



A-level HISTORY 7042/2N

Component 2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917–1953

Mark scheme

June 2024

Version: 1.1 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the leadership struggle in the years 1924 to 1929.

[30 marks]*Target: AO2*

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- this is an official statement by the RCP Conference but its value lies in the way it clearly carries the mark of Stalin. Stalin was General Secretary and had been able to influence the election of delegates to get this vote in favour of the Triumvirate which he had formed with Kamenev and Zinoviev – two respected ‘old’ Bolsheviks
- written in the month of Lenin’s death it gives a clear indication of the division in the party at this time; two key factions have formed with differing views on the future direction of the party; only the victorious (Stalinist) side, though, is represented here, following a vote denouncing Trotsky’s ideas
- as a published, public statement to justify the action taken, this source seeks to denounce the opposition as traitors to the Leninist legacy – a view likely to win sympathy given the veneration in which Lenin was held – even if not necessarily a fair representation

Content and argument

- the source details the beginning of the power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky; underlying the criticism was Trotsky’s concern with the direction of the Triumvirate (Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev) which had formed to block his own ascendancy.
- the source identifies methods of party organisation and control as a key factor in the leadership struggle, although there were, of course, other factors at stake: Trotsky has alleged a lack of democracy and excessive bureaucracy within the party, so criticising the centralised control and large state bureaucracy that had developed under Lenin, which Stalin now controlled
- the source demonstrates how Stalin uses reference to Lenin to discredit the opposition; Stalin had placed himself close to Lenin in his final years; he gave Lenin’s funeral oration (while Trotsky was absent) and used every opportunity to cast himself as heir to Lenin;
- it also shows how Lenin’s ban on factions was used by Stalin and his associates to undermine opposition; the ban helped cement the idea of a leader who upheld the party line; it clashed with Trotsky’s support for party democracy – allowing debates within the party

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the speech was given in 1934, at a time when Preobrazhensky was under arrest by the Stalinist regime and therefore likely to have been pressurised into admitting ‘mistakes’. He had suffered exile from his association with the Trotskyites so it is hardly surprising that he wanted to distance himself and show his admiration for Stalin in the 1930s
- the speech is addressed to the CPSU Congress and is a public admittance of former errors; it is unlikely to represent Preobrazhensky’s real views but it illustrates Stalin’s need to show that intellectuals could be wrong whereas he had always been far-sighted and ideologically correct
- this speech is from the economist Preobrazhensky whose theories were adopted by the Trotskyists; Preobrazhensky witnessed the leadership struggle and saw the use to which his arguments were put; his interest in economic development made him an important figure in the debate which underpinned the leadership struggle

Content and argument

- the source exemplifies one of the key debates in the leadership struggle: ‘permanent revolution’, favoured by Trotsky and the left versus ‘Socialism in One Country’, as favoured by Stalin; the former sought the spread of Communism world-wide, the latter the building of socialism within Russia as an example to the world
- the source shows how Stalin claimed to understand ‘true Leninism’ and possessed unrivalled wisdom and courage; in the 1920s, Stalin’s writings helped suggest that he was as much an active theorist as Trotsky; Stalin’s appreciation of the need to master Marxism-Leninism indicates his shrewd awareness of what brought respect and power
- the source shows the economic arguments at stake during the leadership struggle; in the clashes Trotsky favoured the more orthodox Marxist view, upheld by Preobrazhensky, that the peasants had to be exploited to provide resources for industrialisation; in the years 1925-27, Stalin favoured the NEP before switching to collectivisation during the Great Turn, which the source alludes to
- the source shows Stalin’s methods and opportunism: he made an example of Preobrazhensky, because of his Trotskyite associations, even though this view mirrored what Stalin actually implemented from 1929. When Zinoviev and Kamenev, unable to control Stalin, joined forces with Trotsky to form the ‘Left (United) Opposition’, Stalin, the opportunist, joined Bukharin; Stalin thereupon expelled Preobrazhensky from the party along with Trotsky and Zinoviev (1927)

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- this source comes from a leading figure, intimately involved in the leadership struggle. Kamenev was an 'old' and prominent Bolshevik who had formed the Triumvirate with Stalin in 1924 but had been disgraced and expelled from the Central Committee in 1927; he reports a conversation with another major player, Bukharin, who had opposed him in partnership with Stalin, but was himself now under attack from Stalin; this is a conversation 'from the top'
- in 1928 Stalin had begun to push his new policies, opposing Bukharin (and his allies Rykov and Tomsky) who had lost support in the party for appearing 'soft'; this conversation takes place at a time when Bukharin is clearly desperate; in 1929 he would lose his party positions
- the conversation was recorded by Kamenev – perhaps for his own political purposes – but it was not intended for publication which would suggest it is likely to be a very near representation of what was said, although it is unlikely that the exact words would have been fully recalled; leakage of the conversation could have done Bukharin considerable political damage
- the tone is desperate and pleading; it is damning of Stalin who is deemed 'disastrous' and described as a 'political intriguer' but it also shows some timidity – talk of removing Stalin 'frightens people' and Bukharin fears a party split; it is difficult for opponents to attack for fear of accusations of factionalism.

Content and argument

- the source gives a vivid picture of the last stage of the power struggle. Kamenev's open and seemingly innocent question 'is the struggle really serious?' produces a desperate response from Bukharin who has clearly been duped by Stalin and finally sees through what has been going on; it was Stalin's opportunism and the underestimation of men such as Kamenev and Bukharin that helped him win the power struggle
- the source confirms that Bukharin was outwitted through a challenge to his economic policy: Stalin's 'line' (meaning his measures against the Siberian peasants in 1928, his war against the kulaks, his preparations for a rapid surge in industrialisation and his aggressive support for the Comintern) went against Bukharin's principles
- although conveying Bukharin's view of Stalin as an 'unprincipled intriguer', we cannot be sure whether Stalin cynically manipulated ideology to rise to power or whether he was driven by genuine convictions which changed according to circumstances; the positions he adopted in 1924–29 would certainly suggest that Bukharin might be correct; the source would suggest Stalin exploited developments to centralise control under himself
- the last section of the source exemplifies weakness of Stalin's opponents – a key element of the leadership struggle; Bukharin had left it too late to seek an alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev; he had seriously underestimated Stalin; Kamenev had a power base in Moscow but lacked the drive and ambition of Stalin; the account is one-sided but contains much that can be corroborated.

Section B

0 2 To what extent had Bolshevik authority been established in Russia by the end of 1917?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Bolshevik authority had been established in Russia by the end of 1917 might include:

- the Bolsheviks had launched a revolution in October/November and seized Petrograd; they had removed the Provisional Government, arresting members; they had side-lined the Petrograd Soviet and taken power into their own hands; by December they had extended their control over the provinces, established control in Moscow and defeated an attempt by Kerensky to retake Petrograd;
- Lenin had established Sovnarkom, initially as an all-Bolshevik ministry, although by December some left-wing SRs had been brought into lesser positions. Lenin destroyed other parties – Kadets, SRs and Mensheviks - by arresting leading members. The decree on the press prevented opposition groups from publicising their views. Even when other parties, esp the SRs, did well in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks were able to shut it down with minimal resistance.
- Lenin issued decrees on peace, land and workers' control. These helped to consolidate Bolshevik authority by giving large sections of the population what they were hoping for from the revolution: an end to the war, land for peasants and workers' rights. These decrees won wider support for the new regime.
- the Bolsheviks controlled the economy, e.g. through nationalising the banks, and had established Vesenkha to co-ordinate the economy; they dominated the major towns and railways
- the Bolsheviks had purged the civil service and terrorised the bourgeoisie into submission – abolishing titles and encouraging class warfare; had established the secret police force, the Cheka, and was taking action against 'counter-revolutionaries'.

Arguments challenging the view that Bolshevik authority had been established in Russia by the end of 1917 might include:

- although weakened, other parties had not been banned and the Mensheviks and right-wing SRs who had walked out of the Congress of Soviets had much support within the country, as was shown when elections for a constituent assembly were held in November; the 'bourgeoisie' still retained the vote
- following the Bolshevik Decree on Peace, the new Bolshevik state was vulnerable: Germans were advancing militarily in West Russia; the Ukraine sought German help to achieve independence; in December, Trotsky led the Russian delegation at Brest-Litovsk to negotiate peace from a position of weakness
- the Bolsheviks had no authority over large areas of the countryside which harboured opponents including liberals, former tsarists, nationalists and separatists; foreign nations were poised to intervene against the Bolshevik government; the new Bolshevik state was not recognised internationally, weakening the Bolshevik position at home. The outbreak of Civil War in March 1918 reveals these weaknesses.
- the Bolsheviks were not fully in control of developments – eg the Land Decree merely acknowledged the on-going land seizures; workers' control of factories was conceded to meet popular demand; the Bolshevik decree of National self-determination had little effect as Bolsheviks didn't control the minority areas; local soviets managed their own affairs and did not always submit to central control.

Students should be able to balance the strengths of the Bolshevik government at the end of 1917 with its limitations. The degree of authority asserted by the Bolsheviks was certainly impressive but it was not all-encompassing and many will look ahead to the Civil War to reinforce this point. Answers should nevertheless concentrate on the position by December 1917, before internal troubles began in earnest.

0 3 'In the 1930s, Stalin's Five Year Plans were a failure.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that in the 1930s, Stalin's Five Year Plans were a failure might include:

- the targets were not fulfilled: these were hopelessly over-optimistic and placed a great strain on the country; they encouraged bribery and corruption with competition for resources and the manipulation of statistics; mistakes were hidden and production problems left unresolved
- the plans highlighted the weaknesses of a command economy – the opposite of what was intended: poor central planning (at its worst in the first plan) meant some areas under-produced, others over-produced, creating wastage and substandard goods; the diversion of materials to the military from 1938 hit the third plan; the disappointing levels of oil production produced a fuel crisis at the end of the 1930s
- the Depression meant that the USSR could not earn enough from exports in the early 1930s to pay for necessary machinery; some investment had to be diverted to agriculture because of the collectivisation programme; the purges of 1936/7 deprived industry of 'bourgeois specialists' including planners and technicians; propaganda campaigns such as Stakhanovism distorted the production process
- the plans failed to improve life for the Soviet people: they over-emphasised heavy industry and consumer goods were neglected throughout; there was limited house-building; living standards remained low as the urban population expanded; food was rationed in the first plan, essential commodities were in short supply and living conditions abysmal
- the plans failed to show the superiority of a 'socialist' way: egalitarianism was abandoned as wage-differentials and other incentives were introduced to combat the shortage of skilled workers; tough measures had to be taken to prevent absenteeism and enforce discipline, including labour books; there was an over-reliance on forced labour in gulags.

Arguments challenging the view that in the 1930s, Stalin's Five Year Plans were a failure might include:

- the plans brought industrial growth right across the USSR: the first plan kick-started the economy and the second consolidated the growth, bringing the 'three good years' 1934–36; electricity, coal, iron, steel and engineering made massive strides; many new enterprises were established, particularly in the non-Russian republics; new industrial complexes such as Magnitogorsk were built; new tractor works supported the mechanisation of agriculture
- the plans fulfilled their intention of driving the economy forward through a concentration on heavy industry and communications; impressive projects, eg the Dnieper dams were completed; the USSR developed a much greater self-sufficiency that would stand it in good stead in the event of war
- it was never intended that all targets would be reached and resources were successfully concentrated in priority areas, for example into defence after 1936; the high targets were an effective propaganda device to impart a sense of urgency and drive Soviet citizens forward
- the plans revived faith in the party: Stalin's bold vision contrasted with the Depression in the West and were a political triumph; there was more employment, ensuring work for peasants forced from the land by collectivisation; they developed a socialist enthusiasm and from 1934 when food rationing ended, families had more income; there was more skills training and productivity rates improved; Soviet citizens took pride in what was achieved.

Students are likely to conclude that whilst the Five Year Plans failed in their specific targets, overall they succeeded in turning the Soviet economy round in the 1930s. The best arguments will consider what is meant by 'success' and 'failure' in relation to the overall aims of the plans rather than just the detail.

Better responses may consider the political and ideological implications as well as the more obvious economic results. Reward any well-argued and effectively substantiated response.

0 4 'Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War was entirely due to Stalin's wartime leadership.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

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- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War was entirely due to Stalin's wartime leadership might include:

- Stalin provided strong leadership from the centre, breaking with the past to unify political and military command; the GKO (State Defence Committee) became the supreme body, responsible for mobilising the country's human and material resources with STAVKA below it, controlling the management of military operations; GKO decrees were subject to unquestioning execution by all party, state, military, economic and trade union bodies; Stalin also issued personal orders
- Stalin adapted the command economy to suit wartime needs: he ordered the economic relocation which moved production, including whole factories, east of the Urals in 1941; he readily took assistance from his allies and the Americans in the lend-lease programme
- Stalin demanded strong discipline from both military and civilians: he ordered frontal assaults regardless of casualties and Order 227 (July 1942) outlawed retreat and ordered execution or service in penal battalions for 'cowards'; Stalin changed the labour camp system for war use; deported national minorities; treated any returned POWs harshly
- Stalin understood the importance of propaganda and the need to replace Communist slogans (calling for world-wide proletarian unity) with patriotic ones; he dissolved Comintern and (in a turnabout of policy) made an unofficial concordat with the Russian Orthodox Church; he correctly gauged the mood of the country, promoting heroism and sacrifice; he used his own cult status to advantage with inspirational speeches reinforcing citizens' duty to himself and the Motherland
- he took measures to build up the Red Army in 1942, abolishing military commissars and restoring ranks; he appointed some able generals such as Zhukov and gave them greater freedom to determine strategy; he insisted on fighting to the end, thus carrying the Russian victory into Europe and seizing the German Reichstag.

Arguments challenging the view that Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War was entirely due to Stalin's wartime leadership might include:

- Stalin failed to prepare adequately for war and the massive destruction and military failures of 1941 came from his weak leadership: he ignored intelligence about Germany's invasion plans, leaving the USSR unprepared for Operation Barbarossa; he allowed the best Soviet forces and military equipment to be captured, industrial plants destroyed and the air force to be largely destroyed on the ground;
- Stalin himself disappeared from view for 10 days and made no inspirational radio broadcast during the first two weeks; he caused great human loss by refusing to allow retreat in the south; he didn't evacuate Leningrad which fell under siege
- Stalin's mistreatment of peasants and minorities led some to welcome the Germans, eg in the Ukraine and Baltic States; Stalin showed utter disregard for human life allowing civilians to die of cold and hunger and ordering the execution of soldiers – not marks of good leadership; there was a lack of trust at every level
- it was not leadership but the USSR's geographical size that brought victory: Russia had a huge advantage over the Germans, with plentiful resources both of men and materials including oil; as its military-industrial power increased, the USSR easily out-produced the Germans whose lines were over-stretched and who fought on many fronts
- the USSR fought Germany as part of a Grand Alliance; Soviet victory was made possible by its allies who aided Russia by direct aid and by the mass bombing of German transport and production centres; other campaigns, particularly the opening up of a second front against Germany in the West in 1944, aided Soviet success.

Students are likely to question whether Stalin really was the great war leader that subsequent Soviet propaganda made him out to be, but they should be able to identify at least some strengths. In arriving at a supported judgement as to why the Soviet Union was able to claim victory over the Germans, they should make some attempt to balance Stalin's qualities against his weaknesses as a war leader and many answers are likely to consider some of the other reasons for Soviet victory too. Reward any well-developed argument that reaches a convincing and substantiated judgement.