

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y249/01 Summer 2023 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 revised 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 examination paper contains three questions. 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, all candidates are required to answer. This is the interpretation question.

Every candidate followed the rubric correctly by selecting one of the 30-mark essay questions and no candidate attempted both essay questions. Responses to Question 3 focused on evaluating the strengths and limitations of the given interpretation. A lack of knowledge impacted on the quality of answers across all papers. Furthermore, key words or phrases were misunderstood. The quality of written communication was reasonably good, and most responses were clearly organised.

The quality of some responses to all the questions was hindered by a lack of detailed knowledge and key words/phrases in the question not being fully understood. Overall, the quality of written communication was fair to good, and most responses were clearly organised.

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 poor 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 the questions with Question 1 being slightly 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* Assess the reasons for the events of March 1917.

[30]

Candidates needed to write about the reasons for the March 1917 Revolution and assess which of the reasons they considered to be the most important.

Most candidates were able to provide reasons for the March 1917 Revolution and provide some assessment of them. However, some candidates wrote generalised responses which covered the period from 1900 to 1917 with limited references to the events of March 1917. Some of these candidates did not mention the First World War as a reason for the Revolution occurring in March 1917.

The more accomplished responses used detailed knowledge of the impact of the First World War. The better responses included the Russian military's poor performance that caused resentment and had economic consequences. This led to greater problems in the cities due to inflation and food shortages. Some responses also included the impact on politics as a result of Tsar Nicholas becoming Commander in Chief of the army and the widespread resentment towards the Tsarina and Rasputin. The most successful responses used this knowledge to focus on the circumstances and events leading to the March 1917 Revolution and provided supported analysis and judgements in relation to the question.

Misconception



Candidates should be aware of the changes that were made in the Russian calendar by the Soviet government in 1918. The specification for this Paper Y249 uses the amended date and, therefore, refers to the March 1917 Revolution.

There were some candidates who answered Question 1, who have been using the Gregorian Calendar and were not aware that the March Revolution was the same as the February Revolution. This led to some confusion in their responses.

Exemplar 1

To conclude, the tsar's abdication in March 1917 was sparked by his military and generals turning their backs on him.

However, this was only the final act in a long story of incompetence. Yet, even with his own personal ineffectualness, the tsar had survived through economic hardship causing public distress. Ultimately, it was the war that brought down Nicholas' government. It was the war that brought mass demonstrations on the streets via its effects on the transport systems. It was the war that caused his government and the country's leadership to appear as incompetent as ever. It was the war that ~~was~~ pivotally made his army doubt the ability of Nicholas to remain as leader. This was the key point - protests, mass casualties, and weak leadership, all either directly caused

by or highlighted by the war were the reasons his generals convinced Nicholas to resign.

Exemplar 1, taken from a Level 5 response for Question 1, demonstrates a good attempt to provide a supported judgement in the final paragraph of a traditional essay. The candidate gives a clear judgement that 'the war brought down Nicholas' government' and then supports this judgement with three arguments that the candidate has analysed during the essay. The three arguments are 'war brought mass demonstrations on the streets', 'war caused his government and the country's leadership to appear as incompetent as ever', and 'pivotally made the army doubt the ability of Tsar Nicolas II to remain as leader'.

Question 2*

2* To what extent were Stalin's economic policies a success between 1929 and 1941?

[30]

Responses needed to assess the extent to which Stalin's economic policies were a success. Most candidates attempted to provide an assessment. More accomplished responses provided supporting evidence for both successes and failures across a range of economic activity. However, there were a significant number of candidates who did not provide a balanced argument, by only providing analysis of either success or failure. More accomplished responses were also aware that success/failure of economic policies can also be measured by social and political outcomes, not just in economic terms.

Some candidates would have benefitted from a clearer understanding of what constitutes economic policies as some candidates restricted their analysis to industry in the Five-Year Plans and, therefore, did not include an assessment of collectivisation in agriculture. Also, more accomplished responses confined their analysis to the years given in the question, namely 1929-1941. Some responses included analysis of War Communism and NEP, which were not relevant for this question.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should read any dates in a question carefully. They should only use information from the period in the question as evidence for any argument they put forward.

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 then answer the question that follows:

'The Revolution of 1905 exerted a tremendous influence on Russia. It transformed the structure and political culture of Russian society.'

From: John M. Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled*, published in 1995.

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

[20]

Responses to this question needed to be focused on three aspects of this interpretation. Firstly, the focus needed to be on the Revolution of 1905. Secondly the focus needed to be on an understanding of what 'exerted a tremendous influence' meant in connection with the Revolution. Thirdly a focus on an understanding of 'It transformed the structure and political culture' of Russian society.

Some responses were able to focus on selected aspects of the interpretation but very few showed a clear understanding of all the aspects. Most candidates focused their analysis on the 1905 Revolution, but some were hampered by the generalised nature of their knowledge and, therefore, could not provide detailed supporting analysis. Some candidates attempted to discuss whether there was change but very few focused their analysis on the scale of the change considering the words in the interpretation 'tremendous' and 'transformed' suggested that the changes were significant. However, it was in the third aspect of the interpretation that most candidates lost focus on the question. A significant number of candidates extended their analysis to changes in the economy in the period 1905-14 rather than focusing on the changes in the 'structure and political culture of Russian society'. More accomplished responses, therefore, focused their analysis on such issues as the impact of the October Manifesto 1905 and the Fundamental Laws 1906, the role of the Dumas and the role of parliamentary opposition and revolutionary groups.

There were a significant number of responses that did not make references to other interpretations, but this might have been due to timing in the examination as some responses were unfinished.

Exemplar 2

One strength of this interpretation would be how it discusses the 'transformation' of 'political culture' especially. We know that after the 1905 revolution, the tsar produced the dumas to perhaps appease the public and give them the freedoms they wanted. Because the Russian public had never experienced any type of democracy and they were so used to the authoritarian mode of government from the tsar, the interpretation is strong in stating that this 'transformed' the 'political culture' of Russian society as it gave them a sense of hope.

Exemplar 2, taken from a Level 4 response, demonstrates a good attempt to use the words in the question to focus their knowledge and analysis on the question. This technique would be appropriate for any response in this paper.

Copyright information

Question 3: Quotation from John M. Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled*, published in 1995.

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