
AS

History

7041/2T

Report on the Examination

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Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was reasonably effective, with most students being able to state something of worth. Less able students often took the provenance of the two sources at face value, asserting that Source A was limited as evidence due to it being a speech, stating that speeches always intended to persuade and so were untrustworthy. Similarly, with Source B, less able students stated that it had limited use as it was written approximately 30 years after de-Stalinisation began – that Gorbachev wasn't present when the speech was delivered and that therefore the source lacked credibility. To demonstrate the value of Source A, more able students made comment on the source coming from a key political individual during a major political event, and the nature of the audience. With Source B, more able students demonstrated value by making reference to Gorbachev being an informed insider, although one that was not necessarily objective. Comments on tone tended to be descriptive and unrelated to source value. For example, many students alluded to the bold tone of Source A and reflective tone of Source B without making reference to how the tone of each source impacted on its value.

Students managed the content of the two sources more effectively. Most were able to identify the overarching arguments in each source and most attempted to engage with and evaluate the material, although some did this more successfully than others. Whilst some evaluation was assertive, most students attempted to evaluate the content of the sources using contextual knowledge. More able students understood that Source A was an attack on Stalin's abuse of power, his reign of terror, and his cult of personality. With Source B, better students understood that this again was an attack on Stalin's cult of personality, but that the source also demonstrated Khrushchev's intention to firstly, relieve some of the pressure on himself, and secondly, to oust his closest rivals as part of the struggle for power in the aftermath of Stalin's death. Students who used precise knowledge to support comments made on the source as a whole, achieved better than those students who used patchy knowledge to address content through a sentence-by-sentence approach.

In terms of the comparison, more able students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the beginning of de-Stalinisation in 1956. Better answers made comparative judgement throughout, although there were some very good responses that dealt with the comparison effectively in the conclusion. More able students argued that Source B was more valuable due to Gorbachev's exceptional retrospective understanding of what Khrushchev was trying to do in 1956. Some students emphasised that Source A held more value and some argued that both held equal value. If well-reasoned such judgements were deemed equally acceptable.

Section B**Question 2**

This was the least popular of the two essay questions. Whilst there were some good responses, this question was done less effectively than question 3. Most students dealt with the state of the economy effectively, but provided little of relevance when addressing whether or not the Soviet Union was politically stable in 1982. This unfortunately prevented many from reaching beyond level 3 on the mark scheme. More able students provided a balanced assessment of the state of the USSR by 1982, often concluding that despite improved living standards and less internal dissent, the gerontocracy and years of stagnation under Brezhnev amounted to significant instability. In good responses, factors addressing economic and political stability, such as living standards, internal dissent and the KGB, the 'Old Guard, and the 1977 Soviet Constitution, were balanced out by factors which addressed instability, such as economic stagnation, the war in Afghanistan, the gerontocracy, and problems throughout the Soviet Empire. The more precise the information and the tighter the links to the question, the more likely the answer was to reach the higher mark levels.

Question 3

Most students answered this question effectively. Most students who attempted this question had a good to excellent grasp of the subject knowledge necessary to achieve well on a question asking about the crisis facing Russia in the 1990s. There were some descriptive responses, which received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical stance. However, these descriptive responses often comprised impressive knowledge with occasional references to the question and so still managed to reach level 3 on the mark scheme. Most students offered balance but with differing levels of sophistication, with less able students spending far too much time discussing the named factor in the question (Yeltsin), resulting in uneven balance. Stronger students adopted a much more even approach in terms of balance and evaluated a range of issues such as Yeltsin, Russia's economic plight, Brezhnev's legacy and Gorbachev's failing reforms. Good students often concluded that whilst the economic dislocation and political instability caused by Yeltsin's failing reforms, and Yeltsin's erratic behaviour certainly contributed to the crisis facing Russia in the years 1991-200, the crisis was certainly not entirely due to him - that circumstance, Brezhnev and Gorbachev all played a part, and were perhaps more significant.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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