

AS

History

2R The Cold War, c1945-1963
Report on the Examination

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Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was reasonable on the whole, with most students being able to state something of worth. Weaker students often took the provenance of the two sources at face value, asserting that Source A was limited as evidence due to it being untrustworthy as it was an official response from the USSR. Similarly, with Source B, weaker students stated that the source was wholly trustworthy due to it being a confidential report. To demonstrate the value of Source A, better students made comment on the source being written at the height of the crisis and its value in depicting Soviet justification for their actions. With Source B, better students made reference to the condemnatory tone, explaining how this detracted from its value. However, in general, comments on tone tended to be descriptive and unrelated to source value. For example, many students alluded to the accusatory tone of Source A without making reference to how it impacted on the source's value.

Students managed the content of the two sources more effectively. Most were able to identify the overarching arguments in each source and most attempted to engage with and evaluate the material, although some did this more successfully than others. Whilst some evaluation was assertive, most students attempted to evaluate the content of the sources using contextual knowledge. Better students understood that Source A was blaming the West for the crisis in Berlin, that the US had violated previous agreements and gave the USSR no option but to blockade. Strong students mentioned that it was not just the US that had broken prior agreements and made reference to the USSR's reparation payments. With Source B, stronger students understood that this source was blaming the USSR's lack of co-operation for the blockade. Again, strong students provided examples to demonstrate how both the US and the USSR were uncooperative. Students who used precise knowledge to support comments made on the sources as a whole, achieved better than those students who used patchy knowledge to address content through a sentence-by-sentence approach.

In terms of the comparison, better students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the reasons for the Berlin Blockade. Better answers made comparative judgement throughout, although there were some very good responses that dealt with the comparison effectively in the conclusion. Students tended to argue that Source B was more valuable due to it being arguably more impartial than Source A and it being a review of the causes of the blockade. However, some students emphasised that Source A held more value and others argued that both held equal value. If well-reasoned such judgements were deemed equally acceptable.

Question 2

This was the more popular of the two essay questions and was done reasonably well. Good responses provided a balanced assessment of the reasons for Truman's shift of containment policy from Europe to Asia, often concluding that the establishment of communism in China on its own

was not the cause of the shift, but a combination of factors – in particular the fact that the ‘loss of China’ was used by McCarthy to put pressure on the Truman administration to take stronger action in Asia. Weaker responses tended to provide a running narrative of the Civil War in China and the Korean War or ignore China altogether. Unfortunately, some students misunderstood the question and spent a good proportion of their time discussing US policy in Europe. Unfortunately, some students ended up completely ignoring the requirements of the question, choosing to instead provide the reasons for why containment policy did not in fact shift from Europe to Asia after 1949.

Question 3

This was the least popular of the two essay questions and was done less effectively on the whole than Question 1. Some students demonstrated an excellent grasp of the subject knowledge required to achieve well on this question. They evaluated a range of issues such as JFK’s policies, Diem’s leadership and policies, the Viet Cong and the complexity of the situation in Vietnam in 1963. Strong responses often concluded that JFK’s policies often made the situation worse in Vietnam, but Diem and the complex situation in Vietnam were more important reasons for why communism was not contained in South Vietnam by 1963. Weaker responses tended to know excessive amounts about Diem and the Viet Cong but could provide very little of substance on JFK’s policies. There were several descriptive responses to this question, which often contained impressive knowledge but only made occasional references to the question. These responses couldn’t reach beyond Level 3 on the mark scheme.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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