



A-LEVEL POLITICS

7152/3: Political Ideas
Report on the Examination

7152
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General

As was the case with papers for the previous specification, the vast majority of students answered all questions set. As expected, the length of scripts was noticeably different to last year, given the fact that the duration of the exam is now thirty minutes longer. Centres clearly focused upon just one of the five optional ideologies. It is perhaps to be expected that centres will choose to provide the optional ideology they feel offers the best possible match to the core ideologies. For instance, anarchism was a popular choice partly because it offers a stark contrast to conservatism and has been described by one noted author as a mix of ultra-liberalism and ultra-socialism. As with previous years, the most successful students were able to offer a sophisticated answer in terms of synopticity. It appeared that the majority of students managed to allocate an even amount of time to each question, and avoided offering evaluation in the 9-mark questions.

Question 1

The vast majority of students followed a clear format of three paragraphs by referencing a thinker followed by some level of analysis. The most common thinkers cited were Marx, Engels, Crosland, Luxemburg, Beatrice Webb and Giddens. Terminology largely consisted of the inevitability of gradualism, class conflict, revisionism and class consciousness. Most students attempted to place socialist thinkers in a broader context (such as Giddens in regards to globalisation and the third way). There was however some confusion as to the goal of socialism (especially in regards to Giddens and Crosland). Students should refrain from using the term fundamental socialists and instead use phrases that relate to the various strands of thought. It should also be noted that less successful students confused Crosland with Giddens.

Question 2

By far the most common areas of discussion were the harm principle, the tyranny of the majority and laws in favour of positive discrimination. Students also analysed the potential limitations upon individual freedom arising from both a night-watchman (and enabling) state. This was often placed in the context of the two main strands of liberalism. The social contract theory put forward by John Locke was seen in numerous scripts. Students also managed to consider the question from a liberal feminist perspective. Surprisingly, few students considered the concept of utilitarianism as a limitation upon individual freedom.

Question 3

The main thinkers mentioned in the question on conservatism were Hobbes, Burke, Oakeshott, Rand and Nozick. The most common term used was original sin, and the quote most often cited was a state of nature characterised by a 'war of all against all.' It was pleasing to note how students identified the subtle yet important distinctions between the various conservative thinkers in regards to human nature. For instance, many students observed that the new right perspective adopts a more positive view of human nature than traditional conservatives. It was also pleasing to note that students had a good understanding of Oakeshott in the context of the question. However, many students cited Hobbes as viewing human nature as irrational.

Question 4

This was the first time a source question had been set on the ideologies paper, including previous specifications. It was pleasing to note that most students managed to compare the arguments made, but less able students merely mentioned passages with little or no analysis or evaluation

provided. More successful students offered a detailed and accurate understanding backed up with a balanced analysis and well-substantiated evaluation. In most cases, Marx (Engels) and Giddens were placed within a broader historical and theoretical context. Many students argued that Marxist views concerning social class were no longer relevant, although the vast majority of students claimed that social class had lost some of its relevance by the time Giddens was writing. Many placed the Giddens article into a useful context in regards to late capitalism. This is consistent with the mark scheme and the requirement to analyse and evaluate who the author is, the type of publication and the purpose of the author. Unlike the 9-mark questions, students did not follow a format for the source question. There was a wide variety of approaches provided to the source question. Students often showed a solid understanding of the various strands of socialism in regards to the question. At the highest level, there was a sophisticated use of terminology from all strands of socialist thought – although more Marxist concepts could have been mentioned.

Question 5

As with the question on anarchism, most students correctly identified that support for democracy is not confined to one particular strand of nationalism. There were a range of examples used in relation to synopticity, with the vast majority of students offering a balance to cover both sides of the argument (notably between inclusive and exclusive strands of nationalist thought). Many students managed to analyse and evaluate the key thinkers referenced in the specification, with Maurras mentioned frequently. Students who attempted this question often considered contemporary developments within nationalism (notably the rise of populism in regards to Donald Trump and Brexit). More successful students managed to evaluate the context and impact of nationalism in relation to democracy. Nationalist ideas can often be used to support and undermine democracy (particularly Rousseau). It should also be noted that the term nativist was commonly used in the context of Trump's policies and rhetoric.

Question 6

There was a wide range of answers offered to this question. Students were generally aware of the established strands of feminism in regards to their view of equality, with liberal feminists correctly identified as favouring equality of opportunity whereas socialist feminists favour a more even distribution of wealth. Responses were often placed in the context of the politics of sameness against the politics of difference. It was pleasing to note the use of contemporary terms, such as intersectionality, reference to modern-day developments and historical context. As with other optional questions, most students referenced the key thinkers specified. More successful students managed to illustrate the very wide degree of diversity amongst feminist thinkers in terms of strands, subsections of thought, the separatist approach and post-feminism. As with other 25-mark questions, more successful students demonstrated their synoptic awareness throughout.

Question 7

Multiculturalism was the least popular optional route, but those who attempted the question recognised that integration imposes rights and duties on individuals and social groups. However, the various definitions of integration were not widely mentioned. Multiculturalism was often placed into the context of laws, social practices, tolerance and identity. Regardless of their overall argument, students offered the full range of thinkers mentioned in the syllabus. More successful students sought to evaluate the various strands of multiculturalism in terms of their implications and assumptions surrounding cultural identity. As might be expected, examples were provided from a number of countries and cultures. Having said this, less successful students identified the question too narrowly. This resulted in sweeping generalisations concerning multiculturalism and

integration, rather than a consideration of the differences amongst various thinkers and the diverse strands of thought.

Question 8

Most students who attempted the question focused upon the dichotomy between pacifists and revolutionaries within the anarchist school of thought. More successful students claimed that anarchism was often mistakenly associated with political violence, when the majority of anarchist thinkers adopt a peaceful approach. It was also pleasing to note that students recognised the various subsections of anarchist thought, most notably anarcho-syndicalism in the context of the question. Less successful students sought to identify one particular strand of anarchist thought with political violence. Although most correctly identified the importance of the assumed response from the state, surprisingly few students mentioned propaganda of the deed. Not enough students made reference to the synoptic angle, most notably recent developments within the ideology of anarchism (such as interest groups and social media). Many students mentioned the five key thinkers mentioned in the anarchist section.

Question 9

The majority of students considered the balance amongst ecologists concerning the means of achieving a more environmentally-friendly society. It was common for students to consider the dichotomy between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. There was also reference to light and dark greens, although less mention was made of bright greens. More successful students considered the various strands and sub-strands of ecologism. Evaluation was primarily in the context of capitalism, economic growth and the electoral process. Some of the scripts showed an impressive level of detail and insight, with a high level of synopticity shown. The main area of discussion centred upon the assumptions made amongst ecologists concerning human nature and our place within the broader ecosystem. Students tended to focus upon Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, Merchant's view of the environment and Rachel Carson's work into the Silent Spring. However, there was surprisingly little reference to the concepts and ideas put forward by Murray Bookchin.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.