
AS HISTORY

1H: Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855–1964
Report on the Examination

7041/1H
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General

Some of the best answers to this year's paper showed an extremely sound understanding of the period covered by the questions. While writing styles varied, there were plenty of clearly focused responses to Question 01, which demanded the evaluation and comparison of two sources. Equally, many students wrote a carefully crafted essay (either 02 or 03) in Section B, developing an organised and balanced argument.

When students performed less well, it was usually because of their failure to respond to exactly what was asked for in the questions, or because their knowledge was insufficient to enable them to support the points they made adequately. Almost every student could manage some sort of answer, but for the students achieving lower marks, insecurity produced some rather muddled and generalist work.

Section A

Question 01

Most students were reasonably well-informed about the policy of 'Russification', although a few less able students confused this with 'repression' in general, despite the contents of the two extracts.

Although it was quite acceptable for students to consider each extract in turn and then draw a conclusion as to which offered the more convincing interpretation, the best often wrote comparatively. They considered what each extract had to say about the reasons for Russification and then compared their views on the methods and measures of Alexander II and Alexander III in turn.

Whilst the extracts themselves offered a good number of examples of Russification in action, more able students exemplified and added to these from their own knowledge. The most able offered some very good context, for example about changes in political thinking after 1855 and the effect of the Polish rebellion in 1863 or the assassination attempt of 1866 on Alexander II's outlook. References such as 'earlier concessions to Jews' or the Finns' 'hitherto special protection' were explained and used to support comparisons between the two Tsars. Lower achieving students relied almost entirely on what the sources said, making their answers quite generalist and superficial.

More able students appreciated that the main difference between the extracts' interpretations was that while Extract A suggested Alexander II had not heavily engaged in Russification and had even made concessions, Extract B argued that both Tsars adopted this policy. Some also considered Extract A's related suggestion that the 1880s were a turning-point in Russification policy, whereas Extract B thought it came earlier, with changes in thinking after 1855.

The key factor in differentiating between responses was the extent to which students managed to interrogate these differing interpretations and draw meaningful conclusions as to which extract was the more convincing.

Section B

Question 02

For the most part, the students who chose this question were quite knowledgeable about the various opposition groups that opposed the Tsarist autocracy and particularly about opposition at the time of the 1905 revolution. However, some students were unsure as to which groups were dominant in the given time period. Some cited opponents such as the Narodniks, who were active in the 1860s and 1870, and others cited the Octobrists and Kadets whose opposition was primarily felt after 1905. Furthermore, even among those who had the correct time focus, not all were able to distinguish between liberal and radical opposition, which was an essential part of the question.

Nevertheless there were plenty of good responses which showed a sound knowledge of both types of opposition and were able to address the positives and negatives of both groups. Students were split fairly evenly between those who agreed with the quotation and those who opposed it. The former saw the liberals, with their educated core of intelligentsia and professionals, thriving in the zemstvo, as having a more profound influence than the disparate radicals with their minority followings and uncoordinated programmes. However, others felt that the ideologies and determination of the radicals meant that they exercised a challenge disproportionate to their numbers. Provided such a case was argued effectively without the need to cite evidence beyond 1905, this was equally credit-worthy.

Question 03

This question focused on the years 1894 to 1914 and, as with Question 02, not all students kept to this period in their responses. There were plenty of discussions of the impact of the emancipation of 1861 and whilst its longer-term effects were relevant, much of the detail that appeared in some weaker students' answers was not.

The most effective answers linked their knowledge of economic and political developments in the reign of Nicholas II (to 1914) to the status of the nobility. Developments such as the spread of industrialisation and the accompanying growth of the middle and working classes, as well as the changes of 1905, the composition of the State Dumas and the growing professionalism of government were seen to affect the status of the nobility adversely.

However, many successful answers suggested that the position of the nobles was not strongly undermined, citing nobles' positions as government ministers and Provincial Governors. They also noted that Russia's economy was still agriculturally based until 1914, thus ensuring the status that came with landed wealth was retained. Whatever the argument was, strong responses showed clear judgement supported by well-selected evidence and avoided the generalisation which marred the more limited attempts.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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