Leon Trotsky
HSC Modern History
Personalities in the Twentieth Century

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Get this PowerPoint: http://www.michaelmolkentin.com/resources/
Outline of lecture

1. The syllabus
2. The examination
3. Key features of Trotsky’s life
4. Evaluating Trotsky's life
5. Historiography
Principal focus: Through the study of Leon Trotsky, students gain an understanding of the role of this personality in a period of national or international history.

Students learn to:
• ask relevant historical questions
• locate, select and organise information from different types of sources, including ICT, to describe and analyse relevant features and issues
• assess the impact of the personality on twentieth-century history
• analyse the contribution of the personality to the period in which they lived
• account for and assess differing perspectives and interpretations of the personality
• evaluate the usefulness and reliability of sources
• present the findings of investigations on aspects of the personality, analysing and synthesising information from different types of sources
• communicate an understanding of relevant concepts, features and issues using appropriate and well-structured oral and/or written and/or multimedia forms including ICT.
1 Historical context
   - politics in pre-revolutionary Russia
   - the 1917 revolution
   - establishment of the Bolshevik/Communist state
   - power struggle with Stalin

2 Background
   - family background and education
   - development of political ideals

3 Rise to prominence
   - emerging political role 1905–1917
   - role in 1917 revolution

4 Significance and evaluation
   - role as Commissar for Foreign Affairs
   - role as Commissar for War
   - power struggle following the death of Lenin
   - expulsion from the Communist Party
   - life and activities in exile
   - evaluation: for example practical revolutionary, naïve idealist?
The Examination – Section 3

• Two questions – do both of them!

• Applicable to all 27 personality options (Trotsky is No. 24)

• 45 minutes

Question A (10 marks) - descriptive

Question B (15 marks) – evaluative
Question 18 (25 marks)
(a) Describe the significant events in the life of the personality you have studied. 10
(b) *It is the way an individual faces challenges that shapes them and their achievements.* 15

To what extent is this statement accurate in relation to the personality you have studied and their role in history?
Question 18 (25 marks)

(a) Describe THREE significant events in the life of the personality you have studied.

(b) ‘Differing perspectives and interpretations assist us in gaining an understanding of the personality’s significance in history.’

To what extent is this statement accurate in relation to the personality you have studied?
Question A (10 marks)

• Allow 17 minutes for this section (2-3 mins planning?)
• Aim to write c. 400 words (2 pages)
• All questions since 2006: ‘Describe’ or ‘Outline’
  • Describe: ‘provide characteristics and features’
  • Outline: ‘Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of’
• Forget essay structure- no introduction or conclusion (subheadings OK)
• Write three or four paragraphs, use them to organise the detail of Trotsky’s life into ‘themes’
Question A (10 marks)

(a) Describe THREE significant factors which resulted in the prominence of the personality you have studied. (2012 HSC)

**Paragraph 1:** Trotsky’s role in the 1905 revolution

**Paragraph 2:** Trotsky’s writing on Marxism, 1906-1917

**Paragraph 3:** Trotsky's role in the October 1917 revolution
**Question A (10 marks)**

- Key words on the marking criteria: **detail** and **relevance**

### BREADTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trotsky’s role in the 1905 revolution</th>
<th>Trotsky’s writing between 1906-17</th>
<th>Trotsky’s role in October 1917</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trotsky’s belief about worker involvement in contrast to Lenin</td>
<td><em>Results and Prospects</em> (1906) and its expression of the theory of permanent revolution</td>
<td>Trotsky’s amends with Lenin and the Bolsheviks during 1917.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trotsky’s role in the Petersburg Soviet executive during the October-November general strikes</td>
<td>Trotsky’s work as a war correspondent in 1912-13 in the Balkans</td>
<td>Trotsky’s role in the July Days and his continued disagreements with Lenin</td>
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<td>Trotsky and the MRC and seizure of power in October</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### DEPTH

- **People**
- **Places**
- **Dates (years)**
- **Organisations**
- **Titles**
- **Quotes (brief)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Historical context</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>politics in pre-revolutionary Russia</td>
<td>Describe the personal background and the historical context of the personality you have studied. (2008)</td>
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<td>the 1917 revolution</td>
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<td>establishment of the Bolshevik/Communist state</td>
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<td>power struggle with Stalin</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>family background and education</td>
<td>Describe three significant events in the life of the personality you have studied. (2016)</td>
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<td>development of political ideals</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Rise to prominence</td>
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<td>emerging political role 1905–1917</td>
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<td>role in 1917 revolution</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Significance and evaluation</td>
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Question B (15 marks)

- Allow 28 minutes for this section (incl. 5 mins planning)
- Write c. 600 words (3 pages)
- Treat it as a mini-essay:
  - Develop a thesis that answers the question
  - Include a brief introduction and conclusion
- Use the quotation provided in the question as the focus of your thesis – *engage with it in a sustained manner*
- To prepare make sure you have examples of both how Trotsky influenced his context, where he failed to do so and how his context influenced him.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Trotsky influenced his context</th>
<th>Where Trotsky failed to influence his context</th>
<th>Where Trotsky’s context influenced him</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Though not acting alone Trotsky influenced events in 1917 leading up to the revolution:  
  • His relationship with the workers helped bridge the divide between the Bolsheviks and the Soviets.  
  • This was cemented when he was elected President of the Petrograd Soviet  
  • Role in MRC and planning of the October insurrection  
  etc etc | • Trotsky failed to achieve his internationalist goals as Commissary for Foreign Affairs at Brest-Litovsk in 1918.  
  • The Bolshevik leadership overruled his attempt to stall negotiations and signed a peace treaty with Germany.  
  • Trotsky failed to counter Stalin’s rise to power  
  etc etc | • Trotsky’s revolutionary ideas were the product to various influences in his early years. Eg:  
  • His exposure to class inequality and peasant hardship on his family farm.  
  • Liberal ideology of the Spentzer family in Odessa  
  • Narodnik ideology of the Orchard Commune in Nikolayev  
  • Marxism of Aleksandra Sokolovskaya |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revolutionary Theorist</th>
<th>Revolutionary Leader</th>
<th>Revolutionary Critic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • *Our Political Tasks* (1904)  
  • *Results and Prospects* (1906)  
  • *Terrorism and Communism* (1920)  
  • *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937) | • President Petersburg Soviet (1905)  
  • President Petersburg Soviet (1917)  
  • President of the MRC of the Petrograd Soviet  
  • Civil War leadership | • Conflict with Lenin 1905-1917  
  • Conflict with Stalin (1919-24)  
  • Leftist opposition to Stalin  
  • Exile writings |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Trotsky’s life</th>
<th>Details of Trotsky’s historical context (from 1. Historical context)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Background</strong></td>
<td>- politics in pre-revolutionary Russia</td>
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• Politics in pre-revolutionary Russia (Yr 11 content)

• The reigns of Alexander II and Alexander III
  • Liberal reforms (emancipation of the Serfs, Zemstovo reforms)
  • Russification, Jewish policy (extension of the Pale of settlement)
  • Assassination of AII; repression under AIII

• The development of reformist/revolutionary politics in Russia
  • Populism
  • Liberalism
  • Marxism

• Industrialisation in Russia during 1890s and its social impacts

• Nicholas II’s ascension and his commitment to autocracy

Preceded Trotsky’s birth— but influenced his life
• 2. Background

– family background and education

  • Jewishness
  • Social class
  • Education: Gromokla, Odessa, Nikolaev
  • Relationships: parents, Spentzer
  • Personality
  • Marriage

– development of political ideals

  • Time with Spentzers, exposure to liberalism
  • Orchard Commune and Franz Shvigovsky and the Narodniki
  • Aleksandra Sokolovskaya and Marxism
  • Imprisonment, exile, escape and encounters with Lenin’s work – radicalisation?
  • Early writing as ‘The Pen’ and for Iskra
  • RSDLP split, Trotsky's criticism of Lenin in Our Political Tasks (1904)

Trotsky’s My Life
3 Rise to prominence

- emerging political role 1905–1917
  - Relationship with Bolshevik and Menshevik factions
  - Role in 1905 – Petersburg Soviet and arrest
  - *Results and Prospects* (1906)
    - Permanent revolution
    - Anticipated conflict with the peasantry after a revolution occurs
  - Failed attempts to re-unify RSDLP, conflict with Lenin
  - War correspondent in the Balkans, Western Front

- role in 1917 revolution
  - Arrival in Petrograd May 1917
  - July Days, voluntary arrest and siding with Bolsheviks
  - President of Petrograd Soviet (bridge between Bolsheviks and Soviets)
  - President of Military Revolutionary Council, co-ordination of October revolution
4. Significance and evaluation

- role as Commissar for Foreign Affairs
  - Role at Brest-Litovsk, conflict with Central Committee

- role as Commissar for War
  - Establishment of the Red Army, use of ‘Military Specialists’
  - Trotsky’s train
  - Crushing peasant uprisings (and Krondstadt)
  - War Communism and especially ‘Labor Armies’
  - Opposition to NEP and conflict with Central Committee

- power struggle following the death of Lenin
  - Lenin’s testament
  - Socialism in One Country vs Permanent Revolution
  - Trotsky vs Stalin (strengths and weaknesses) 

(continued…)
4. Significance and evaluation (continued)

– expulsion from the Communist Party
  • The United Opposition (Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev)
  • The Tenth Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution - support for Trotsky
  • Expulsion

– life and activities in exile
  • Alma Ata (1927-29)
  • European exile (1929-1936)
  • My Life (1930)
  • Mexico (1937-1940)
  • The Revolution Betrayed (1937)
  • The Fourth International
  • Assassination
evaluation: for example practical revolutionary, naïve idealist?

1. The impact of an aspect of Trotsky’s life on him (2015)


3. The nature of Trotsky’s impact (2012)


5. The way in which historians (and others?) have interpreted Trotsky (2006, 2008, 2016)
Historiography

Three reasons you need to do some work on it:

1. It is one of the explicitly identified skills ("account for and assess differing perspectives and interpretations of the personality")

2. Question B in the 2006 and 2008 papers

3. It can help you develop your own evaluation of Trotsky
Historiography

What you don’t need:

• To read full books on Trotsky
• To be able to name-drop historians throughout your response

What can be helpful:

• Three distinct historical perspectives on Trotsky
• These could be three particular authors eg:
  • Isaac Deutscher or David North
  • Robert Service or Geoffrey Swain (recent, non-Trotskyist biographers)
Historiography - strategies

• Wikipedia and review websites for book/author summaries

• The introductions and conclusions of books

• Podcasts, interviews with authors  (Hitchens vs Service: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuzXR-5w4Qk; Service on Trotsky: http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2010/07/robert_service.html)

• Literature reviews:


Trotsky by Ian D. Thatcher

Trotsky and the Russian Revolution by G. Swain
Trotsky’s key texts

• *Our Political Tasks* (1904)
• *Results and Prospects* (1906)
• *Terrorism and Communism* (1920)
• *My Life: An Attempt at Autobiography* (1930)
• *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937)

Leon Trotsky Internet Archive: [https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/](https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/)
Questions?

www.michaelmolkentin.com/resources/