



2004 History: Revolutions GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2004 there was a disappointing lack of accuracy in factual information. This was particularly noticeable for Question 1 in Section A, where students did not seem to take notice of the specific instructions, including the recommended length. In Question 2 answers were more accurate and showed students' ability to name specific facts. In general, spelling and handwriting need to be addressed.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

Question 1

1i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	9	16	31	25	15	3.1

1ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	7	14	34	25	14	3.1

Students need to practise reading questions accurately so that they deliver their answers in accordance with the requirements. It seems that students did not understand the meaning of terms such as 'significance' and 'event'. They often attempted to describe long-term developments, such as 'bad harvests' or 'financial crises' as 'events'.

The lowest scoring answers described one or two events but did not explain either of them, showing a poor grasp of the question. The mid-range answers moved beyond a description and towards linking the event to an effect. The better answers revealed an understanding of 'significance' by using connecting phrases such as 'this led to', 'the significance of this is' and 'this created' and also by using phrases such as 'furthermore' and 'it demonstrates' or qualifiers such as 'the significance was great'.

The questions set for all revolutions were comparable in that students were required to name two events which created social and/or political tension for the government of the old regime. For each question, a range of dates was specified and these were to act as parameters for the response. The best answers acknowledged the constraints and framed their answers accordingly. For example, students answering the question on the Chinese Revolution noted that it was in 1898 that Cixi forced Emperor Guangxu to withdraw the recently enacted reform edicts that were designed to address the more serious political problems of the Qing dynasty. In explaining the significance of the event, the students recognised the repeal of these acts was a lost opportunity for the government to stave off imminent revolution. Similarly, these students recognised the importance of October 1911 as the point at which demonstrations by revolutionaries against the government's nationalisation of Chinese railways escalated, showing that the Qing could no longer rely on the provincial armies; they no longer held a mandate to rule.

Students who scored in the mid-range either failed to nominate two events or did not fully explain the significance of an event. For example, many students who answered the question on the Russian Revolution mentioned the march to the Winter Palace to present the Tsar with a petition for political representation and better working conditions. However, few wrote that the significance of this was that the very act of petitioning the Tsar indicated there were problems in the Empire and that the Tsar's limited reforms following this event resulted in his authority being undermined.

Students need to be more mindful of the wording of the question when framing their answers. The question on the American Revolution asked how the two events created social and political tension for the government of **Great Britain**. The better answers noted that when the colonists refused to pay the duties required by the Stamp Act, more taxation agents were appointed and the presence of troops in the colonies was increased to signal the British Government's intention to exercise its authority. The Quartering Act was a further indication of the growing tension in the colonies and signified that the British Government took the colonists' revolutionary activity seriously.

There were disappointing factual mistakes in some responses. In their answer on the French Revolution, a number of students nominated the storming of the Bastille or the Royal Family's flight to Varennes as an event, although these

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were clearly outside the time frame of the question. In the Chinese Revolution, the Opium wars and the Sino-Japanese war were also outside the given time frame, but were mentioned frequently in answers.

One aspect in which students showed improvement in their answers to Section A was in confining their answers to the space provided. Students are increasingly showing skill in developing succinct responses to these types of questions.

Question 2

2i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	8	16	31	23	13	2.9

2ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	11	7	15	33	22	13	2.9

The structure of the question gave students an easily achievable framework to supply specific facts. With the framework provided for their answer, most students seemed to understand what was required by the term ‘measures’, and were able to name specific policy decisions enacted by the revolutionary government. On the whole, students seemed to understand how to answer this question and gave accurate information for the given time frames. However, the more sophisticated skill of explaining the ‘significance’ of one of the ‘measures’ set apart the stronger answers from the rest.

The instruction was to name two measures taken by the government **against its opponents**. Too often students failed to illustrate how the measure was designed to quell or attack counter-revolutionary activity. The NEP was frequently nominated as a measure taken by the Russian communist government, but few students linked it to the question or explained its significance as an economic measure to quieten criticism of the regime such as had occurred at Kronstadt in 1921. Students needed to think carefully about the measures they chose. The Great Leap Forward was not really a measure taken by the Chinese communists against its opponents. Better choices for this question were the Hundred Flowers Movement or the Speak Bitterness Campaign, which were clearly designed to limit the actions of counter-revolutionaries (or at least groups that the new government identified as problematic).

Section B

Revolution	None	English	American	French	Russian	Chinese
%	2	0	10	50	23	14

Section B was structured in such a way that students choosing different revolutionary contexts were presented with comparable documentary extracts and questions.

Students demonstrated increasing competency in handling these questions. They were less likely to paraphrase and copy large sections of the document, and more inclined to synthesise the key ideas to show their understanding of the extract than in previous years. Few students addressed the two questions in a single response, instead treating the two questions separately – in the first question they identified the key ideas and in the second question they elaborated on the importance of the idea. It was encouraging to see students challenging the ideas of the extracts. For example, a number of students recognized that Mao’s writing was at odds with his government policy; they acknowledged that he encouraged his critics to air grievances but recognised this as a ploy to ‘entice snakes from their lairs’.

Question 3i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	3	18	37	26	14	3.2

Ability to demonstrate factual knowledge of revolutionary ideas, leaders or movements in the comprehension of the document.

The first part of this section assessed how well students comprehended the document and were able to provide evidence from the document to demonstrate their understanding. Students are encouraged to select the main ideas from the material and explain what is revolutionary compared to the established, traditional order. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrasing the document. Some students need more practice in extracting ideas and in knowing how much explanation is required. Students should make connections to the notion of change. Students would benefit from identifying key ideas before they discuss their significance in relation to leadership.

In 2004 students responded confidently to the documents and it was evident that they were familiar with the leadership and ideas that drove the revolution, particularly for France and China. The response to the American document, a letter from George Washington, was a little disappointing. Only the best students referred to Washington’s ideas as typical of



the broader revolutionary ideas. For the question on Russia, students seemed less able to isolate the key revolutionary ideas and Lenin's leadership. Weak answers tended to give literal interpretations of Figes and described Lenin as 'greedy' or 'self obsessed'. Very few compared the document to Lenin's role in creating the Bolsheviks as an elite group, or explored the qualities that made him an effective leader.

By far the most popular question was on the French Revolution. Students had to identify how the sans culottes saw themselves. Better answers identified a number of attributes of the sans culottes mentioned in the extract; they saw themselves as hardworking, manual and skilled labourers as opposed to academics, but nevertheless holding ideals that committed them to the revolution. Invariably, they mentioned the willingness of the sans culottes to resort to violence to protect the revolution. In all cases, the better students used quotes from the document to support their answer but also showed that they had an understanding of the context of the document. This was also the case in good answers to the other documents' questions, where the students identified three or four key ideas and then showed a deeper knowledge of how important these ideas were in the revolution.

Question 3ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	4	8	11	13	13	13	11	9	6	5	5.1

There were many students who did not attempt this part of the question, although those who did generally performed well. Perhaps this is a reflection of the order in which questions were attempted. There was improvement in the use of evidence to support answers. Students seemed better prepared to link ideas to the events and developments over the revolutionary period and were able to qualify their judgements. The wide parameters provided by the dates were given so that students would have ample opportunity to deliver their knowledge and frame an answer.

Analysis of ideas, leaders and/or movements in the development of the revolution.

The second part of the question required students to explain the extent to which the person or idea was important in moving the revolution forward. The importance of the sans culottes, of Washington's ideas and of Mao's leadership made for interesting discussions, although the more informed students also commented on other groups, leaders or ideas that drove the revolution.

Figes' interpretation of Lenin proved problematic for some students. They argued that Figes was unfair in characterising Lenin as uncompromising and cited his dismissal of the Constituent Assembly and the introduction of the NEP as examples of his flexibility and adaptability. Yet they seemed to have missed the point that Lenin's determination to bring to fruition a socialist state was the motive behind these actions, and that at no time did he waver from his promise to deliver communism. The very best answers made this point and developed detailed responses based on additional evidence to support Figes' contention that Lenin was prepared to make any number of sacrifices for the revolution.

Students who chose to answer the questions on the extract from Mao were confronted with a piece of writing that needed to be firmly located in its historical context, that is, the launch of the Hundred Flowers Campaign. While Mao's motives for initiating this movement are contested, he identifies in this extract two or three key aspects which had by this time defined Maoism – the massline, recognition of the inherent revolutionary nature of the peasantry and the need for permanent revolution. Better students elaborated on the importance of these ideas and how they were important in shaping the revolution. Students were able to write about the early period of Mao's leadership and the broader framework of his ideas. Factual knowledge of these aspects was quite strong.

Students' skill in the use of evidence to support an argument.

The better responses used varied and extensive evidence to support their argument. Students who wrote on the importance of the sans culottes identified that at different times they played a greater or lesser role in the revolution. During the time of the terror, the mob (as identified by Rude) played a vital role and was used by Robespierre to terrify counter-revolutionaries and to radicalise the revolution. Yet these students also perceptively argued that if, in fact, the sans culottes were being manipulated and used, then it could be argued that they were being controlled as opposed to exercising control in the revolution. Similarly, the better responses on the American Revolution recognised that the ideas expressed by Washington were important to the revolution, but that they were articulated more cogently by other revolutionary leaders such as Adams.

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Section C – Essay

Revolution	None	English	American	French	Russian	Chinese
%	3	0	4	19	61	13

Question Chosen	0	4	5	6
%	2	13	50	35

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	4	8	12	16	17	16	11	7	4	5.6

The essays showed that students were more confident in discussing the challenges faced by the new regimes and essays were usually balanced with adequate comparisons to the old regimes, although there were still some who bypassed the old regime and only discussed the revolution or the snapshot period. Many answers that fell into the mid-range category lapsed into narrative. The discussion of historians' perspectives was better integrated, with more extended commentary throughout the essays and fewer students responding to this criterion in a final paragraph.

There was still too much evidence of students using rote-learned sentences relating to historiography such as 'revisionist historians see the revolution as... while liberal historians see the revolution as...' Often these statements were inaccurate or, worse, irrelevant to the line of argument that the student had otherwise been developing competently. This approach mainly occurred in the mid-range level. A better approach is for students to know how an historian has interpreted an event in history. When answering on the new regime in Russia, students wrote quite well about how the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly has been interpreted differently by historians. For example, they mentioned that Fitzpatrick identified this as the first sign that the Bolsheviks would compromise their ideals to hold power, while Lynch justified the action saying that in times of war the government could be excused for revoking democratic ideals.

There seemed to be many pre-planned essays where the topic's key words simply disappeared, or were only used at the start and in the conclusion but nowhere in the body of the essay.

Question 4

Question 4 was not particularly popular, yet had potential for both the Russian and Chinese revolutions. In both of these revolutions a widely acknowledged factor in the demise of the old regime was the poor quality of the leadership. In the new regimes, the charismatic leaders both compromised their ideals and 'sold out' on the idealism of the revolution. There were excellent, but unfortunately few, essays that took this line of argument.

Question 5

Question 5 was a very popular choice but the quality varied widely. Students tended to ignore the term 'easily' and focussed on 'is not created'.

There was a tendency to agree with the quote and begin the essay with a discussion of the aspirations of the revolutionaries. A consequence of this approach was to neglect the old regime. When students did realise their oversight they often then compensated by inserting token sentences such as 'this was similar to the old regime'.

Some students perceived this essay as a gift; the opportunity to write on social, political and economic aspects of the new regime and their essays were structured accordingly.

Question 6

Question 6 was also popular but most responses were of mediocre quality, with students failing to address all aspects of the question. Often students ignored the words 'that had confronted the old regime'.

Very few students dealt with the proposition that the new government had problems because it did not deal with the crises that had confronted the old regime. Excellent answers were able to address this contention. When writing on the Russian Revolution, better students explained that a lack of political representation was an issue in the old regime, and the Bolsheviks' failure to grant democratic freedoms created crises such as the Kronstadt Rebellion. Similarly, a lack of land was an issue after the Emancipation Edict of 1861, but it had still not been resolved in Stalin's time, resulting in groups like the kulaks resisting government attempts to collectivise farmland.



Many answers were structured along thematic lines, which seemed to provide a sound framework for delivering factual information on the challenges confronting the revolutionary governments and for comparing the similarities and differences between the regimes. The essays that adopted this approach were more competent and interesting and engaged with the topic in a thorough manner. However, there were some very simplistic constructions of learned essays that compared the old regime leader with the new regime leader on aspects such as power and then discussed war, economy and society. These answers plodded along and really only did half the job.

Use of evidence remains a defining skill between the mid-range and high scoring essays. Many students simply used knowledge as evidence, while the best answers use detailed facts and/or historians' viewpoints.

Some descriptions of student work to bear in mind that help define levels of achievement in essays are:

- five: may be narrative in style, little real evidence is given
- six: not all of the question is addressed
- seven: provides a clear and relevant argument
- eight: confident, but falls short; the subtleties of the question are not fully addressed
- nine-ten: sophisticated with subtle inferences.

Part of a response to Question 5 that was assessed as representative of an eight follows. The response missed 'easily' in the question and fell short because it seemed to lapse into a change and continuity style essay in parts. A redeeming feature is the student's strong knowledge and use of historians.

In 1917 Russia underwent two revolutions, the first in March where 303 years of Romanov Tsarism was ended with the abdication of the Tsar, and a Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet took over governing Russia as Dual power; and the second when Lenin and his Bolshevik party overthrew the Provisional government in November to begin a one party dictatorship. The aim of these revolutions had been to create a utopian Marxist society, where 'each [worked] to their ability and each to their needs', in a classless, industrially advanced state. Although communism was seen as failed by 1991, Soviet historians would maintain that it had been worth pursuing the utopian dream. Other historians like American Richard Pipes, will say that the revolution had failed to create any sort of a new society. However, historians like Adcock say that some of the expectations of the revolution had been achieved, if not politically, then socially and economically.
[The student misses 'easily' in the question.]

Politically, it would seem that the new society had failed the expectations of a liberal government; the new one party state was just as authoritarian as the autocratic Tsarist regime had been. Continued reliance on police state to suppress opposition is evidence of that, with the Cheka under Lenin little if nothing changed from the Tsar's Okhrana. And like the Tsar, political parties were banned. Censorship was still keeping people from voicing their opinions. Although the revolution had been in the name of the workers, they still had no political power. The Kronstadt revolt in 1921 in response to the economic crisis of War Communism, demanded many of the same things as at the start of the revolution, showing that they had not been achieved.

The fact that the revolt was put down by force draws a parallel with Bloody Sunday, when the workers demanded reforms. This shows that the new society had hardly been created, as it had so much in common with the old.

It is here where historians like Richard Pipes would say the revolution brought 'no change', and MacDonald would say although it had started out as a genuine revolution with high expectations, the movement had been betrayed by the Bolsheviks. However, historians are partial to bias, and Pipes is an anti Bolshevik and extremely critical of their actions. In this aspect it would seem true that the expectations of the revolution had not been established in a new society.
['Easily' has still not been addressed. It is starting to resemble a 'change and continuity' essay.]

Socially, 'what was at the bottom of Russia now came top most' (Reed). One expectation had at least been achieved – a whole ruling class had been wiped out – the Tsar's family was executed in 1920 July, and the aristocracy lost all their social privileges and positions. Everyone was now equals, and during the Provisional Government's term, social rights were recognised. To that extent a new society had been created, there were no more class divisions – everyone was a worker for the state. However, social rights granted under the Provisional Government were taken away in Lenin's term during his revolutionary government, when special measures were taken to face civil war crisis. Although this suggests social expectations weren't achieved after all, the equality of persons still remained. No one at any time was better off or were more privileged than anyone else. Even Lenin the leader, led a modest life. So the expectation of equality still remained in the new society.

Economically, Adcock says that there had been most change. The first change was not a very positive one, War Communism was introduced in 1918 and lasted until 1921. All produce was given to the government to be redistributed among Russians at state distribution centres and ration cards. It was seen by some to be a full blown attempt to quickly introduce Communism into Russia, and a response to civil war by others. Regardless, it was a disaster as famine and inflation rose exceptionally. To revive the economy, Lenin introduced the NEP in 1921; it was certainly an opposite direction of what the expectations of the revolution had

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been as it allowed small scale capitalism to revive the economy, however, Lenin said it was the 'one step back' necessary to take 'two steps forward' into the industrially advanced state that had been expected of a Marxist state...

[The student's knowledge is good and the argument has developed, although it is not closely focused on the question. The use of historians' views supports the student's contentions. The student went on to discuss Stalin's 5 Year Plan, industrial towns, Collectivisation and comparison of living conditions.]

...In conclusion, while political expectations of freedom and the dictatorship of the workers may not have been fulfilled, a new society was evident in other aspects of Russia...one can see there truly had been the creation of a new society.

[The conclusion seems more like a change and continuity essay.]