



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel
In GCE History (8HI0/1E)
Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1E: Russia, 1917–91: from Lenin to
Yeltsin

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see candidates able to engage effectively across the ability range on this summer's AS Level Paper 1 Option 1E: Russia, 1917-91: from Lenin to Yeltsin. The paper is divided into three sections. Section A comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause and/or consequence. Section B offers a further choice of essays, targeting any of the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3). Candidates mainly appeared to be able to organise their time effectively, although there were some cases of candidates not completing one of the three responses within the time allocated for this paper. Examiners did note a number of scripts that posed some problems with the legibility of handwriting. Examiners can only reward candidates for what they are able to read.

Of the three sections of Paper 1, candidates are generally more secure with the essay sections, and in sections A and B most candidates were prepared well in centres to demonstrate their abilities to write, or to attempt, an analytical response. Stronger answers clearly understood the importance of identifying the appropriate second order concept that was being targeted by the question and used this to aid their approach to answering their chosen question. Largely candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner suited to the different demands of questions in these two sections, in terms of the greater depth of knowledge required where Section A questions target a shorter time period, as compared to the more careful selection generally required for the Section B questions covering a broader timespan. Candidates do need to be mindful when formulating their planning that there is an argument and a counter argument within their answer; some candidates lacked sufficient treatment of these and therefore showed imbalance in their answers. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these strands progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period. In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrated a clear focus on the need to discuss different arguments given within the two extracts, clearly recognising these as historical interpretations. Such responses tended to offer a comparative analysis of the merits of the different views, exploring the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in the light of the evidence, both from within the extracts, and from candidates' own contextual knowledge. Such responses tended to avoid attempts to examine the extracts in a manner more suited to AO2, assertions of the inferiority of an extract on the basis of it offering less factual evidence, or a drift away from the specific demands of the question to the wider taught topic. This is a continuing trend and was pleasing to see.

Q1 There were a lower number of responses to this question. On Question 1, stronger responses targeted the reasons for the survival of the Soviet regime in the years 1917-28 and included an analysis of the relationships between the key issues and the concept (causation) involved in the question. Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the stated factor (Lenin's leadership) and a range of other factors (e.g. Trotsky's role, the utilisation of arts and culture, control and censorship and the weaknesses of opposition). Judgements made about the relative importance of Lenin's leadership were reasoned and based on clear criteria. High scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated. Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of the reasons for

the survival of the Soviet regime in the years 1917-28. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far making responses often fairly brief. There was also evidence of responses that were lacking in coherence and structure and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements. It is worth remembering that causation questions are best responded to with multiple reasons. Therefore, candidates may limit themselves if they only assess the stated cause given in the question.

Q2 This was the most popular question on Section A. On Question 2, stronger responses targeted the reasons for Stalin's control over the Soviet population and included an analysis of the relationships between the key issues and the concept (causation) involved in the question. Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the stated factor (Stalin's use of the media and propaganda) and a range of other factors (e.g. economic modernisation, terror and intimidation and the threat posed by Germany). Judgements made about the relative importance of Stalin's use of the media and propaganda were reasoned and based on clear criteria. High scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated. Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a simple, limited analysis of the reasons for Stalin's control over the Soviet population. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or remained generalised. Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Q3 On Question 3, stronger responses targeted how accurate it is to say that the Soviet government's economic priorities did not change in the years 1953-85 and included an analysis of the relationships between the key issues and the concept (change/continuity) involved in the question. Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the argument (e.g. continued focus on heavy industry and the continuation of a command economy, in contrast to Khrushchev's shift to light industry and the boost of consumer industries under Brezhnev). Judgements made about change/continuity regarding the Soviet government's economic priorities were reasoned and based on clear criteria. High scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated. Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of how accurate it is to say that the Soviet government's economic priorities did not change in the years 1953-85. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on change/continuity or were essentially a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far or offered only one narrow aspect of the question. Furthermore, such responses were often fairly brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Q4 This was the more popular question in Section B. On Question 4, stronger responses targeted the significance of the provision of education as a Soviet social development and included an analysis of the relationships between the key issues and the concept (significance) involved in the question. Sufficient knowledge was used to develop the stated Soviet social development (the provision of education) and a range of other Soviet social developments (e.g. Social security, housing and healthcare). Judgements made about the relative significance of the provision of education were reasoned and based on clear criteria. High scoring answers were also clearly organised and effectively communicated. Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly simple, limited analysis of Soviet social developments in the years 1917-85. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on significance or were

essentially a narrative of the period under discussion. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it was not developed very far making responses often fairly brief. There was also evidence of responses that were lacking in coherence and structure and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements. It is worth remembering that significance questions are best responded to with multiple aspects. Therefore, candidates may limit themselves if they only assess the stated area given in the question.

Q5 On Question 5, stronger responses were clearly focused on the extracts and possessed the confidence and understanding to develop an extract-based analysis of the view that the collapse of the Soviet Union came about because of nationalist resurgence in the Communist states of Eastern Europe. Higher scoring answers offered some comparative analysis of the two extracts and used own knowledge effectively to examine the merits/validity of the views presented (e.g. the resetting of the Eastern bloc and the domino effect of nationalism this created, success of Baltic fronts emboldening republics, economic failings and insecurities, Gorbachev's reforms). Stronger responses were also focused on the precise question (the collapse of the Soviet Union came about because of nationalist resurgence in the Communist states of Eastern Europe) rather than the general controversy and put forward a reasoned judgement on the given issue, referencing the views in the extracts. Weaker answers tended to show some understanding of the extracts and attempted to focus on the reemergence of nationalism but were likely to under-use Extract 2 (Oliver and Aldcroft). At the lower levels, basic points were selected from the extracts for illustration and comparisons made between the two extracts were fairly rudimentary. Weaker candidates sometimes also relied almost exclusively on the extracts as sources of information about the issue in the question. Others made limited use of the two extracts and attempted to answer the question relying largely on their own knowledge. Moreover, in lower scoring responses, the candidate's own knowledge tended to be illustrative (e.g. just tacked on to points from the extracts) or drifted from the focus of the question. Furthermore, these answers were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.