



A-level
Politics

7152/3 Political ideas

Report on the Examination

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General

Almost all students managed to complete all sections of the paper within the time allowed. As in previous years there was an imbalance in the optional ideologies answered by students, with Nationalism, Feminism and Anarchism accounting for almost all entries. Section A answers were generally well-structured, with 3 clear points. In both section B and section C, stronger responses focused on the question set rather giving a general account of the key thinkers on the specification.

Section A

Question 1

Almost all students correctly suggested that socialists have a negative view of the free market and generally started their answers with Marxist theory. Those students that gave three different perspectives; were able to score well. Students were in most cases were able to accurately cite a key thinker in relation to a perspective. Weaker answers tended to either repetitively explain points that they had made (for example suggesting that Marx, Luxemburg and Webb all viewed the free market as harmful and unstable), there was also a tendency in many mid-level responses to explain socialist theory at length without focusing on the free market. There was also unclear expression of the views of Giddens, suggesting that he was an unabashed advocate of the free market. Answers that explained and analysed his more nuanced views tended to score better.

Question 2

Students were typically able to refer to a range of thinkers and state their key ideas; Locke's concepts of natural rights, Mill's Harm principle, more modern conceptions positive freedom advocated by Green, Rawls and Frieden and the importance of individual freedom being equally available to all (often citing Wollstonecraft's argument for female emancipation and equality). Responses that obtained higher marks avoided repetition and were able to give a more analytical explanation of why thinkers held a perspective, for example being able to accurately explain why individuals would rationally seek to be free in the original position or in Locke's state of nature. Responses at middle and lower levels tended to make assertions about the ideas of key thinkers without using examples or analysis of key ideas to develop them further.

Question 3

A range of points were commonly raised; Hobbes's justification for a Leviathan, Rand and Nozick's minarchist view of the state, the importance of pragmatism, and Burke's advocacy for the preservation of established institutions. Answers that scored highly were able to effectively focus on the question set, explaining why the state should take the form it should, for example explaining the new right belief of protecting a right to private property. Weaker answers either tended to repetitively state that conservatives emphasised the importance of creating and maintaining order, or gave a general, and therefore less focused, account of key thinker's ideas.

Section B

Question 4

Most students were able to identify Luxemburg was a revolutionary socialist, who advocated for revolution as an essential event in achieving the aims of socialism, and that Webb was a democratic socialist, who thought revolution to be harmful and counterproductive. Much less common was a discussion of the evident similarities between the thinkers; that capitalism was a corrupting force and that ultimately democratic government by the people in a socialist state was desirable. A meaningful discussion of the provenance of these extracts was yet again rare. Where students effectively reflected on this they typically scored very highly. Furthermore, the command word in the question to “compare” was not attempted by many students, with many responses giving 2 separate and narrative accounts of the extracts. Students who, for example, suggested that Luxemburg rejected parliamentary democracy in bourgeoisie society as a reflection of their interests, versus Webb ‘s view that universal suffrage enabled meaningful reform to a socialist state did very well. The use of thinkers other than those in the extracts often led to students losing focus on the question. Students that discussed the ideas of other key thinkers that were irrelevant to the extracts did not receive credit for those parts of the answer. This was often true in the use of Giddens for example when discussing his influence on Labour governments of Blair and Brown.

Section C

Question 5

This was again a popular optional question, and as a result yielded a wide range of responses. Most students were able to identify that nationalism is an ideology often used to justify political institutions reflecting the culture of a people. The ideas of Von Herder, Mauras and Garvey were often used illustrate this. With regards to the idea of rights, students often were able to use the ideas of Rousseau effectively, to illustrate civic traditions within nationalism. Responses that reflected that protection of culture and rights were not necessarily mutually exclusive often scored well. As with all the section C responses there was a tendency for many answers to present a list of key thinkers’ ideas, sometimes returning to the focus of the question at the end of each paragraph. Whilst these answers often had much creditworthy material, they did not address the thrust of the question as well as responses that dealt with the question thematically using thinkers as examples. Students that reflected on the reasons for the differing perspectives amongst nationalist thinkers in their evaluation were typically rewarded at higher levels.

Question 6

This was the most popular section C question. Most students were able to identify that equality for women was the aim for all feminists. Students that approached the question by considering the different strands of feminism and their critique of the position of women legally, economically socially often did well. This was particularly true when answers were developed by discussing why there was disagreement between the different strands. Students were able to cite a good range of thinkers with Millet, bell hooks, De Beauvoir, Rowbotham and Gillman all being accurately used in strong responses. As with all the

section C responses there was a tendency for many answers to present a list of key thinkers' ideas, sometimes returning to the focus of the question at the end of each paragraph. Whilst these answers often had much creditworthy material they did not address the thrust of the question as well as responses that dealt with the question thematically using thinkers as examples.

Question 7

This question was done by a very small number of students. Most of the responses were at mid and lower-levels and did not address the key thinkers with confidence, if they were mentioned at all.

Question 8

This question was popular, with a higher proportion of students attempting it than in previous series. Most students were able to identify that it focused on a tension within anarchism between syndicalists such as Proudhon and egoists such as Stirner. Students who cited other libertarian thinkers were credited, such as Rothbard, and received higher levels if this was in addition to discussion of key thinkers. However, where students only relied on the ideas of thinkers that were outside the specification they were limited to level 2 as per the rubric in the mark scheme. Responses that scored highly were able to challenge the premise of the question suggesting that the main motivation of anarchism was to end oppression at the hands of the state. As with all the section C responses there was a tendency for many answers to present a list of key thinkers' ideas, sometimes returning to the focus of the question at the end of each paragraph. Whilst these answers often had much creditworthy material, they did not address the thrust of the question as well as responses that dealt with the question thematically using thinkers as examples.

Question 9

Most students were able to identify that the often the tension between light and dark green ecologists is about the status human beings morally and economically in relation to other living creatures and the natural environment. Students who reflected on concepts such as anthropocentrism, the Gaia hypothesis, and sustainability were given credit this was often enhanced when this was linked accurately to key thinkers. As with all the section C responses there was a tendency for many answers to present a list of key thinkers' ideas, sometimes returning to the focus of the question at the end of each paragraph. Whilst these answers often had much creditworthy material, they did not address the thrust of the question as well as responses that dealt with the question thematically using thinkers as examples.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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