

# Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in History A

Unit Y249

Russia 1894–1941

Sample Question Paper

Version 0.16

**Date – Morning/Afternoon**

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes



**OCR supplied materials:**  
• 12 page Answer Booklet

**Other materials required:**  
• None



\* o o o o o o \*

<b>First name</b>									
<b>Last name</b>									
<b>Centre number</b>						<b>Candidate number</b>			

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Complete the boxes above with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer either question 1 or question 2 in Section A, and question 3 in Section B.
- Write your answer to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Do **not** write in the bar codes.

## INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **50**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [ ].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (\*).
- This document consists of **4** pages.

**Section A**

Answer **ONE** question.

**EITHER**

- 1\*** Assess the reasons why the overthrow of the Tsar in March 1917 was followed by a second revolution in November 1917.

**[30]**

**OR**

- 2\*** 'Stalin's leadership and political skills were the most important reasons why he was able to consolidate his power.' How far do you agree?

**[30]**

**Section B**

**3** Read the interpretation and then answer the question that follows:

'Despite efforts at political reform, urban Russia on the brink of the First World War arguably found itself on the brink of a new revolution.'

From: O.Figes, *Revolutionary Russia* 1891–1991, 2014

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.

**[20]**

---

Copyright Information:

Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991: A Pelican Introduction, 978-0141043678, Pelican, 2014, p66. Reproduced with permission.

Cambridge OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge OCR is a Company Limited by Guarantee and an exempt charity. Registered in England.

Registered office: The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number: 3484466.

We operate academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers.

We are committed to providing a fully accessible experience across all our products, platforms, and websites. Find out more about our [accessibility standards](#).

© Cambridge OCR 2026. All rights reserved. We retain the copyright on all our publications. However, our registered centres are permitted to copy and distribute our material for their own internal use, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the publication. Find out more about our [copyright policies](#).

We update our publications regularly so please check you have the most up-to-date version.

We cannot be held responsible for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

When we update our specifications, you'll see a new version number and a summary of the changes. While we do our best to reflect these changes in all associated resources on [Teach Cambridge](#), if you notice any discrepancies, please refer to the latest specification on our website and [let us know](#).

Our resources do not represent any teaching method we expect you to use. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in our resources.



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**...day June 20XX – Morning/Afternoon**

**Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in History A**

**Unit Y249 Russia 1894–1941**

**MARK SCHEME**

**Duration:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**MAXIMUM MARK 50**

**This document consists of 16 pages**

**MARKING INSTRUCTIONS****PREPARATION FOR MARKING****SCORIS**

1. Make sure that you have accessed and completed the relevant training packages for on–screen marking: *scoris assessor Online Training*; *OCR Essential Guide to Marking*.
2. Make sure that you have read and understood the mark scheme and the question paper for this unit. These are posted on the RM Cambridge Assessment Support Portal <http://www.rm.com/support/ca>
3. Log–in to scoris and mark the **required number** of practice responses (“scripts”) and the **required number** of standardisation responses.

YOU MUST MARK 10 PRACTICE AND 10 STANDARDISATION RESPONSES BEFORE YOU CAN BE APPROVED TO MARK LIVE SCRIPTS.

**TRADITIONAL**

Before the Standardisation meeting you must mark at least 10 scripts from several centres. For this preliminary marking you should use **pencil** and follow the **mark scheme**. Bring these **marked scripts** to the meeting.

**MARKING**

1. Mark strictly to the mark scheme.
2. Marks awarded must relate directly to the marking criteria.
3. The schedule of dates is very important. It is essential that you meet the scoris 50% and 100% (traditional 50% Batch 1 and 100% Batch 2) deadlines. If you experience problems, you must contact your Team Leader (Supervisor) without delay.
4. If you are in any doubt about applying the mark scheme, consult your Team Leader by telephone, email or via the scoris messaging system.

5. Work crossed out:
  - a. where a candidate crosses out an answer and provides an alternative response, the crossed out response is not marked and gains no marks
  - b. if a candidate crosses out an answer to a whole question and makes no second attempt, and if the inclusion of the answer does not cause a rubric infringement, the assessor should attempt to mark the crossed out answer and award marks appropriately.
6. Always check the pages (and additional objects if present) at the end of the response in case any answers have been continued there. If the candidate has continued an answer there then add a tick to confirm that the work has been seen.
7. There is a NR (No Response) option. Award NR (No Response)
  - if there is nothing written at all in the answer space
  - OR if there is a comment which does not in any way relate to the question (e.g. 'can't do', 'don't know')
  - OR if there is a mark (e.g. a dash, a question mark) which isn't an attempt at the question.Note: Award 0 marks – for an attempt that earns no credit (including copying out the question).
8. The scoris **comments box** is used by your Team Leader to explain the marking of the practice responses. Please refer to these comments when checking your practice responses. **Do not use the comments box for any other reason.** If you have any questions or comments for your Team Leader, use the phone, the scoris messaging system, or e-mail.
9. Assistant Examiners will send a brief report on the performance of candidates to their Team Leader (Supervisor) via email by the end of the marking period. The report should contain notes on particular strengths displayed as well as common errors or weaknesses. Constructive criticism of the question paper/mark scheme is also appreciated.
10. For answers marked by levels of response:
  - a. **To determine the level** – start at the highest level and work down until you reach the level that matches the answer
  - b. **To determine the mark within the level**, consider the following:

Descriptor	Award mark
On the borderline of this level and the one below	At bottom of level
Just enough achievement on balance for this level	Above bottom and either below middle or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
Meets the criteria but with some slight inconsistency	Above middle and either below top of level or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
Consistently meets the criteria for this level	At top of level

**11. Annotations**

Annotation	Meaning

## 12. Subject-specific Marking Instructions

### INTRODUCTION

Your first task as an Examiner is to become thoroughly familiar with the material on which the examination depends. This material includes:

- the specification, especially the assessment objectives
- the question paper and its rubrics
- the mark scheme.

You should ensure that you have copies of these materials.

You should ensure also that you are familiar with the administrative procedures related to the marking process. These are set out in the OCR booklet **Instructions for Examiners**. If you are examining for the first time, please read carefully **Appendix 5 Introduction to Script Marking: Notes for New Examiners**.

Please ask for help or guidance whenever you need it. Your first point of contact is your Team Leader.

**USING THE MARK SCHEME**

Please study this Mark Scheme carefully. The Mark Scheme is an integral part of the process that begins with the setting of the question paper and ends with the awarding of grades. Question papers and Mark Schemes are developed in association with each other so that issues of differentiation and positive achievement can be addressed from the very start.

This Mark Scheme is a working document; it is not exhaustive; it does not provide 'correct' answers. The Mark Scheme can only provide 'best guesses' about how the question will work out, and it is subject to revision after we have looked at a wide range of scripts.

The Examiners' Standardisation Meeting will ensure that the Mark Scheme covers the range of candidates' responses to the questions, and that all Examiners understand and apply the Mark Scheme in the same way. The Mark Scheme will be discussed and amended at the meeting, and administrative procedures will be confirmed. Co-ordination scripts will be issued at the meeting to exemplify aspects of candidates' responses and achievements; the co-ordination scripts then become part of this Mark Scheme.

Before the Standardisation Meeting, you should read and mark in pencil a number of scripts, in order to gain an impression of the range of responses and achievement that may be expected.

Please read carefully all the scripts in your allocation and make every effort to look positively for achievement throughout the ability range. Always be prepared to use the full range of marks.

**INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXAMINERS**

- 1 The co-ordination scripts provide you with *examples* of the standard of each band. The marks awarded for these scripts will have been agreed by the Team Leaders and will be discussed fully at the Examiners' Co-ordination Meeting.
- 2 The specific task-related indicative content for each question will help you to understand how the band descriptors may be applied. However, this indicative content does not constitute the mark scheme: it is material that candidates might use, grouped according to each assessment objective tested by the question. Rigid demands for 'what must be a good answer' would lead to a distorted assessment.
- 3 Candidates' answers must be relevant to the question. Beware of prepared answers that do not show the candidate's thought and which have not been adapted to the thrust of the question. Beware also of answers where candidates attempt to reproduce interpretations and concepts that they have been taught but have only partially understood.

	<i>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.</i>
	<b>Generic mark scheme for Section A, Questions 1 and 2: Essay [30]</b>
<b>Level 5</b> 25–30 marks	There is a mostly consistent focus on the question. Generally accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding is demonstrated through most of the answer and is evaluated and analysed in order to reach substantiated judgements, but these are not consistently well-developed. There is a well-developed line of reasoning which is clear and logically structured. The information presented is relevant and in the most part substantiated.
<b>Level 4</b> 19–24 marks	The question is generally addressed. Generally accurate and sometimes detailed knowledge and understanding is demonstrated through most of the answer with evaluation and some analysis, and this is used appropriately to support the judgements that are made. There is a line of reasoning presented with some structure. The information presented is in the most-part relevant and supported by some evidence.
<b>Level 3</b> 13–18 marks	The question is partially addressed. There is demonstration of some relevant knowledge and understanding, which is evaluated and analysed in parts of the answer, but in places knowledge is imparted rather than being used. The analysis is appropriately linked to the judgements made, though the way in which it supports the judgements may not always be made explicit. The information has some relevance and is presented with limited structure. The information is supported by limited evidence.
<b>Level 2</b> 7–12 marks	The focus is more on the topic than the specific demands of the question. Knowledge and understanding is limited and not well used, with only limited evaluation and analysis, which is only sometimes linked appropriately to the judgements made. The information has some relevance, but is communicated in an unstructured way. The information is supported by limited evidence and the relationship to the evidence may not be clear.
<b>Level 1</b> 1–6 marks	The answer relates to the topic but not the specific question. The answer contains only very limited relevant knowledge which is evaluated and analysed in a very limited way. Judgements are unsupported and are not linked to analysis. Relevant knowledge is limited, generalised and poorly used; attempts at argument are no more than assertion. Information presented is basic and may be ambiguous or unstructured. The information is supported by limited evidence.
0 marks	No evidence of understanding and no demonstration of any relevant knowledge.

	<i>AO3: Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.</i>
	<b>Generic mark scheme for Section B, Question 3: Interpretation [20]</b>
<b>Level 5</b> 17–20 marks	The answer has a very good analysis of the interpretation. It uses detailed and relevant knowledge of the historical context and shows thorough understanding of the wider historical debate, in the form of detailed examination of other interpretations, in order to produce a well-supported evaluation of both the strengths and weaknesses of the given interpretation.
<b>Level 4</b> 13–16 marks	The answer has a good analysis of the interpretation. It uses relevant knowledge of the historical context and good understanding of the wider historical debate, in the form of examination of other interpretations, in order to produce a supported evaluation of both the strengths and weaknesses of the given interpretation.
<b>Level 3</b> 9–12 marks	The answer has a partial analysis of the interpretation. It uses some relevant knowledge of the historical context and shows partial understanding of the wider historical debate, in the form of reference to other interpretations, in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the given interpretation. The evaluation may be un-even with only limited treatment of either limitations or strengths, but both will be addressed.
<b>Level 2</b> 5–8 marks	The answer has a limited analysis of the interpretation. It uses generalised knowledge of the historical context and shows limited understanding of the wider historical debate, in the form of generalised reference to other interpretations, in order to produce a limited evaluation of the given interpretation. The evaluation may deal with either strengths or limitations in a very superficial way, or may only address limitations or strengths.
<b>Level 1</b> 1–4 marks	The answer has a very limited analysis of the interpretation which may be descriptive and relate more to the topic area than the detail of the interpretation. It uses very limited and generalised knowledge of the historical context and shows very limited or no understanding of the wider historical debate, with reference to other interpretations being implicit or lacking, in order to produce a very simplistic, asserted evaluation of the given interpretation.
0 marks	No evidence of understanding or reference to the interpretation.

## Section A

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1*	<p><b>Assess the reasons why the overthrow of the Tsar in March 1917 was followed by a second revolution in November 1917.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates may put the blame squarely on the inadequacies of the Provisional Government after the overthrow of the Tsar.</li> <li>• Candidates may refer to the circumstances of its creation, its legitimacy and relationship with the Petrograd Soviet, its policies towards the war, the land question, the economy and its ability to deal with opposition.</li> <li>• Candidates may also suggest the failure of the Kerensky offensive.</li> <li>• Candidates might consider the failure to deal with the severe economic problems created by the war.</li> <li>• Candidates might consider the impact of Kornilov's attempted coup.</li> <li>• Candidates might consider that the failure to deal with the land question was critical in undermining support for the Provisional Government.</li> <li>• Candidates might consider that the Provisional Government failed to deal effectively with the Bolsheviks.</li> </ul>	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No set answer is expected.</li> <li>• At Level 5 there will be judgement as to the relative importance of the reasons.</li> <li>• At level 5 answers might establish criteria against which to judge the relative importance of the reasons.</li> <li>• To be valid, judgements must be supported by relevant and accurate material. If not, they are assertions.</li> <li>• Knowledge must not be credited in isolation, it should only be credited where it is used as the basis for analysis and evaluation, in line with descriptions in the levels mark scheme.</li> </ul>

## Section A

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates might consider the exploitation of unrest by the Bolsheviks and the effectiveness of their propaganda and organisation after the return of Lenin, and the roles of Lenin and Trotsky in orchestrating the coup in November.</li> </ul>		
2*	<p><b>‘Stalin’s leadership and political skills were the most important reasons why he was able to consolidate his power.’ How far do you agree?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In arguing it was the most important reason,</b> answers might argue that Stalin’s political skills were most important reason as he allied with both the left and right.</li> <li>Answers might argue that the cult of personality and links to Lenin were more important.</li> <li><b>In arguing that other reasons were more important,</b> answers might argue that the cult of personality and links to Lenin were more important.</li> <li>Answers might argue that many believed in the socialist revolution and the improvements to the economy.</li> <li>Answers might argue that Stalin was able to use the economic policies to control workers and this allowed him to consolidate his power.</li> <li>Answers might argue that it removed opposition or potential opposition.</li> </ul>	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No set answer is expected.</li> <li>At Level 5 there will be judgement as to the relative importance of the reasons.</li> <li>At level 5 answers might establish criteria against which to judge the relative importance of the reasons.</li> <li>To be valid, judgements must be supported by relevant and accurate material. If not, they are assertions.</li> <li>Knowledge must not be credited in isolation, it should only be credited where it is used as the basis for analysis and evaluation, in line with descriptions in the levels mark scheme.</li> </ul>

## Section A

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Answers might argue that the police state and terror created fear and prevented criticism.</li><li>Answers might argue that show trials convinced many that Stalin was the saviour of Russia.</li></ul>		

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	<p><b>‘Despite efforts at political reform, urban Russia on the brink of the First World War arguably found itself on the brink of a new revolution.’</b></p> <p><b>From: O.Figes, <i>Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991</i>, 2014</b></p> <p><b>Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This historical debate centres around the extent to which there was a revolutionary situation in Russia in 1914.</b></li> <li>• <b>In analysing and evaluating the strengths and limitations of the interpretation</b>, alongside the main line of argument that revolution was likely in 1914, answers might also consider the acknowledgement of efforts at political reform, the focus on urban Russia.</li> <li>• <b>In analysing and evaluating the strengths of the given interpretation</b>, answers might use knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban unrest, militancy and disorder in 1914</li> <li>• Stolypin’s assassination</li> <li>• the growth in political opposition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No set answer is expected.</li> <li>• Candidates must use their knowledge and understanding of the historical context and the wider historical debate surrounding the issue to analyse and evaluate the given interpretation.</li> <li>• Candidates must refer to at least one other interpretation.</li> <li>• The quality of analysis and evaluation of the interpretations should be considered when assigning answers to a level, not the quantity of other interpretations included in the answer.</li> <li>• Other interpretations considered as part of evaluation and analysis do not need to be attributed to specific named historians, but they must be recognisable historical interpretations, rather than the candidate’s own viewpoint.</li> <li>• Answers may include more on strengths or more on limitations and there is no requirement for a 50/50 split in the evaluation, however for level 5 there should be well-supported evaluation of both and for level 4 supported evaluation of both, in line with levels descriptors.</li> <li>• Candidates are not required to construct their own interpretation.</li> </ul>

## Section B

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the disappointments with the Dumas and the Tsar's continued devotion to autocracy</li> <li>• the actions of revolutionary groups and parties.</li> <li>• Answers might consider the continuing, bad living and working conditions in towns and frustration with this.</li> <li>• <b>In analysing the limitations of the given interpretation, answers might use knowledge and understanding of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rural issues, such as peasant land hunger and the relatively slow progress of agrarian change; the limitations to Stolypin's reforms and his sacrifice of the weaker peasant to the strong</li> <li>• the recovery of Tsarist power after the 1905 Revolution</li> <li>• support for the Romanov dynasty</li> <li>• the success of Stolypin's land reforms</li> <li>• the weakness of the Tsar's opponents</li> <li>• the scale of economic growth.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Other interpretations that might be used in evaluation of the given interpretation are:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpretations which acknowledge 1914 as a revolutionary situation, but which take a broader view, encompassing rural areas and/or economic rather than political failings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

Section B

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpretations which argue that Russia was not on the brink of revolution in 1914 (and which therefore would be likely to cite developments 1914-17 as crucial to the development of revolution).</li> <li>• Candidates might cite interpretations that argue that analysing 1914 in terms of revolutionary/non-revolutionary situation is teleological and anachronistic.</li> </ul>		

### Assessment Objectives (AO) Grid

Question	AO1	AO2	AO3	Total
1/2	30			30
3			20	20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>50</b>

### Summary of updates

---

Date	Version	Change
November 2020	0.15	Updated copyright permissions.
March 2026	0.16	Withdrawal information of qualification including final first teach date and final assessment opportunity date.