

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y249/01 Summer 2024 series

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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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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.

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Paper Y249/01 series overview

Y249 is one of five non-British Period Study units for Paper 2 for the AS Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests a period of study of about 50 years through a traditional essay and an essay based on evaluating an interpretation.

The paper is divided into two sections. The first two questions, in Section A, are traditional essay questions and the candidate is required to answer one of them. The third question, in Section B, is the compulsory interpretation question.

To do well on Section A, candidates needed to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement at least in the conclusion.

To do well in Section B, candidates needed to focus on evaluating the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussed at least two issues in depth in the essay question gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question considered the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation in the interpretation question referred to at least one other interpretation gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the issues in the interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produced a judgement in the essay question that was not supported and was, therefore, assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question showed a lack of understanding of the major issues in relation to the question were unable to support their response with relevant or accurate material did not focus on the precise wording of the question made unsupported comments about issues in the interpretation question which were no more than assertions.

Section A overview

Candidates are required to answer one of the two questions in this section. All candidates attempted one of these questions, with Question 2 being more popular.

To do well on the essay question, candidates needed to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. To reach the higher levels, candidates needed to assess the issues they discussed and provide a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

Question 1*

1* 'Political problems were the most serious issue for Russia in 1894.'

How far do you agree?

[30]

Candidates needed to focus their analysis on the three aspects of this question. Firstly, to demonstrate their understanding of what constituted 'political problems' and then to appreciate the context of this question 'in 1894' and finally assess whether the political problems were 'the most serious issue'.

The more accomplished responses were those that showed an understanding of all three aspects. Most candidates understood that the purpose of the question was to discuss the relative seriousness of some issues. However, some candidates did not demonstrate a clear understanding of what constitutes 'political problems' such as the problem of the system of autocracy concerning whether it was unfit for purpose and the problem of opposition and the need for repressive measures. A significant number of responses did not fully consider the time factor, 'in 1894', in the question. Few responses demonstrated a clear understanding that 1894 was the year Tsar Nicholas II ascended the throne and, therefore, he might be one of the problems worth considering in respect of whether his character and abilities might make him unsuitable to be the Tsar.

A significant number of responses used the opportunity to discuss various issues covering the whole of Nicholas' reign rather than concentrating on the very early years of his reign in the mid-1890s. Most candidates provided knowledge and analysis of other issues with many of them using a thematic approach and considered economic and social problems. The more accomplished responses provided more specific problems within in these themes. For example, the economic hardship faced by the peasantry and the growing tension in the cities as a result of industrialisation. A few responses referred to discontent from the national minorities, in particular, in Poland.

Misconception



The All Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party [the SDs] was formed in 1898 and subsequently split into the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks in 1903.

Therefore, these groups were not relevant evidence for explaining and analysing the problem of political opposition in 1894.

Exemplar 1

		political problems are seen as his most
		important issue as there were both
		political opposition and national minority
		opposition which threatens the Tsar's position.
		For example, the populists had assassin
		assassinated the Tsar's grandfather,
		Alexander Alexander II. Furthermore, the
		Poles had made political groups such as
		their Democratic and Socialist party.
		This shows that the ability of the
		populist being able to assassinate a previous
		Tsar and how they are very able to
		assassinate Nicholas who had just
		ascended the throne in 1894. Furthermore
		the political groups formed by the Poles
		can make it easier to spread ideas
		of Marxism which also threatens the

Tsar's ~~possi~~ position with a potential revolution. Both of this highlights the already existing discontent within the political opposition and oppressed ~~oppressed~~ minority, making it more likely for an overthrow of the Tsar. Therefore, this does present political problems as the most serious issue faced by for Russia as his position was heavily undermined by his opposition. However, some may argue that it wasn't a serious problem faced as the populist had tried to gain support from the population but massively failed. This shows that from the failed attempts from gaining the support of others, the population may not have enough ~~discon~~ discontent to overthrow the monarchy. However, this does not decrease the likelihood of an assassination attempt against the Tsar as it had previously happened. Therefore, political ~~pp~~ problems does ~~it~~ pose a more serious issue in Russia than economic issues & ~~it~~ as political had to be dealt more quicker to ensure the Tsar maintained his position.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates a good attempt to explain and analyse the issue of 'political problems' in 1894.

This response attained Level 4.

Question 2*

- 2*** How important was the leadership of Lenin, in the period from April 1917 to the October [November] Revolution, to the success of the Bolshevik seizure of power? **[30]**

The purpose of this essay question was for candidates to analyse the reasons why the Bolsheviks were successful in seizing power in the October 1917 Revolution. The candidates were given the suggestion that 'the leadership of Lenin' was the most important cause. Most candidates made an attempt to explain the role of Lenin's leadership and then analyse this given factor with analysis related to other factors, particularly, the failures of the Provisional Government. More accomplished responses widened their knowledge and analysis to other causes including the role of Trotsky and the significance of specific events such as the July Days and the Kornilov Revolt.

However, there were a significant number of candidates that did not answer the question fully but instead described some of the events that took place between April and October 1917 rather than focusing their response on analysing the reasons for Bolshevik success and using the evidence of those events to support their arguments. If a response is predominately descriptive, as the generic mark scheme indicates, then the response is unlikely to attain more than Level 3.

Misconception



There were a number of candidates who confused the reasons for Bolshevik success in the October 1917 Revolution with the reasons for Bolshevik success in the Civil War 1918-21 and therefore used evidence from Lenin's leadership after October 1917.

Section B overview

All candidates attempted this question and most responses focused on evaluating the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation.

To do well in the interpretation question, candidates needed to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation while making references to other interpretations. Other interpretations that are considered as part of evaluation and analysis do not need to be attributed to specific named historians, but they must be recognisable historical interpretations, rather than the candidate's own viewpoint.

Analysis of the attribution of the interpretation was uncommon; this is Assessment Objective 2 and not required on this paper.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation and answer the question that follows.

'In ability, Witte towered above all the other ministers and officials in the government.'

M Lynch, Reaction and Revolution: Russia 1894–1924, published in 2008.

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

[20]

Responses needed to address the main aspect of the interpretation, that Witte was significantly more able than other ministers and officials in the government. Few responses made reference to the words, 'ability' or 'towered above' in their analysis.

Most candidates tried to provide knowledge and analysis of the strengths and limitations of this interpretation. Candidates provided knowledge and analysis of Witte's policies to discuss whether his policies were successful or not. The quality of the analysis was determined but the quality of their knowledge of Witte. Unfortunately, there were a significant number of candidates who did not extend their answer to considering the second aspect of the interpretation. Therefore, candidates who did refer to other interpretations, which suggest that other ministers and officials had more ability than Witte, provided more accomplished responses. Stolypin and Pobedonostsev were the ministers and officials that were most used in responses. Exemplar 2 below demonstrates how a candidate successfully used evidence of other ministers to address the question. It is worth noting how the candidate used some of the words in the question to keep their analysis focused on the question.

Misconception



Many candidates did not show that they were fully aware that Witte was not just Minister of Finance between 1892-1903 but he was subsequently Chairman of the Committee of Ministers 1903-1906 and then became the first Prime Minister from November 1905 to May 1906.

Exemplar 2

		<p>However, there are limitations of this interpretation such as it ignoring the fact of Witte's focus on industrial reforms and ignoring factors like agriculture which Stolypin could be seen as lowering over in ability of putting his agricultural reforms on motion against opposition. Stolypin did the 'wager on the strong' which included providing landbanks for peasants to buy their own land and changing the farming system from the strip system (seen as backwards) to the more Western consolidated farm system. Although £ only 16% had changed to the new system, he succeeded in getting his policies across through the 3rd Duma. Another limitation could be seen on Witte's ability to influence the Tsar however, figures such as Pobedonostsev could be seen as a more powerful figure in ability to influence the Tsar as he had been his tutor and supported policies and enforced ideas such as Russification and anti-Semitism through pogroms.</p>
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Exemplar 2 is an example of a candidate attempting to include analysis of 'other ministers and officials' into their response by referring to Stolypin's policy of 'Wager on the strong' and Pobedonostsev's influence on Tsar Nicholas. This answer attained Level 4.

Assessment for learning



Using words and phrases from the question in responses can be a very helpful way to keep the analysis focused on the specific demands of the question.

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