

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y249/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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. 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 can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y249 series overview

Y249 provided opportunities for candidates to respond to questions on Tsarism and Bolshevik consolidation. Every candidate followed the question options correctly by selecting just one of the 20 mark essay questions and so no candidate attempted to complete both essay questions.. By far the most popular question was Question 1. However, some candidates did attempt Question 2. All candidates attempted the interpretations question and the focus on evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the given interpretation was much more explicit and widespread than in previous years. Overall, the quality of written communication was fair to good and responses were clearly organised. In many cases, key words like Russification and Witte were spelt correctly.

Section A overview

Question 1 was the most common response by a significant margin.

Question 1

1* To what extent were the attitudes and actions of Nicholas II the cause of the 1905 Revolution?
[30]

Responses needed to write about a range of causes of the 1905 revolution and assess the extent to which Nicholas was to blame. All responses were able to write about three or more factors or causes. Those commonly selected were the 1905 'Bloody Sunday' massacre, Russification, the personality of Nicholas II and the Russo-Japanese War. In most cases, these causes were attributed to Nicholas II suggesting he was to blame. This aspect of analysis was common and quite robust across the range of responses. (See Exemplar 1). What responses were also required to do was explain how the cause contributed to the 1905 Revolution. This was less common as candidates mostly focused on explaining the link to Nicholas II rather than the link to causing unrest. Exemplar 2 is a good example of how the candidate explains the chosen factor, in this case emerging political opposition as a cause of unrest in 1905.

Candidates sometimes did not address factors that were not linked to the attitudes and actions of Nicholas II. In this regard, they had completed a multi-causal response but had not provided balance to the answer. Where candidates did look to other factors, they often highlighted the impact of Witte's policies or agrarian problems. More accomplished responses highlighted the connections between these causes and the 1905 Revolution and provided a level of analysis to justify why these factors could not be blamed upon Tsar Nicholas II.

The most common error in this question was attributing the orders to open fire to Nicholas II when analysing 'Bloody Sunday'. Candidates did not have to blame the massacre on the Tsar. Those that did so accurately stated how it was symptomatic of wider autocratic repression experienced by the masses.

Exemplar 1

Russo-Japanese war, so Nicholas II's attitudes and actions directly led to the Russo-Japanese war which ended terribly for the Russia, which in turn led to opposition and ^{as it was a national humiliation} unrest at home^{caused} and the 1905 revolution.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates a candidate response that clearly links a cause to the named factor, i.e. the attitudes and actions of Nicholas II. There is also earlier explanation that highlights the role of Nicholas in declaring war with Japan. This was a good analysis of the named factor in the question.

Exemplar 2

Before 1905, ^{political} ~~leg~~ parties had no right to exist, which meant that people were angry that they could not express their views. ~~The Russo-Japanese war was also meant to dampen the social unrest in domestic issues, but this also meant to dampen the social unrest in domestic issues but this did not happen.~~ ^{The Russo-Japanese war was also meant to dampen the social unrest in domestic issues, but this did not happen.} One of the reasons why reformist middle classes and liberals rose up in 1905 was because ^{of domestic social issues e.g.} people could not freely express their views. Although the zemstva allowed some representation, its members were largely made up of the landowning gentry, so was not truly democratic. Nicholas II believed in autocracy, meaning that he was not willing to share his powers with anyone. ~~The Fundamental~~ This meant that political parties were not allowed to exist and people had to underground with their views and meet up secretly. By 1905, the lack of political parties and equally ~~for~~ lack of free speech and assembly to worship, drove even moderates towards more radical ways. People felt that the state was too repressive, as demonstrated by the use of the Okhrana, secret police. ^{This suggests that} Nicholas II's ~~policy~~ ^{views and policies} ~~generated by his~~ autocratic ~~made~~ ^{drove} moderates to extremism, ~~in~~ which caused the 1905 revolution.

Exemplar 2 shows a good level of explanation to link the lack of freedoms experienced in Russia to people turning to extremist and radical views.

Question 2

2* To what extent did Lenin achieve his economic aims in the period 1918–1924?

[30]

Candidates needed to have a clear awareness of Lenin's economic aims. Namely to implement Marxism, to provide for the Red Army and workers during the Civil War and control the commanding heights of industry (War Communism) and to help the economy to recover after the economic trauma, widespread famine and unrest of War Communism; this was achieved to a degree via the implementation of NEP. The most comprehensive responses approached this question by analysing the economic successes of War Communism and then its economic failures, then analysing the economic successes and failures of NEP. The most common error that inhibited responses was either a lack of specific economic understanding surrounding War Communism and/or NEP, and a drift of focus away from economic aims to political ones. In these latter cases, the response unsuccessfully tried to link political developments to economic aims. However, the ideological and economic spheres do overlap but some explanations were not able to accurately use this knowledge to explain if Lenin did or did not achieve his economic aims.

Exemplar 3

Despite this however, Lenin may not ~~have~~ ^{have} been aware about the impacts of industrialisation on the people of Russia so he was still able to set policies. Irrespective of this, the failure to industrialise steadily lead to the poor agricultural policy.

Exemplar 3 contained some good explanation in sections. However, the exemplar also shows how candidates found it difficult to be accurate and decisive in their dealings with Lenin's economic aims. The exemplar is an example of part of an argument that is an asserted response that also contains conjecture and a lack of specificity.

Section B overview

All candidates attempted this question. It was clear that the question required a wider contextual awareness of the reasons for Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War. Candidates often wrote about the strengths and weaknesses. When this was done explicitly, the discriminating factor became the quality and accuracy of knowledge deployed to effectively evaluate the interpretation.

Question 3

- 3 Read the interpretation and then answer the question that follows:

'Throughout the struggle, the Reds were sustained by a driving sense of purpose. Trotsky... created an army that proved capable of fighting with an unshakable belief in its own eventual victory.'

From M Lynch, *From Autocracy to Communism: Russia 1894–1941*, published in 2008

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation as an explanation of why the Reds won the Civil War, making references to other interpretations that you have studied. **[20]**

Candidates were able to address aspects of the interpretation to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. For example, candidates could comment on the 'driving sense of purpose'. This was common, candidates wrote about the Reds driven by the desire to implement Communism and often juxtaposed this with the Whites lack of purpose and their multitude of aims. In most cases, this was a missed opportunity for further development with only a few responses explaining in detail what these various White aims were i.e. restore autocracy, new elections for a constituent assembly (SRs), a more western style of government, etc. Candidates could also comment on Trotsky's ability to create a Red Army. This was generally done well, responses describing the millions conscripted against the less numerous White forces. Some candidates also wrote about the 'unshakeable belief' held by the Reds. This provided an opportunity for some discussion of Bolshevik propaganda and Trotsky's armoured train. In fewer cases, candidates questioned this unshakeable belief and highlighted this as a limitation. These responses cited the fear and coercion used by the Reds as a reason different from the 'belief' outlined in the interpretation.

The most commonly cited other interpretation was the weaknesses of the Whites and sometimes the Greens, and the geographical advantage held by the Reds. These were used to criticise the coverage of Lynch's interpretation. Again, like most 'explanations', the quality of supporting knowledge was limited. More accurate responses spoke about the divided White armies and cited specific names like Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich. Other successful responses spoke about the Red manipulation of Makhno's Green army.

Overall, candidates knew the wider context at least in a general sense. Responses also commonly attempted to explicitly address the strengths and limitations of the interpretation. Moreover, analysis of the attribution of the interpretation was uncommon. This is Assessment Objective 2 and not required on this paper. Ultimately, the better responses were able to explicitly address the strengths and weaknesses of Lynch's interpretation in a contextual framework that contained specific evidence of events surrounding reasons for the Red victory in the Russian Civil War.

Exemplar 4

On the other hand, this extract is limited in that it does not consider the weaknesses of the White forces. While the historian acknowledges the Red Army's united purpose ~~it is not~~ Lynch does not highlight the division ~~over~~ aims in the White camp in this extract. The Whites were made up of those who opposed the Bolsheviks and consisted of many groups including moderate socialists, those who wanted to restore the monarchy and the Greens which included national minorities hoping for independence. The lack of ~~aim~~ common aim lead to friction between the ~~two~~ ^{different} camps and made a cohesive anti-Bolshevik effort more difficult. The Lynch's omission of this in this extract is a huge oversight as this likely made the Red Army much harder to defeat.

Exemplar 4 is a good example of a paragraph that explicitly addresses the interpretation and develops its response by using some detailed knowledge of White weaknesses. It was more common for responses to neglect to mention key words. This extract adds some detail by including terms like 'moderate socialists', 'Greens', and 'National minorities'.

Copyright information

Question 3: M. Lynch, 'Access to History: From Autocracy to Communism: Russia 1894-1941', p. 135, Hodder Education, 2008.

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