
AS

History

2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917-1929
Report on the Examination

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Question 01

Average responses to this question, placed in Level 3, identified certain aspects of the argument in each source and applied some contextual knowledge, although this lacked depth and/or was often rather generalised in focus about discontent with the tsarist system from 1905 onwards. Comments on provenance in Level 3 tended to take Source A at face value and argue that it is valuable as the author was present during events and wrote a factual report. Such responses lacked balance and development. With regard to Source B, Level 3 responses did not often pick up on the fact that Trotsky's argument was that the revolution was not 'essentially a women's protest, backed up afterwards by a soldiers' mutiny'. A significant number of responses asserted that this made the source valuable as there was a women's protest and mutiny, thereby missing one of the arguments in the source. Most students at this level picked up to a degree that Trotsky had an agenda to promote Bolshevism and Lenin, although this often lacked depth of explanation.

At the higher levels, students were more precise in identifying the arguments within each source. With regard to Source A, there was some effective analysis of whether the disorder was spontaneous or not, and some precise assessment of the Okhrana's claim that no soldiers were involved in the disorder at this stage. This was sometimes linked to the date of Source A as it was written before the main mutiny of the Petrograd garrison. These stronger answers also suggested that the Okhrana chief may have had an interest in downplaying the scale of the disorder, and the potential involvement of soldiers, in order to make it appear that he had everything under control. In terms of Source B, responses in Levels 4 and 5 effectively identified Trotsky's point in the first three lines, and went on to analyse the claim about 'peasants and workers' making the revolution, as well as the claim that the workers were 'educated ... by the party of Lenin'. There was some precise contextual knowledge deployed in relation to Source B by stronger students, especially around Lenin and Trotsky's whereabouts in February 1917.

Weaker responses, in Level 2, only provided very superficial comments in relation to the content and provenance of the sources. Such answers tended to paraphrase the sources, offering little more than basic comprehension. There was very little accurate and relevant contextual knowledge in such responses. Comments on provenance were also very limited in scope, usually just offering very superficial observations, such as Source A was written at the time whereas source B was written 13 years later, with no further development. Several students made the mistake of saying that Trotsky, and sometimes also Lenin, was present in Petrograd in February playing a key role in events, possibly confusing the February Revolution with October.

Question 02

This was by far the most popular of the two essay questions. Most students found this response very accessible and offered a balance of factors to explain the Reds' victory in the Civil War. Therefore, the vast majority of answers achieved Level 3 or above. The two main determining factors between Levels 3, 4 and 5 were the range and depth of supporting evidence and the quality of analysis/judgement offered.

In Level 3, students tended to offer a decent range of factors but some paragraphs lacked specific examples, e.g. names and locations of the White generals, or details of the different groups and motivations making up the Whites. Analysis in this level tended to be limited to rather bland statements that, whilst the Whites' weaknesses were important in explaining their defeat, there

were also other significant factors such as Trotsky's leadership and the Reds' geographical advantages.

In Level 4, there was a better depth of supporting information, offering specific examples to illustrate the different factors covered. In addition, responses in Level 4 attempted to offer some judgement that it was either the Whites' weaknesses or the Reds' strengths that were most important in explaining the outcome of the war. In Level 4, explanation of this judgement tended to lack depth and was not necessarily pursued throughout the response.

In Level 5, there was more developed analysis which was sustained through the answer. Therefore, in this level, students often set out a line of argument in the introduction, which was pursued through the essay, culminating in a conclusion consistent with the previous analysis.

Question 03

Whilst less popular than Question 2, this question did elicit some very good responses and most students had plenty of content to include in their responses. There was a wider range of marks for this question with some weaker students failing to show a sufficient understanding of the demands of the question and merely providing some descriptive detail that was very limited in scope.

Responses placed in Level 3 offered a range of relevant content but this tended to be rather descriptive and lacked precise focus on the question. Some students did not define or explain what 'underestimated' meant very effectively and there were several answers which gave a rather narrative account of Stalin's defeat of the Left and the Right and then asserted that this showed that his opponents underestimated him. There was a lot of focus on the decision not to publish Lenin's testament and Trotsky's non-attendance at Lenin's funeral, but again this was often rather descriptive in delivery with only a brief link to the question. It would have been good to see more students explore the policy differences which Stalin exploited in order to secure power.

In Levels 4 and 5, students were more precise in focusing each paragraph on the question and explaining effectively the different ways in which Stalin was underestimated. There was, naturally, a greater range and depth of content in these higher level answers. The very best responses offered some sophisticated analysis, perhaps suggesting that it was Stalin's political skill and cunning which led to him being underestimated, therefore Stalin should be given more credit for achieving his rise to power than the statement suggests.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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