

Skills Supplement

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Answering Source-based Questions

The Soviet Union after Lenin. Collectivisation

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THE SYNOPTIC UNIT in Edexcel History requires students to use all the skills they have developed in the A-Level course: the ability to work with sources, the knowledge they have acquired and the ability to handle different interpretations. Above all, answers must be source led but with the students' knowledge fully integrated.

Question (a) requires understanding of the key features of a historical movement or development to be demonstrated. It will involve primary sources and a judgement is required cross-referencing the sources and testing them against their own knowledge.

Question (b) asks students to make a judgement about an historical interpretation of an issue of legitimate historical debate. There will be evidence which both supports and challenges the interpretation and students must absorb and analyse this as well as using their own knowledge in answering the question.

Below are a series of questions which can be used as a checklist by students as they work and for self assessment of how they have performed when they have finished. The teacher uses it as a cover sheet in the marking process. The aim is to clarify in students' minds what they need to do.

Check list	Student self assessment	Tutor assessment
Have you allocated your time sensibly? • on reading and planning? • twice as much on (b) as (a)		
Have you identified what you have to make judgements on in both (a) and (b), and engaged with the interpretation in (b) in your answer?		
Have you analysed the sources and used them fully in your answers?		
Have you integrated your knowledge with the sources in your answer?		
Do your answers focus on the question throughout and come to a conclusion?		

Overall comment, possible areas for improvement and targets for next assignment

In the exam the question will cover a broader issue than collectivisation alone, this example uses the same format and is designed to give some practice on a topic covered near the beginning of the unit.

Source 1. Extracts from the Smolensk archive. Peasants' letters to *Our Village*, a peasant newspaper concerning the first collectivisation drive, 1929-30. These letters were not actually published in the newspaper.

Ivan Trofimovitch. I am a poor peasant. I have one hut, one barn, one horse, three dessyatins of land. ... Isn't it true that all poor peasants and middle peasants do not want to go into the kolkhoz at all, but you drive them in by force? ... (In my village) poor peasants came out against it ... they did not want serfdom.

Source 2. Lev Kopelev was an activist who later went into exile, quoted in R. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (1986) p 233.

With the rest of my generation, I firmly believed that the ends justified the means. Our great goal was the universal triumph of Communism ...

I saw what 'total collectivisation meant - how they mercilessly stripped the peasants in the winter of 1932-33. I took part in it myself, scouring the countryside ... testing the earth with an iron rod for loose spots that might lead to buried grain. With others, I emptied out the old folks' storage chests, stopped my ears to the children's crying and the women's wails. For I was convinced that I was accomplishing the great and necessary transformation of the countryside; that in the days to come the people who lived there would be better off ...

In the terrible spring of 1933 I saw people dying of hunger. I saw women and children with distended bellies, turning blue, still breathing but with vacant lifeless eyes. And corpses - corpses in ragged sheepskin coats and cheap felt boots; corpses in peasant huts ... I saw all this and did not go out of my mind or commit suicide. ... Nor did I lose my faith. As before, I believed because I wanted to believe.

Source 3. R. Service, *A History of Twentieth-century Russia* (1997) pp 181-2.

With the exception of 1930, mass collectivisation meant that not until the mid-1950s did agriculture regain the level of output achieved in the last years before the Great

