

# **Modern History**

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Society and Environment Learning Area



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

## GENERAL COMMENTS

This year there was a greater concentration of topics studied in this course. In the Comparative Study Section, the vast majority of students studied Revolutions and Turmoil. In the Depth Study Section, 'The World to End all Wars' (Topic 8), and 'An Age of Catastrophes' (Topic 9) were equally favoured, with a small cohort of students undertaking a study of 'Postwar Rivalries and Mentalities' (Topic 10).

## ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: INDIVIDUAL HISTORY ESSAY

Moderators were impressed with the interesting historical topics chosen and the focus questions that were developed from the topics. Many students had developed a thoughtful specific question, with a clearly defined focus and time-frame, and a well-structured argumentative essay, that considered both sides of the question. In less successful essays, questions were either too broad, too narrow, invited narrative or explanation, or used the sources to further the narrative, rather than provide evidence in the argument.

Teachers are reminded to submit a range of essays that cover all grade bands to enable accurate moderation to occur.

Particular issues of concern included:

- samples of materials not being consistent with the instructions in the *Learning Area Manual*, including not adhering to the performance standards that are outlined in the syllabus
- the use of the three sources which should invite analysis. Sources should be three separate sources not three references from the one source. Moderators also commented on student over-reliance on Wikipedia
- quotations taking the place of an argument rather than being used to support an argument
- making sure the question fits the modern era (c. 1500), as defined in the curriculum statement
- the need for a consistent method of referencing – either the Harvard or Oxford Referencing System
- ensuring that the focus question is appropriate, and a reasoned historical argument that examines both sides of an issue rather than one that encourages a narrative response
- submission of drafts that are not necessary.

## ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: EXAMINATION

The examination paper was exceptionally fair, with accessible questions in all topics that were closely related to the key areas of inquiry in the curriculum statement. As in previous years, all essay questions invited a reasoned historical argument. This style of question should now be very familiar to students as they have had, since 2002, examples from past papers which have invited students to argue in response to an issue.

This year, to indicate a higher level of understanding, students had to demonstrate the ability to address the issue of the question, provide evidence in support of the proposition, and then offer counter arguments. They needed to show a good grasp of historical knowledge and be able to articulate their thoughts in clearly expressed and

accurate language. In addition, higher level responses needed to reveal a coherent structure and a consistent referral to the question or proposition throughout the essay. Detailed, informative, and probing analysis, while directly addressing the key words of the questions, and covering the time periods, were highly rewarded.

Pleasingly, there were few papers that indicated students were disengaged from the course; however there were a number of instances where students only submitted a 1½ pages response, whereas the questions invited a more detailed argument.

The sources analysis topic was interesting and coincidentally related to a current event in the public domain. The questions were accessible and held few surprises. As in previous years, the questions tested the application of knowledge and understanding, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. While the general standard of answers has improved over the years, teachers are reminded to emphasise the development of higher-level skills in the teaching of this section of the course.

Examiners noticed the improvement in standard in the answers to the sources analysis question. The topic (the abdication crisis of King Edward VIII), which had a resonance with the present royal situation, was handled well by most students who are increasingly coming to grips with what is required in addressing a cross-reference question, and understanding reliability and evaluation. Less successful students quoted large sections of the source instead of showing understanding by using sources as evidence to support a point of view.

Students who achieved at the higher level addressed the proposition that was asked of them and explored different sides of the argument. They showed impressive knowledge that was relevant in addressing the points they wished to make. These students had effective introductions that addressed the key words of the question, topic sentences to each paragraph, judicious use of knowledge without lapsing into narrative, and concise and meaningful conclusions.

Some recurring problems that should be avoided:

- ignoring the issue of the question and writing everything known, frequently in narrative form
- using obviously pre-prepared answers
- mis-reading the question, for example, writing about a dictator's *rise* to power instead of his *maintenance* of power
- poor spelling, sentence structure, and hand-writing
- a decline in historical literacy, for example saying that Hitler *reigned*
- the use of slang, for example the word *stuff* instead of food
- brief responses to questions
- lack of effective planning evidenced by arrows and direction statements guiding the examiner to look elsewhere in the script.

## **PART 1: Comparative Study**

### **Topic 1: Pain and Gain: Modernisation and Society since c. 1500** (Questions 1–3)

#### *Question 1*

This question required students to have an understanding of the role agriculture played in traditional societies and evaluate it alongside other factors such as trade and urbanisation. Many responses tended to be too general with no real sense of

time, change, and continuity; nor did they have a thorough understanding of the concept of modernisation. Unfortunately some students who could not answer a question in Topic 3, tried to adapt their knowledge to this topic with little success.

#### *Question 2*

There were five responses to this question.

#### *Question 3*

There were three responses to this question.

### **Topic 2: Intruders and Resisters: Imperialism and its Impact since c. 1500** (Questions 4-6)

#### *Question 4*

There were seven responses to this question.

#### *Question 5*

Most students who attempted this question accepted that traditional societies benefited from imperial expansion. The more successful answers argued that there were benefits, but countered this by stating, with evidence, that there were disadvantages and costs associated with imperial intrusion.

#### *Question 6*

There were no responses to this question.

### **Topic 3: Revolutions and Turmoil: Social and Political Upheavals since c. 1500** (Questions 7–9)

This was by far the most popular topic in this section of the course with over 1500 responses to the three questions in this section. It is extremely important for students studying a revolution in either China or Russia to clearly identify which ones they are using in their introduction. Examiners were concerned that several students used the 1905 Russian Revolution as one of the two revolutions to discuss.

#### *Question 7*

In this question, most students addressed the issue of economic discontent and balanced this with social and political discontent that existed in pre-revolutionary societies. Less successful answers addressed the economic issues without linking these to discontent, and then lapsed into how these factors caused revolution. While saying that these factors caused revolution is a valid statement to make, it was important to state that the focus of the question was on pre-revolutionary societies. Students who chose to compare America and Cuba with Russia were able to make effective contrasts.

#### *Question 8*

The concept of misery was often equated with the word 'miserable'. For a successful response to this question, students needed to establish which groups in society were in misery, and why this was so. The more successful students considered a range of groups and were specific in their use of examples to support their case. The collapse of the old order was an issue that many students did not grasp, therefore many students neglected this aspect of the question. The most successful answers argued that misery was one of a number of causes of revolution.

#### *Question 9*

On the whole this question was well answered. Some students who chose America as their case study were able to make effective contrasts in their essays. In all cases students needed to define key terms in this question such as 'revolutionary governments' and 'extreme measures'. Higher-level answers focused on extreme measures in a post-revolutionary government, described them, and balanced these with reforms, and as fulfilling revolutionary aims. The most successful answers included statements about why such measures were necessary at the time.

### **Topic 4: A Sense of Belonging: Groups and Nations since c. 1500** (Questions 10–12)

#### *Question 10*

There were four responses to this question.

#### *Question 11*

This question was generally well answered. Most students chose India and South Africa as case studies. Some argued that in India, religious divisions between Hindus and Muslims particularly hindered the development of national awareness, but not so much in South Africa. More successful arguments discussed other factors such as the presence of the British as a contributing factor.

#### *Question 12*

There were seven responses to this question.

### **Topic 5: The Captives, the Unwanted and the Seekers: Forced and Free Migration since c. 1500** (Questions 13 to 15)

There were three responses to this topic.

### **Topic 6: Slaves, Serfs, and Emancipation: Forced Labour since c. 1500** (Questions 16 to 18)

#### *Question 16*

There were six responses to this question.

#### *Question 17*

Most responses described aspects of drudgery associated with poor living conditions, the monotony of forced labour, punishment, and working conditions. More successful answers, after having addressed 'drudgery', focused on other areas of life such as community, celebrations, and family life, with specific examples to support their case.

#### *Question 18*

This was the most popular question of this topic and students were able to balance the benefits and costs of emancipation.

## **PART 2: Depth Study**

Many students had learned their material well, although prepared answers appeared frequently. In using prepared answers students did not respond directly to the question and fell into error because of it. While some markers commented with concern about the brevity of some students' essays (which prevented students from demonstrating the depth of knowledge required), others noted that more detailed and accurate knowledge was evident this year.

### **Topic 7: Public and Private Lives: A Social and Political History of Women since c. 1750**

(Questions 19 to 21)

There were few responses to these questions. They appeared to attract students with limited knowledge or those who were trying to apply their knowledge of one of the other topics such as the First World War.

### **Topic 8. The War to End all Wars: The First World War and its Consequences, c. 1870-1929**

(Questions 22 to 24)

#### *Question 22*

For success in this question, students needed to be sure about what the word 'stumbled' meant. Those who related this to the July Days and then addressed the reasons for the build-up of tensions did well. The less successful responses merely described the longer-term causes of war such as arms races, alliances, imperialism, and national self-interest.

#### *Question 23*

This was a popular question, but few students addressed the issue of 'continuous' slaughter. Many described, with limited detail, that slaughter occurred at one or two battles in the Great War. More successful responses, having addressed the reasons for the continuous slaughter – such as the tactics of the generals and the method of warfare, went on to describe other aspects of the war that caused the continuous slaughter, such as the home front and the arrival of the United States forces into the war.

#### *Question 24*

This question was generally well answered. Students looked at the motives of the leaders who took part in the Paris Peace Conference, and balanced revenge against other factors such as the need to make the world a safer place.

### **Topic 9: An Age of Catastrophes: Depression, Dictators, and the Second World War, c. 1929 to 45**

(Questions 25 to 27)

#### *Question 25*

For success in this question, students needed to have an accurate understanding of the term 'widespread', which could relate to different classes of people and geographical areas. There were some interesting insights that appeared: some students said that the American Negroes were always suffering, and that the Russians suffered not because of the Depression, but because of the brutal policies of Stalin. The most successful answers addressed the issue of suffering, came to

grips with the concept of 'widespread', and then referred to groups that did not suffer at that time. Unfortunately some students used this question to tell the examiners all they knew about the rise to power of Adolf Hitler.

#### *Question 26*

Those students who confused 'maintained power' with 'coming to power' were not successful in their response to this question. Almost exclusively, students responded using Adolf Hitler as their case study. Students needed to be aware that this topic covered the period 1929 to 1945. Very few students addressed the war years in their answer, and to achieve marks at the higher level this was needed. In addition, many students described, in a paragraph, aspects of propaganda such as flags, powerful speeches and uniforms, and then went on to examine other reasons for Hitler maintaining power, such as terror and the four-year plans. Answers at the higher level examined propaganda in more detail, such as the propaganda involved in creating motorways, 'Strength through Joy' and war-time successes, and made the link to Hitler's continuous hold on power.

#### *Question 27*

Although this question was not as popular as the others in this section, many students who chose this question were able to describe in great depth the various aspects of technology, and they balanced this with other aspects of war such as the war against civilians, battle tactics, and the nature of war-time leadership. Some students misread the question and discussed World War I technology instead.

### **Topic 10: Postwar Rivalries and Mentalities: Superpowers and Social Change since c. 1945**

(Questions 28–30)

#### *Question 28*

This was the most popular question in this section. Unfortunately, many did not go into the depth required in relation to the disagreements over Germany, and instead moved quickly into a discussion of other causes of the Cold War. While students are to be lauded for recognising the multiplicity of reasons why the Cold War occurred, a detailed response to the issue of the question was necessary.

#### *Question 29*

Students who tackled this question generally had a hazy notion of the term 'affluent' and gave generalised answers to this question. Some associated affluence with the welfare state, women's rights, and consumerism without relating these changes to prosperity, success, and better opportunities.

#### *Question 30*

There were few answers to this question. Most made simplistic comments about the benefits in the fall of Communism without analysis of specific issues and the groups of people affected in one way or another.

### **Topic 11: Persecution and Hope: Power and Powerlessness in Society since c. 1500**

(Questions 31 to 33)

#### *Question 31*

This was the most popular question in this topic. Most students were able to focus on a political leader such as Deng Xiaoping, Adolf Hitler, or Hendrik Verwoerd, and discussed them adequately. In many cases, however, there was difficulty in



understanding who or what was a 'minority group', how a leader persecuted them to *maintain* power, and other reasons for persecution.

#### Question 32

There were some solid responses to this question. Most students easily identified charismatic leaders, and successful responses gave reasons for their charisma, how they inspired people, as well as identifying other reasons for people seeking freedom.

#### Question 33

This proved to be a very difficult and complex question. Students had to come to terms with 'to what extent', '*continued* prejudice', 'oppressed and persecuted' and 'aspirations' to have success in answering this question.

### PART 3: Sources Analysis

#### (Question 34)

(a) Most students answered this question well, identifying two reasons given by Edward VIII for his abdication. Some students gave very long answers for only one mark.

(b) This question was generally well answered. Most students gave two reasons why Edward VIII loved Mrs Simpson. Some students gave four or five reasons even though the question only asked for two.

(c) This question proved difficult for many students because they treated it as a comprehension response and quoted large sections of the source. Students need to understand that a conclusion is what they understand the source to be about and then give supporting evidence to prove their assumption.

(d) Most students were able to give examples of how the views in Source 5 supported those in Source 6. Disturbingly, however, many students did not understand the meaning of 'To what extent ...?' Therefore these students did not continue to explore the ways in which Source 5 was *not* supported by Source 6.

(e) Students were asked to assess the uses and limitations of two sources – Source 2 (a recollection) and Source 4(a) (a picture). This was intended to encourage students to discuss the nature of the evidence as well as the content. Many students described both sources as primary evidence and hence useful. Those who described Source 2 as a secondary source because it appeared in a 1969 publication said it 'was useless'. These two statements are incorrect because all sources, whether primary or secondary, have degrees of usefulness and limitation. The most successful students understood that Source 2 was useful because it was by a person who was close at hand (the King's chief advisor) at the time of his abdication. It was useful in that it gave information about the love that Edward VIII had for Mrs Simpson. These students noted that the limitation of the Source lay in the fact that Lord Monckton was too close to Edward and would have been biased.

The usefulness of Source 4(a) lay in the fact that it provided visual information about the popularity of Edward VIII at the time. In discussing the limitations of the photo, some students noted that as it was published in Edward's memoirs it might have been biased. They stated, amongst other points, that it was only one scene in one particular place, and needed to be supported by cross-reference in other sources;



they noted that the crowd may have been at the ground for another reason, or that Edward may have happened to be there to take advantage of a particular situation. Students need to be aware of three points in addressing this type of question: 'who, when and why'. Then they need to give evidence from the source, including its caption, to support their point of view.

(f) The last question has traditionally been a proposition where students are asked to write a mini-essay in response. As in proposition-type essays, they needed to have an introduction and a conclusion, as well as addressing the issue of the proposition and stating a counter-argument using the sources as evidence. Few students scored full marks for this question because they merely described each source in turn and stated how each source linked, in some way, to the issue.

Chief Assessor  
Modern History