



---

# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1H: Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855-1964  
Report on the Examination

---

7042  
June 2019

---

Version: 1.0

---

---

Further copies of this Report are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2019 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

## General

It was good to see some strong answers to all the questions posed in this summer's examination, including some very full answers to question 01. Reading three extracts and teasing out their key arguments in relation to a topic is not an easy task. The additional requirement that some contextual own knowledge is applied to the evaluation of these arguments makes this a challenging start to the paper, and it was gratifying to find that many students produced competent answers, even if some of the less able students still ignored the question topic. All of the essay questions (02-04) proved effective in differentiating between those who made a genuine attempt to respond to the wording of the question asked and those who simply wrote out what they knew, sometimes with some perfunctory links to the question, or relied on generalisation. All of this year's questions required students to look at familiar areas in ways that challenged them to think beyond their pre-prepared learning. As might be expected, some rose to that challenge, producing thoughtful and well-argued responses, while others floundered and wrote at a tangent to the actual question demands. The latter achieved some credit for their knowledge but, as always, the degree of focus and the depth of understanding shown ultimately determined where a student's answer was placed. Although the majority of students completed the paper, producing 2 essays of roughly equal length, a few obviously spent far too long on Section A and failed to complete their final essay answer. Students should be reminded that an incomplete essay can bring quite a heavy penalty in terms of the marks they are likely to be awarded and that pages of notes are unlikely to gain as many marks as two to three well-written and argued paragraphs.

## Section A

### Question 01

The autocracy of Alexander II and Alexander III was clearly a topic that students felt comfortable with and most were able to draw on a sound knowledge of the two reigns in their answers. A few, however, struggled with general comprehension of the extracts and, rather too often, even in quite good responses, phrases were taken out of context and misinterpreted. In Extract B, for example, the reference to emancipation bringing about the destruction of the 'whole foundation of the administrative system' was often analysed without reference to the last part of the sentence - 'and he (Alexander II) could not avoid the task of reconstructing this' - a phrase designed to reinforce the extract argument that Alexander II was 'forced' by circumstances to carry out reforms. Similarly, a good number of students referred to the phrase, 'Alexander II's reforms had torn apart the historical unity of the Russian state' in Extract C as Moss' argument. However, more careful reading would have shown that this was actually the argument of Aksakov, whose 'attitude' was shared by Slavophiles and Alexander III himself.

The main differentiator between the more effective and less effective answers was the extent to which students directly responded to extract arguments relating to 'attitudes to autocracy', as asked for in the question. The better responses were extract-driven; the arguments in the extracts which corresponded to the question topic were identified and their merits were supported and challenged, with comments backed by contextual knowledge of the period. Such answers did not always contain lengthy passages of context, but relevant examples were selected from the student's own knowledge and effectively deployed.

In addressing 'attitudes to autocracy', some students looked at the attitudes of the two Tsars (about which each extract had a different opinion), others linked what the extracts suggested to the attitudes of the general population, or elements within that population, (for example, landowners, serfs, the court, Ministers and groups such as Westernisers and Slavophiles), while still others

combined the two approaches. All such responses were equally acceptable provided they were based on the arguments put forward in the extracts.

Whilst disorganised answers clearly advertised their shortcomings, some students performed less well than they might have done by adopting an over-mechanical approach. Summaries of what the extracts said before the evaluation began were of little worth, and brave attempts to find two points in support and two to challenge, irrespective of the arguments contained in each extract did not always work. Sometimes there was more to support, less to challenge or vice versa. Greater flexibility generally helped produce more insights and consequently, more marks.

At the lower end of the scale, less able students were, all too frequently, more concerned to show what they knew, than to examine what the extracts actually said. Such students tended to approach the extracts too literally, looking at what was written and latching on to statements such as (in Extract A), 'he reformed the army' or 'his greatest reform' (was the emancipation of the serfs), as an opportunity to digress into developed sections of 'own knowledge'. For future students, a timely reminder that 01 is not an 'essay' but an evaluation question, seeking to examine students' understanding of what others have written, should force them to think more deeply about the task in hand. When students wrote that all three extracts were convincing - despite the fact that they offered quite differing views, it was clear that they were answering without thinking.

## **Section B**

### **Question 02**

Given that one of the key questions for this option is, 'What was the extent of social and cultural change?' it was disappointing to find a number of students struggling to identify 'social change' in their responses to this question. Many of these muddled the concept with 'political change' and some also focused on 'economic change' in their attempt to evaluate the significance of the growth of towns. The majority were able to offer some evidence linking town growth to the emergence of the working class and it was, of course, relevant to discuss the politicisation of that class in the oppressive conditions of the new industrial cities. However, this sometimes led into descriptions of the 1905 revolution and the workings of the Duma, rather than discussion of other elements of social change and continuity, perhaps looking at how the nobility and 'middle classes' were affected by urban development and referencing the limited changes in rural society by way of balance.

### **Question 03**

Most students were reasonably knowledgeable about the transformation of Russian industry in the years 1917 to 1941, but not all were able to relate this to the application of socialist/Marxist principles, or, indeed, to any principles. A few simply described, or took issue with the extent of transformation, so missing the main thrust of the question, while others paid lip service to socialist/Marxist influences without ever explaining what these were. There were, however, some very interesting responses from better students who were not only able to look at the socialist/Marxist theory behind industrial change, but also able to discuss socialist/Marxist elements in the way the policies were carried out. These ranged from central planning and the allocation of resources to the elimination of the capitalist classes, the emphasis on the proletariat, 'Socialist man' and, in some cases, the equal involvement of women in the workforce. Balance was usually provided with reference to Lenin's NEP but good students also referenced other elements in Stalin's five-year plans, such as wage differentials and bonuses as well as the use of repression in order to offer a fair judgement. Reference to agriculture was relevant when it was linked to the

transformation of industry and some skilfully considered the theories behind collectivisation and the part it played in providing for factory workers.

**Question 04**

Although less able students tended to ignore the key words 'political stagnation' , or used them rather meaninglessly in their answers, most offered some sort of explicit or implicit definition. Such varied from an 'absence of political activity' (which generally led to essays which disagreed with the view given) through 'ineffective leadership' to 'lack of change in the apparatus and outlook of government' -the latter being the more commonly held view and one which gave rise to some effective debate. Some answers were too heavily weighted to discussion of either Stalin or Khrushchev and a few completely omitted Stalin's war years. A good number adopted a comparative approach, looking at elements of government and political activity under both leaders, and such worked well when due heed was given to the question and the date-span. However, there was a tendency for such writers to draw on information from the 1930s in discussions of Stalinism and some less thoughtful students also tried to make economic and other comparisons which were of limited relevance to issues of 'political' stagnation.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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