

2000 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre Modern History

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Modern History

2 Unit People and Events

General Comments

There were 2900 candidates in 2000, a small increase on 1999. The paper was a fair test of candidates' analytical skills and knowledge, and allowed candidates the opportunity to demonstrate what they had learned.

An increasing problem with candidates is the failure to carefully read the instructions on the examination paper. A significant number of candidates completed wrong combinations of questions, either two Twentieth Century studies or two Elective Studies, instead of one from each.

Twentieth Century Germany was again the most popular non-compulsory question. The United States, in both the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century areas, continues to be the main growth area. The decline in the numbers attempting Modern World Studies in recent years has been reversed and it enjoyed a significant rise in popularity in 2000.

Section I – Core Study – World War I (30 Marks)

General Comments

Part A was well handled by candidates overall. The average for this question was higher than for Parts B and C. Some candidates were confused as to what was required by (a)(i) and (a)(ii). Two sets of months/years were often provided by candidates, not one as the question required.

Part B was a good discriminator and the full range of marks could be applied. Some candidates answered the question solely using their own knowledge or the sources provided and this limited the scope of their responses. Most candidates however were able to link the sources to their own knowledge. A number of responses used the sources or their own knowledge as evidence to support the argument they were making.

Part C polarised candidates' responses. It was either handled very well or was done very poorly. Many candidates did not know the difference between reliability and usefulness and how to apply them to the sources. Candidates who did so performed strongly.

Section II – Twentieth Century National Studies (40 Marks)

General Comments

74% of candidates attempted Germany and it remains the most popular question in this section of the paper. 13% answered Russia and 10% the USA. Less than 2% completed any of the other options.

Specific Comments

Comments have been provided only for questions that attracted more than 55 responses.

Question 8 and 9 – Germany (2129 responses)

In answering part 8(a), candidates took two separate approaches. Some traced the important events of Hitler's life, commenting on those contributing to his path to the chancellorship. Most candidates however, used a different approach and dealt in detail with the period from 1930 to 1933.

The questions on the Jewish Community, 8(b), the Nazi Youth Groups 9(a), and Occupation of the Ruhr 9(b) were straightforward questions easily understood by candidates. Their ability to provide detailed, relevant information was the discriminator between candidates.

Part 8(c) was not well answered. Candidates spoke generally on the effects of the Night of the Long Knives and only a small number specifically highlighted the effects on Hitler's leadership in any detail. In answering part 9(c), candidates tended to concentrate on his second Presidential term rather than covering the entire period from 1925 to 1934.

Question 14 and 15 – Russia (360 responses)

In answering part 14(a), better candidates went beyond a general description of the Secret Police and highlighted their changing role in different periods. Similarly, in describing the main events of Stalin's life in part 15(a), better candidates were able to explain the significance of the events for Stalin and Russia.

Questions 14(b), the overthrow of the Tsar, and 15(b), the Kulaks, were well answered. Candidates had a good understanding of the events leading to the revolution and the methods Stalin used against the Kulaks. Weaker candidates in part 15(b) drifted from the topic spending too much time talking about the reasons for Stalin's attacks.

Most candidates in part 14(c) could outline Trotsky's actions in the Civil War but many had trouble assessing his importance, beyond saying he was important. Most responses to part 15(c) generally listed the effects of the purges. Responses that concentrated on the Communist Party were a rarity.

Question 16 and 17 – USA (290 responses)

Overall the questions on the USA were very well answered. Questions 14(a) on the Klu Klux Klan, 15(a) on D-Day, and 16(b) on Roosevelt, contained relevant, detailed supporting evidence overall.

Candidates did however have some difficulty with the term 'how successful' in answering question 17(c) on MacArthur, with most candidates describing the tactics he employed rather than assessing their impact. Many candidates in question 17(b) spoke too generally about the problems of the unemployed without providing detailed, specific evidence to support their arguments.

Section III – Electives (30 Marks)

General Comments

Candidates in this section of the paper attempted a wide range of questions. The number of candidates doing Modern World Studies has risen from 40% in 1999 to 46% in 2000. Indo-China remains the most popular Elective study followed in declining order by USA, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Russia, US-Soviet Relations, Australia, China, Japan, Britain and India.

Specific Comments

Comments are provided below for those questions that attracted more than 100 responses.

Nineteenth Century Studies

Question 18 – Australia (190 responses)

Overall, this question was not well answered. The Myall Creek Massacre, part (a), was not a good discriminator. Candidates generally spoke about the trial and did not focus on the events and personalities. In part (c), the squatters, candidates did not demonstrate sound knowledge of their political, social and economic roles. The question on Caroline Chisholm, part (b), was the best answered part providing detailed examples of her aid.

Question 20 – China (161 responses)

In part (a) candidates concentrated on personal events of Ci Xi's life. Better responses had sound sequencing and an explanation of the significance of events. Candidates found part (b) difficult and provided few reasons for the Boxer Rebellion. Part (c) was well done, however candidates generally listed the provisions of the treaties but did not analyse their long term effects on China.

Question 23 – Japan (125 responses)

In part (a), the best answers included very good descriptions and factual information on the traditional samurai activities. In part (b), better answers linked the Restoration to Modernisation and gave specific information on the process. Part (c) was not well answered. Few candidates could explain how the Meiji Restoration changed the status of the samurai.

Question 24 – Russia (420 responses)

Part (a) was a straightforward question. As with other 'main events' questions on the paper, the discriminator was the candidates' ability to highlight the significance of the events. Part (b) was not well answered nor was part (c). Most candidates failed to consider 'why' revolutionary groups developed and could not explain how the emancipation of the serfs affected society. There was a lack of detailed and relevant information.

Question 25 – USA (496 responses)

This was one of the better answered questions on the paper. Candidates provided detailed synopsis of events of the Sioux Wars, part (a), the better candidates analysing the significance of them. Candidates also displayed a good understanding of the reasons for tension between north and south and how Lincoln's election heightened

the tension, part (b). Most candidates spoke in general terms of the importance of slavery to the southern economy and society, part (c), but answers generally lacked sufficient detail.

Modern World Studies

Question 26 – Arab-Israeli Conflict (425 responses)

Overall, this was a well answered question. Some candidates had difficulty setting time limits in part (a), beginning their discussions back in the days of Abraham. Candidates also had difficulty understanding the role of the UN in the creation of Israel. In part (b), better candidates were able to provide specific ways and events in which the PLO attempted to help Palestinians in the 70's and 80's. They also demonstrated a good understanding in part (c) of Arafat and the peace process over the last 8 years.

Question 27 – Conflict in Indo-China (620 responses)

Overall, this was a well answered question. In part (a), better candidates addressed both Laos and Cambodia and some looked at the US homefront for reactions to the US involvement. In part (b), better answers looked at the political, social, economic and environmental issues. In part (c), candidates writing on Vietnam generally had more recent knowledge than those writing on Cambodia.

Question 28 – US-Soviet/CIS Relations (280 responses)

Responses to part (a), main events in the Cold War, were particularly well done with candidates discriminating between the relative importance of events. In part (b), candidates tended to list events rather than focussing and accounting for the changing nature of the relationship between USA and USSR. Part (c) was not as well answered. Responses lacked hard historical examples of recent events.

2/3 Unit (Common)

General Comments

The standards this year were higher overall. The numbers of problem scripts were significantly down on previous years, and there were very few non-attempts. Less able candidates were generally able to present a competent narrative, but lacked analysis in their responses.

Core WWI

Candidates were able to respond to this question with adequate, relevant knowledge and appropriate source use. A significant number of candidates were able to gain top marks.

The topics of enlistment and the homefront gave the candidates scope to demonstrate adequate and often substantial relevant own knowledge. A considerable number of candidates missed question 1(a)(ii) probably because question 1(a)(i) required two answers.

Most candidates had sufficient knowledge of changing attitudes to provide satisfactory responses. However, a number misunderstood the question and provided answers relating to attitudes to war rather than attitudes to enlistment. Better candidates focussed specifically on the changing attitudes to enlistment in both countries. Many candidates had trouble linking three sources to their own knowledge.

Despite the fact that some candidates had difficulty with part (d), many were able to combine the sources with some relevant own knowledge. Better responses suggested that many of the problems facing the German Government were not necessarily caused by mismanagement. Candidates argued that the British had access to greater manpower and necessary resources, which allowed them to sustain the war effort longer. The more harmonious industrial relations in Britain was acknowledged and the lack of active partnerships in Germany was seen as a cause of unrest by 1918.

20th Century National Studies

Germany was once again the most popular national study, attracting 66% of candidates. The next most popular topics were Russia/USSR 22%, the USA 6.5% and China 4.2%.

The best candidates responded with impressive essays that argued at length on the basis of sound knowledge and understanding of a range of historical interpretation. These essays focussed on relevant problems and issues, made appropriate use of historians, and were well organised. The best essays displayed outstanding literacy.

Average and weaker candidates sometimes had difficulty focussing on the relevant issues. Also, there was a tendency to ignore the period indicated in the question. A large number of these candidates were intent on recording prepared responses, rather than responding to the questions asked. Weaker candidates also had difficulty using historians effectively, often failing to prioritise points in their argument and were far less fluent.

19th Century National Studies

In part (a), once again, candidates ignored the instruction “briefly”, and wrote lengthy, detailed responses of up to 2 pages and sometimes more.

In part (b), better candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of cause-effect relationships, while weaker candidates merely narrated in general terms.

In part (c), some candidates had difficulty with the concept of “to what extent”.

Modern World Studies

Most candidates were well prepared and were able to competently answer the three parts of the structured essay on their relevant Modern World Study.

Part (a) responses were often too long, however a majority of the candidates gained full marks.

The candidates responses to part (b) were commendable with the discriminator being the use of analysis as well as the relevant narration of events.

The issue in contention today was required in part (c). Responses needed to include historical perspective and appropriate evidence to substantiate judgements. A few candidates mismanaged their time and failed to allow enough time for part (c).

Slightly over half of the candidates (51%) answered the conflict in Indochina questions, whilst 27% tackled the US-Soviet/CIS Relations in the Nuclear Age. Arab-Israeli conflict was answered by 22% of the candidature.

3 Unit (Additional)

The 3 Unit paper was a very demanding one requiring candidates to think quickly on their feet, especially in the most popular area, the International Relations between the Wars. There was quite a range in responses although fewer in the lower range. Top answers showed excellent subject knowledge, fluent style and appropriate use of historiography. There were many pathways to a perfect score and many candidates took very different, yet acceptable approaches to the questions. These responses were typically characterised by a thorough analysis of the question. Less able responses were typically narrative in nature and failed to comprehensively respond to the question set.

Questions 13 and 14(a) in Revolutions were overwhelmingly the most popular. The standard was generally very good, with increased use of historiography by most candidates.