examiners are not looking just for detail of the topic identified (in this case the decrees), but want to know the impact. That is, what difference did they make?

Question 1 (d)

Unsurprisingly, this was a topic which was well-known, though it also showed a lack of focus on the part of some candidates. The question asked why the Tsar was unpopular in February 1917 and it was not expected that candidates would trace this unpopularity back to 1905 (n.b. the specification starts in 1917).

What was expected was reference to the poor showing in the war under the Tsar's leadership, the failure to end the war, inflation, poor living conditions, the mutiny of the troops in Petrograd and weak autocratic rule as exemplified by the Tsarini in the Tsar's absence. This was a much more valid set of criteria to use than the off-specification material on the Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday.

Most candidates took this route and scored securely in Level 2 by providing detail to support these causal factors. Where candidates were able to make a clear link between the factor and the increased unpopularity of the Tsar, Level 3 was awarded.

Tsar Nicholas was in charge of Russia in February 1917. Tsar was very unpopular due to many reasons. The decision to stay in the war was a key reason why the Tsar was very unpopular. Throughout his part in time of war Russia were struggling on supplies, soldiers and peasants lives. From staying in the war would increase death rate and waste supplies. Therefore this very much annoyed the people and allowed them to dislike the Tsar. Families and friends were killed for wrong reasons in the eyes of the people. Another reason for the Tsar being unpopular was due to the peasants lives and living conditions. 85% of Russia were peasants and unhealthy. Supplies were very low and living conditions were extremely poor. Therefore due to his many illnesses occurred and deaths were taking place. This put the Tsar in a position where he was wanted and needed for help. However

nothing was done. Tsar was very unpopular and men from showing no care for the

peasants the decision to stay in war decreased his popularity.

Another reason to the Tsar's unpopularity was his wife. As Russia was struggling in the war; Tsar decided to take charge and travel over with the army. Therefore he left his wife Tsarina in charge. The Tsarina was born in Germany and was not trusted by the people of Russia. She was known as a spy. People disliked the decision from the Tsar and led to men not trusting his wife and finding her as weak. This therefore led to a lack of popularity towards the Tsar.

Overall I believe the poor life styles to the peasants was the biggest problem for the Tsar (unpopular) as Russia had 85% of the population as a peasant. Therefore this meant dislikes the Tsar the popularity levels will be extremely low.



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Examiner Comments

This is a good answer which linked the points to the unpopularity of the Tsar, rather than just describing each reason. Failing to leave the war, poor living conditions and the unpopularity of the Tsar's wife were all explained and so Level 3 was reached.



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Examiner Tip

Remember that this is a causation question. The examiners do not want to read the story of the Tsar's overthrow. They want you to explain why he was unpopular.

Question 2 (a)

To score highest marks on this type of question, candidates have to realise that it is a question about 'change', rather than a question about economic policy in the years 1918-21.

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were able to identify and explain the various 'twists' in the Bolshevik economic policy. Most could explain the move from War Communism to the New Economic Policy, but many also gave detail of the change from the freedoms of immediate post-revolution times to War Communism. Consequently there were many answers at Level 3, though sometimes the detail of War Communism or NEP was all that was provided. Answers which restricted themselves to such detail were rewarded at Level 2.

Question 2 (b)

There were a variety of approaches which could be taken in answering this question. Most candidates considered the impact of collectivisation on the peasants. This certainly was the policy which had the greatest effect, but there were also some very good answers which looked at the impact of industrialisation, of educational and social reform and even Russification. Where detail was provided, reward was given in Level 2, where an explanation of how the life of the peasants was different as a result of Stalin's policies, then Level 3 was achieved.

Between 1928-1939, Stalin was in power and he demanded very highly of the peasant to provide food for his idea of industrialisation to occur. They went from the previous policy of the NEP (New Economic Policy), where they would have to produce a certain quota for the government and then could sell their surplus grain. This led to the formation of the kulaks, who were the wealthy farmers who benefited from this period.

Then in 1929-30, Stalin made his policy of collectivisation compulsory for every peasant. This meant that all the peasants land was rounded up and separated into 240,000 kolkhoz (collective farms). These were about 500 hectares big and peasant lived on them with 80 other families. There was also the creation of Sovkhoz which were the big estates, these were usually 3600 hectares.

Farming methods for the peasants changed greatly, Stalin

began the mechanisation of the agricultural industry. He placed MTS (Machine Tractor Stations) around the countryside with roughly 10,000 tractors. This was seen as a positive but indeed only slowed farming down as 1 in 12 tractors worked and spare parts were very rare.

Overall peasant life changed dramatically but most importantly there was Stalin's control over them now and the process of de-kulakisation (getting rid of the wealthy peasant) by sending them to gulags.



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Examiner Comments

This answer follows the conventional route of discussing the impact of collectivisation of peasants. It does, however, break away from the conventional story of peasant opposition and appreciate that there was change in the extent to which peasants had freedom. Under NEP they had some freedoms, but as a result of collectivisation and the need to support industrialisation, there was an increase in 'Stalin's control over them'.



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Examiner Tip

Remember that this is a question about change. So what you need to do is look at the difference that Stalin's rule made to the life of the peasants. How different was it to what had gone before?

Question 3 (a)

This question asked candidates to consider the reasons why the Provisional Government was overthrown. Almost all candidates were able to write on the four reasons given (the weaknesses of the Provisional Government, the work of Trotsky, the role of Lenin and continuing to the fight in the First World War).

There was a good level of explanation, taking candidates into Level 3 and a pleasing number of answers prioritising between reasons, or more commonly, explaining the relationship between them. Such answers were rewarded at Level 4.

In October 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power from the provisional government, there were many reasons why they were successful.

One reason why the Bolsheviks were successful were the weaknesses of the provisional government, these included the lack of support from peasants, and the poor leadership of Kerensky. In ~~the~~ ^{September} 1917 General Kornilov began to march for Petrograd to seize power, Kerensky chose to arm the Bolsheviks whom had been imprisoned since the July days. ~~After~~ After the revolt had been stopped the Bolsheviks were now armed and out of jail, putting them in a perfect situation to seize power from Kerensky.

This error of judgment from Kerensky was a major part of his own downfall as the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917.

Another reason for Bolshevik success in October 1917 was the role of Lenin. Lenin was influential as a Bolshevik and was a brilliant leader. ~~After~~ After ~~the~~ fleeing to Finland after the July days he returned to regain power. Previously he had created the 'April thesis'. This is what he promised to give the people if he succeeded in taking power. The promises were land, bread, peace and freedom. These promises gave him much support from people in Russia. Lenin knew when to seize the moment and coordinate

an attack on the Provisional Government and this proved to be an invaluable quality for taking over and leading Russia.

Another reason for Bolshevik success was because of the Provisional Government's decision to continue fighting in the First World War. They were getting heavily beaten and it caused famine in the rest of Russia, so it weakened all resources for the Provisional Government and made Bolshevik success an inevitability. This could perhaps be classed as a weakness of the Provisional Government or another poor error of judgment from Kerensky.

Another reason for Bolshevik success was the work and role of Trotsky. Trotsky worked hard to organise and communicate with the Soviets across the Red Guard, the Bolshevik forces. Trotsky organised where to attack and who would try to obtain vantage points such as train lines and communication centres. Due to the high level of preparation and organisation, the Provisional Government did not stand a chance against the Bolsheviks.

From my own knowledge of all accounts and events it is clear to me that due to all of the provisional government's mistakes and weaknesses, the full strength of the Bolshevik party was not needed in order to seize power in October 1917. Without the role of Lenin or the work of Trotsky, it is a possibility that the Bolsheviks could have won, however if the provisional government had all of their forces, it is unlikely that the Bolshevik party could have battled them all and ~~beat~~

Secured power.

In Conclusion Although all of these factors were important for a Bolshevik success, I feel that the most important were the weaknesses of the Provisional Government and Kerensky's leadership and decisions, such as the decisions regarding the First World War and the Kornilov Revolt.



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Examiner Comments

This is a concise answer, but it provided an explanation of the reasons why the Provisional Government fell and in the final two paragraphs compared the relative importance of the weakness of the Provisional Government and the work of Lenin and Trotsky. The conclusion was reached that no matter how important the two Bolshevik leaders were, the Provisional Government would not have fallen if it had been stronger. That took the answer to high Level 3.



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Examiner Tip

Remember when you are prioritising, it is not enough just to say 'this was the most important because ...' You need to say 'this reason was more important than that reason' and explain why by referring to both reasons..

Question 3 (b)

This was very much the less popular of the alternatives in Question 3, with the fall of the Provisional Government proving much more popular than Stalin's industrialisation. Despite that, there were some very good responses to this question. Details of the Five Year Plans and the Stakhanovites were well known and candidates were usually able to explain how these factors help Stalin to industrialise the Soviet Union. Some candidates were less secure in explaining how propaganda and methods of control contributed to industrialisation and their answers tended to be more descriptive, than analytical. The very best answers argued that the Five Year Plans produced the blue print, propaganda and Stakhanovites encouraged people to work towards industrialisation and, if that didn't work, methods of control forced the Soviet people into contributing whether they wanted to or not.

Paper Summary

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

- Answers should be confined to the years of the specification (1917-39) with earlier material used only to reinforce what was happening within the period mentioned in the question.
- Good teaching has meant we see a significant improvement in the responses to Q3, where explanation and prioritisation are now seen regularly.
- Care should be taken on Q1b to ensure that details relate precisely to the question asked.
- In Q1c and Q2 effects and change are best explained if candidates can give a summary of the position that existed previously.

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