

2019 VCE History: Revolutions examination report

General comments

The key knowledge and skills assessed in the 2019 History: Revolutions examination were specified in the VCE History Study Design 2016–2020. There was clear evidence that students were aware that the different questions in the examination required special skills and techniques and they mostly responded appropriately. There were two sections in the examination and students were required to focus on a different revolutionary context for each section. Most students complied with this direction and selected a different revolution for each section, although a small number wrote on the same revolution in both Section A and B. Fortunately, the number of students making this error has diminished.

The answer booklet had labelled areas for students to respond. Generally, students wrote their answers in the correct space and labelled the continuation of responses. This demonstrated familiarity with the format of the answer booklet and an understanding that responses to Section A and Section B were to be written in different areas.

Specific information

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

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Revolutions chosen

Section A

Revolution chosen	none	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	14	32	49	5

Section B

Revolution chosen	none	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	11	24	39	26

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	4	24	48	19	4	2.9

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	5	28	47	16	3	2.8

Questions 1a. and 1b.

There were three sources – an image and two written texts – provided for each of the revolutions for Question 1 in Section A. The first question, worth five marks, required students to outline important aspects of an event or policy, while the second question required an explanation of the causation of an event or situation. In each instance students were required to use their own knowledge to supplement or develop the response. The skill of constructing a concise response was evident, with higher-scoring responses providing context and selecting short, relevant quotes from the sources. However, some responses merely paraphrased or quoted from the source without adding additional material. Generally, students failed to make use of the rich material provided in the visual sources. Many students did not refer to the visual material and those who did tended to do so in a superficial manner. The introduction to each of the visual sources contained important information but this was often ignored, leading to misinterpretation. Practice in interpreting visual sources and developing strategies to incorporate these into a response is valuable for students.

Responding to Question 1a. on America, students correctly identified colonial administration and the actions of the British Government as being the reasons for calling the First Continental Congress but few named the Coercive Acts as the context for the ‘present unhappy situation’. Similarly, most responses referred to colonists seeking redress of the grievances but only the higher-scoring responses elaborated on what this involved. Answers to Question 1b. highlighted the outbreak of hostilities for the actions taken at the Second Continental Congress and listed the formation of an army, appointment of Washington as its commander and the writing of the Declaration of Independence. Source 3, which depicted the writing of the Declaration of Independence, was referred to in a cursory way, with few students acknowledging the momentous nature of this undertaking (demonstrated by the stance of the authors in the painting) and the serious implications of this document.

The following high-scoring response on America for Question 1b. uses the source material, especially the visual representation, to good effect and provides the student’s own knowledge, demonstrating further contextualisation.

The Second Continental Congress (1775) acted as a colonial government which took steps resulting in the Declaration of Independence (1776) and caused the American Revolution. Firstly, they “voted to raise a regular army” (S2), in order to combat the presence of a British ‘Standing Army’ in the colonies, whose threat manifested in the Boston Massacre (1770) and Quartering Acts contained in the Coercive Acts (1774). It was this Continental Army that would improve the local militia forces seen at Lexington and Concord Battles (1775), and thus, the 2nd Continental Congress’ decision enabled the American colonial forces to “match (the British) muskets’ (S2) at the Battle of Bunker Hill, under the command of George Washington”. As such, it inspired hope that a revolution would be successful. Further, the decision was taken to draft the Declaration of Independence (1776), and as depicted in Source 3, was inspired by great

Founding Fathers- Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, whose actions at the 2nd Continental Congress and writings allowed the creation of a document that became the formal separation, in writing, from Britain, that caused the American Revolution and the Revolutionary War.

For students who selected the French Revolution, the sources on the storming of the Bastille and its consequences appeared accessible. Higher-scoring responses provided a chronology that placed the events of July 14 in context: the Estates-General had stalled, Necker had been dismissed and there was a fear that the King meant to close the National Assembly by force. Sources 2 and 3 provided material relating to how the fall of the Bastille affected the power of Louis XVI and higher-scoring responses used quotes from the extract and features in the visual. For example, these responses mentioned that the banner above the Hotel de Ville referred to Louis XVI as 'THE KING OF THE FREE PEOPLE' and that he accepted the cockade as a symbol of the revolution. Features from the print (Source 3) were used as evidence to explain how the storming of the Bastille affected the power of the King, including the depiction of him following the members of the National Assembly and the National Guardsmen, shown as spectators to the scene and no longer under his control.

The sources selected for Question 1 Russia highlighted the plight of the urban workers and peasants in 1905. The petition of 1905 provided students with a list of grievances, and the higher-scoring responses elaborated on these, explaining how the industrialisation policies initiated by Witte led to the growth of factories and exploitation of workers. The visual source was not well utilised, with many students failing to link the march of January 1905 with an attempt to redress the grievances of workers from St Petersburg. Rather, they focused on the violence and actions of the guards and attributed the attack to a direct order from Nicholas. In contrast, higher-scoring responses linked the two sources, highlighting that in 1905 the absence of representative government meant the masses could only vent their grievances through petitions and protest, but were frequently met with repression. Answers to Question 1b. were generally low-scoring and many students appeared unfamiliar with the situation of the Russian peasantry. They also failed to link the peasant protests of 1905–1906 with the dual causes of harvest failure and oppressive conditions.

The New Life Movement was the focus of Section A China and the students who selected this option responded confidently to the questions. In responding to Question 1a., students drew on the speech by Jiang Jieshi (Source 2) for details about the values at the centre of the movement and used the text and features of the poster (Source 1) to discuss the changes the government wanted in labour production. Responses to Question 1b. were lower-scoring, although higher-scoring responses recognised the importance that Jiangxi Province had to the communists and highlighted how the GMD therefore selected this place to re-establish control and influence.

Section B – Revolution 2

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	6	27	44	16	3	2.7

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	7	28	42	15	3	2.6

Questions 2a. and 2b.

In Section B the sources for each revolution comprised two written extracts and students were required to analyse the historical interpretations about the significant consequences of the revolutionary context they selected. Most students attributed their quotes to specific sources with phrases such as ‘as seen in Source 1’ or a bracketed attribution ‘(Source 1)’, which demonstrated how they were addressing the requirements of the question. Higher-scoring responses formed reasoned inferences from the historical interpretations and were able to contextualise primary sources. There were many mid-scoring responses that simply paraphrased the texts rather than analysing the opinions conveyed in the historical representations.

In their responses on America, Section B students identified the social conditions that affected the lower classes after the War of Independence and noted how the promises made of the revolution were not delivered, leading to conflict. The source of conflict stemmed from Congress’s inability to pay the regular soldiers and officers and the high rate of debt after the war, which saw rural farmers suffering as creditors called in their loans. There was a good understanding of how farmers, often returned soldiers, were frustrated and ready to rebel.

Students responding to Questions 2a. and 2b. in Section B France demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges to the revolution in mid-1793. The multiple challenges raised in the extract from McPhee were identified as the military threat of invading troops, the ‘Federalist’ revolts and the economic difficulties experienced by wage earners as the value of the assignat fell. Responses to the question on the impact of government by Terror also used the source material to good effect. The statistics for victim numbers were used as evidence of the ‘dark cloud of fear’ and the denial of civil rights was provided as an example of government repression.

The student response below for France Question 2a. expands on the material from the source with their own knowledge.

The challenges faced by the revolution in 1793, threatened to end the revolution as highlighted by Source 1, “France itself, was in danger of falling apart”, facing military and internal enemies. As a result of the Brunswick Manifesto (25th July 1792) and the war with Austria and Prussia, France declared war on the Grand Alliance (1st February 1793) which resulted in “Enemy troops were on French soil in the northeast, southeast and southwest” (Source 1). Indeed, the Vendee rebellion of 80,000 peasant militants (11th March 1793) threatened France with destruction throughout June-August, as the nation was forced to introduce a revolutionary tribunal (June 1793) and create the Committee of Public Safety (July 1793) in order to ensure the survival of the nation. Ultimately, the assassination of Marat (18th July 1793) threatened the Convention and began the terror in response to the disaster on all sides of the revolution.

Students responding to Questions 2a. and 2b. in Section B Russia recognised the importance of the land question to the legitimisation of the new regime. They highlighted the popularity of the Decree on Land while noting that this merely formalised a practice that was already occurring as peasants seized landowners’ land. Students also noted that a reduction in land rents was welcomed but that variations in the amount of land redistributed meant that many peasants ‘received no additional land’. While comprehension of the source material was good, few responses elaborated or offered additional evidence and many made generalisations about peasant life.

The following student response demonstrates how the material in Source 1 could be used and offers some own knowledge with the inference that the decree had limited success.

Land distribution was highly significant in legitimising the Bolshevik regime as it symbolised the achievements of one of their key pre-revolutionary aims of “Bread, Peace, Land”. Ever since February 1917 there had been ‘spontaneous seizures of land’ from the peasants, so the Decree on Land (27 Oct 1917) was rather ex-post facto in nature. Yet, land redistribution “was a hugely popular measure’ as power was “transport[ed] to peasant hands”. It was clear from the Bolshevik loss at the Constituent Assembly elections (Nov 1917) that the Socialist

Revolutionaries actually held a majority of peasant support. Thus to appear as though the Bolsheviks cared about peasant welfare was essential in defending their regime.

In response to Section B China Questions 2a. and 2b., high-scoring responses used the written texts to outline the reasons for, and the consequences of, the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Most responses to Question 2b. referred to the stated aim that freedom of speech in the arts and science was necessary to strengthen the country but higher-scoring responses noted that it was announced at about the time of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation speech and Mao may have been influenced to show that he was more liberal than Stalin. Similarly, in response to Question 2b., there was incorporation of material from the text and additional evidence about the ways in which intellectuals responded to the call for free expression and criticism after the intellectuals initially exercised restraint.

Section A: Question 1c.; Section B: Question 2c.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	5	9	15	16	16	14	11	5	2	0.4	4.4

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	5	10	14	15	14	14	10	6	2	0.4	4.2

These questions provided the students with the opportunity to use the skill of historical thinking and to engage more closely in a discussion of the causes and consequences of the revolution. Students were directed at the beginning of Questions 1 and 2 to use the sources in their answers. Following this direction, the highest-scoring responses to Questions 1c. and 2c. used the sources and built on, rather than repeated, the answers they made to the five-mark questions. They also used other evidence to develop their response. Approaches that worked successfully placed the sources at the centre of the analysis or made a contention about the message conveyed by the sources as a starting point. These higher-scoring responses then had a line of argument to explore the question. Responses that did not score well presented information in a narrative style while a surprising number ignored the sources. The skill of using historians' interpretations is varied. The highest-scoring responses cite historical interpretations to support their arguments, but there are many responses that merely name historians and offer no explanation of how their work has added to understanding of the causes of the revolution.

Students responding to Question 1c. France used information in the sources to highlight the importance of the actions of the people in the development of the revolution. They mentioned that popular movements, although unplanned, were successful in challenging and ultimately contributing to the overthrow of the ancient regime. Reference was made to the Parisian crowds who gathered arms to defend the National Assembly when they perceived it under threat, and how revolts spread to the countryside and intensified during the Great Fear. Historical interpretations included the view of McPhee that the revolution of the bourgeoisie deputies was secured by active intervention of the working people of Paris and the argument of Soboul that peasant revolt ruled out the possibility of compromise with the feudal aristocracy and forced the bourgeoisie revolution onwards. Higher-scoring responses referenced the interpretations of historians to support a line of

argument. These are contrasted with the lower-scoring responses that merely named the historians.

This skill of citing historians and referring to the evidence they use was also seen in higher-scoring responses to Question 1c. for America, Russia and China. For example, students responding to Question 1c. Russia explored how the promises of reform offered by the Dumas and the punitive measures of Stolypin enabled the Tsarist government to hold on after 1905. Trotsky's view that 1905 failed as a revolution because the protestors were disunited and inexperienced was also mentioned.

Question 2c. began with the instruction 'analyse' and this was generally understood by students. The higher-scoring responses used an array of evidence including historical interpretations. The question for the American option asked to what extent social groups challenged the consolidation of the new regime and higher-scoring responses elaborated on the effect of economic constraints of the war and post-war period on the common people. Higher-scoring responses to the question on France demonstrated knowledge of the Terror and explained how liberty was entirely curtailed including free communication of ideas, opinions and the right to a fair trial. There was also precise knowledge about laws introduced under Robespierre. In relation to Question 2c. Russia, there were high-scoring responses about the lives of the peasants under the policies of War Communism and the New Economic Policy. Many responses were very general, arguing that under War Communism all peasants starved and that under the NEP they prospered. The higher-scoring responses understood that there were complex factors at work and that experiences of the peasants differed.

The following response is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 2c. Russia. It uses the sources and has an array of evidence.

The everyday lives of peasants may have seen some improvement following the Revolution, however this improvement only came after the harsh period of Civil War and War Communism which undoubtedly failed to improve their everyday lives. Following the outbreak of Civil War in 1918, the Bolsheviks unveiled the policy of War Communism in June 1918, in an effort to support the ideal of "everything to the front". Under War Communism peasants could have any and all of their grain surpluses forceably sold to the state at a fixed price, they were unable to sell their goods, would be subject to food rationing and could be conscripted to the Red Army. These policies drastically decreased the means of agricultural production to 37% of pre war levels, as peasants began to produce only enough to feed their families. Those who did produce excess grain could be beaten, tortured, attacked and even executed by the Cheka for failure to sell it. "A Bolshevik invasion was unleashed on the villages" (Source 2). Along with growing poverty due to war and limited food came diseases. Of the 10 million deaths in the war, 95% were due to famine and disease. The Great Famine of 1920-21 alone claimed 5-8 million lives, primarily that of the peasants. Situations grew so dire in some regions peasants resorted to a diet of cannibalism and 'famine bread' made of grass and mud. The devastating situations spread revolts and riots nation wide, with the climax occurring in the Tambov countryside. The Tambov revolt combined with the 1921 Kronstadt revolt, as asserted by Figes "drove home the need for a new economic policy" as a counterrevolution by the impoverished peasant class seemed an impending possibility. The NEP of June 1921 saw peasants compensated for their harsh experiences during the war, with the ability to once again sell their surpluses, subsidies for their agricultural production, reduced taxation and the reintroduction of currency. Peasants were literally seeing improvements to their everyday lives as grain cultivation grew to 91 million hectares by 1922 and average earnings increased by 50%. However the economic scissors crisis loomed over that ability to thrive in the new mixed economy. Although the peasant class may ultimately have seen improvement in their lives it took many years to occur.

For Section B Question 2c. China, higher-scoring responses were characterised by knowledge of the short- and long-term consequences of the Hundred Flowers Campaign. They referred to the Anti-Rightist Campaign, which saw hundreds of thousands of intellectuals sent to labour camps

and the lasting legacy in which people learnt the lessons of speaking out and were cautious of future mass campaigns.

The following student response to Section B Question 2c. China is clearly signposted and includes relevant historical perspectives.

The main consequence of the Hundred Flowers movement was the introduction of the Ant-Rightist Campaign. Firstly, despite Mao's initial calls to "let flowers of any kind bloom" (1), upon "wide social criticism" (2) of his government, those naïve enough to speak out were persecuted. Between 1957 and 1960, over 2.9 million Chinese were labelled "rightists" by Mao and severely punished for that insubordination. Historian Nien Cheng writes that. "many lost their homes, jobs and lives". Punishments included struggle sessions, concentration camps and self-criticism. One account of the extreme suffering inflicted on a "rightist" was given by Liu Dao, who claims that after two years in a concentration camp, he went from "98 kilograms to 41 kilograms". Secondly, as historian Maurice Meisner asserts a further consequence of the Hundred Flowers Campaign was that "socialism in China would no longer be built on popular democracy". Therefore, the CCP was able to implement policy such as the Great Leap Forward (1957-1961) and not face any public criticism. The Great Leap forward resulted in over 40 million deaths in China because of Famine and the destroyed the steel industry in backyard furnaces. However, because of the Hundred Flowers and subsequent anti-rightist campaign, no-one would speak out against Mao or the CCP.

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	6	10	14	16	14	13	12	6	2	1	4.3

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	8	10	13	13	12	12	11	6	2	1	4

Questions 2 and 3

To respond successfully to Questions 2 and 3 in Section A, students needed to be familiar with the key knowledge and skills articulated in the Study Design. All questions began with the command word 'explain'. The highest-scoring responses were directly focused on the question and generally framed around a contention made at the outset; detailed, precise evidence was given in the form of statistics, dates, policies and names of legislation. In addition to primary sources, references to relevant historical interpretations were included in the higher-scoring responses. In contrast, responses that did not score well were narrative in style, contained incorrect information, did not answer the entire question and/or lacked historical terminology. There were also a number of instances in which students misattributed views to a particular historian or used a historian who has written on a different revolution.

Students responded very well to Section A Question 2 America, explaining how slavery presented a challenge. The initial decision to exclude slaves from the Continental Army was later reversed when Britain promised freedom to any slave who enlisted to fight against the patriots. The issue of slavery was also discussed as a challenge in the post-war era when the north and south clashed over how slaves would be counted for purposes of tax and representation. Question 3 on America related to the importance of the inclusion of the Bill of Rights to the ratification of the Constitution. While there were some high-scoring responses, many neglected to state that ratification was

contingent on the inclusion of a Bill of Rights. The higher-scoring responses began with this point and then looked at the arguments of the Anti-Federalists regarding the need for an explicit statement of rights compared to the Federalists who claimed this issue was implied in the preamble to the constitution.

The student response below for Question 2 America addresses both aspects of the question and contains relevant evidence.

Slavery posed a serious ideological and practical challenge to the new regime during and after the revolutionary war. Following the initial outbreak of the War of Independence in 1775, slaves were banned from enlisting in the Continental Army, under the orders of George Washington. However, as the war proceeded and the numbers of the Continental Army soldiers dwindled due to limited conscription times, the Continental Army suffered heavy early defeats at the Battle of Brooklyn and Long Island and some slaves began escaping their masters to serve for the "Red Coats" who promised their freedom, the policy was removed. As such, over the period of the war, 5,000 slaves would join the Continental Army, promised their freedom for their service in an attempt to match the promises of the British. These slaves would fight amongst their white counterparts and as soldiers would assist in the eventual American victory. However, following the conclusion of the War, there was still much debate over slaves place in the newly formed American society. While number of freed slaves increased from 25,000 to 50,000 following the conclusion of the war, so too did the number of slaves. In the seven decades following the conclusion of the war, slave numbers would increase from 500,000 to 4 million. This influx in numbers called for much debate over representation and the ethics of slavery. The 3/5ths and Sunset clauses passed by Congress were the political answers to the debate of slavery, however there was still much divide between the Northern and Southern states. While it was believed that the "social and intellectual environment that had allowed slavery to exist had ended" (Wood) in the Northern states, Southern states still relied heavily on slaves due to the boon of the cotton industry. As such, over the coming decades, slavery would pose as an ideological divide between Northern and Southern America. The acceptance of slavery both during and after the revolutionary war would prove an immense challenge for the new regime.

Question 2 France focused on the effects of the revolution on the everyday lives of the nobles and the bourgeoisie. Precise information about the effect on nobles included loss of feudal privileges and the condemnation of émigrés as enemies of the state, stripping them of their titles, property and rights and stopping them from re-entering France under the threat of a death penalty. Most responses were less clear on the effects of the revolution on the bourgeoisie and sometimes there was no mention of this group. Higher-scoring responses noted that the bourgeoisie were set to benefit from the sale of Church and émigré property and that it was only with the radicalisation of the revolution that they were threatened. Question 3 France required knowledge about laws enacted in the new regime. There were excellent responses that highlighted the many laws and the impact of these on French citizens.

The quality of responses for Russia varied with both high- and low-scoring responses to both Question 2 and 3. Question 2 required an examination of the means by which the Bolshevik Government was able to defeat major political opposition. The highest-scoring responses addressed the period from October 1917 to March 1921, beginning with the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly at gunpoint and ending with the bloody defeat of the Kronstadt Rebellion. Some students discussed Bolshevik opposition to Dual Authority, which was clearly outside the time frame and in the first Area of Study. Similarly, Question 3 elicited a range of responses with higher-scoring answers including reference to the changed political and economic conditions associated with the NEP. As in other questions that required discussion of two aspects, there were many responses that discussed one factor to the detriment of the other; in this case it was neglect of the political fallout of embracing a quasi-capitalist economy.

The responses to Section A Question 2 China frequently began with Mao's acknowledgment of women's equality with men and the importance of the Marriage Law in recognising the rights of

women. However, there was little understanding of how the mobilisation of women often resulted in an increased workload, as women were still responsible for domestic duties and childcare. The higher-scoring responses were able to see nuances in 'improvement'. There were some detailed responses to Question 3, which focused on the First Five-Year Plan and collectivisation. Higher-scoring responses contained detailed information on the means by which the government sought to centralise economic planning and its effects. A disappointing aspect of some responses was confusion between the First Five-Year Plan and the Great Leap Forward.

The student response below to Question 2 China contains a range of evidence.

Akin to Chairman Mao's claim that "women hold up half the sky" it is irrefutable that the lives of women flourished under the new regime through the marriage Law of May 1950, as well as the formation of the All China Women's Federation in 1949 dictating well-laid plans for the livelihood of women. Firstly, the Marriage Law of May 1950 abolished practices of child brides (highly prevalent in the old Nationalist regime) as well as arranged marriages increasing autonomy in the lives of females. This was furthered by the prohibition of the traditional practice of footbinding as well as educational campaigns surrounding health- particularly cholera and typhoid. The results were magnificent with an increase in life expectancy from 37 to 57 from 1950-1957 exemplifying the increase in quality of life for women. Compounded by the establishment of the All China Women's Federation (1949) whom consisted of a staggering 75,000 members, the new federation showcased its influence through the 48th Article of the Constitution which provided work-based childcare for all women promoting their involvement in the workforce, am plied amplified by the fact that by 1961 50% of doctors were women whilst largely successful in urban areas, stringent views on women remained in rural areas, exemplified by the Danwei committees that conducted household checks increase pressure on women limiting their role to a domestic level still it cannot be repudiated that the lives of women did improve significantly under the People's Republic of China, allowing Fairbank to label Mao's administration as a "dedicated government".

Section B – Revolution 2

Question 1 – Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	2	3	3	4	4	6	7	8	6	8	8	9	8	8	5	4	3	2	1	0.2	9.7

The skill of essay writing was assessed through an examination of the causes of each revolutionary context. Students need to be cognisant that in each case the revolution was not caused by a single factor but rather an interplay of connecting factors. These can be long-term factors that weakened the government, short-term factors that precipitated the crisis, new philosophies about political and social reform and the actions of revolutionary leaders who seized on the prevailing conditions to change society. Each essay topic posed a different set of causes and asked students to what extent they agreed with the factors presented in the prompt as the prime causes of the revolution they studied. Thus, students would benefit if they have previously reached a conclusion on the relative importance of different factors and have some understanding of the links between different factors. In addition, students should address all of the wording in the statement prompt rather than responding only to parts of it.

The assessment criteria for the essays were printed on the last page of the examination booklet. These criteria included the 'construction of a coherent and relevant historical argument that addresses the specific demands of the essay question'. There were a number of essays that did not respond directly to the prompt, opting to write a generalised response to the whole Area of

Study instead. Only the highest-scoring responses included accurate and relevant primary sources and used historical thinking concepts in the construction of their argument.

The essay question on America asked students to evaluate the degree to which the ideas of the Enlightenment were a key factor in causing revolutionary leaders to seek independence from Britain. Most students demonstrated knowledge and understanding of these new philosophies that questioned absolute monarchy and claimed an unchecked government could subvert the rights of the individual. They related this to the philosophers who argued that people had an intellect that allowed for self-government through representatives elected to the task. Higher-scoring responses then linked this to British taxation policy and stated how revolutionary leaders argued that the parliament was in contravention of the principles of representative government when they imposed taxation legislation on the colonies. For example, Patrick Henry raised the cry of 'no taxation without representation' in relation to the Stamp Act. A number of responses outlined the Enlightenment philosophies and named leaders who espoused these principles, then argued that British taxation was an entirely separate issue.

Students responding to the essay question on France were presented with a proposition that French involvement in the American War of Independence caused a chain of events that made revolution a certainty. There were therefore a few component parts to this essay, including knowledge about the fiscal crisis brought on by the cost of the war, a range of other contributing factors and the issue of whether revolution was therefore inevitable. Higher-scoring responses contained impressive evidence about the economic impact of the war including statistics about the cost and increasing debt. These responses added reference to the American spirit brought back by returning soldiers, but more importantly they referred to the specific conditions in France at the time and argued that these 'primed' the country for revolution and created a situation in which a 'chain of events' could occur.

The essay question for Russia asked students to assess whether 'long-term causes' weakened the Tsarist regime sufficiently for it to 'simply collapse' in February 1917. However, many students failed to appreciate that the question was about long-term tensions and short-term triggers, requiring an evaluation of the importance of each as a cause of the government's collapse in early 1917. Other responses focused on the role of Nicholas, turning the essay into an evaluation of his personality, rather than addressing the question that was asked.

Students responding to the essay on China had to assess the effects of two events – the Long March and the experiences in the Yan'an Soviet – and then determine the importance of each to the success of the Chinese Communist Party. Many responses developed a narrative beginning with the CCP escape from the Jiangxi Soviet, the trials of the Long March and the setting up of the Yan'an Soviet. Higher-scoring responses saw beyond the mythical status the CCP has attached to the Long March and Yan'an Soviet and noted the real achievements of both these phases of the revolution. They also discussed the relevance of other factors such as the Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War and the contribution these made to CCP success.

In summary, the highest-scoring essays are characterised by engagement with the premise of the essay question. A personal judgment of the importance of different causes of the revolution based on accurate evidence is a hallmark of a high-scoring response, as is reference to the interpretations of key historians. By using these skills to frame their responses, students demonstrate historical thinking, which is the crux of historical investigation.

The student example below is an essay that scored in the higher range and employs the skills highlighted above. It uses evidence to support the argument and is a clearly structured response to the question. There is reference to the views of historians (although the student does incorrectly name one historian).

France's involvement in the American War of Independence (1774-1788) precipitated the revolution, as it created a financial crisis which led to an undermining in public faith in Louis,

while allowing public grievances to be aired inciting revolutionary fervour. However, while this financial crisis enabled revolution to occur, one cannot overlook the influence of the Enlightenment, as well as Louis unwillingness to accept limitations to his power, in contributing to France's formal transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy.

Firstly, France's involvement in four successive wars, the last of which (American War of Independence) costing 1,066 million livres, caused a chain of revolutionary events, as it contributed to a financial crisis (126 million livre deficit by 1788) that it required Louis to pass taxation reform. Due to the war, Financial minister Calonne presented a proposed taxation reform to the Assembly of Notables, a group of 144 members of the privileged orders who rejected his equal taxation. This led to Calonne's firing (April 1788) and replacement by Brienne, who was similarly rejected. Facing rejection from the parlements likewise, after Louis forced the Paris Parlement to register the laws (27th November 1788) which were nullified upon his departure, Louis called for a meeting of the Estates-General in May, 1789, as the financial crisis was undermining his public support. As William Doyle states though the Assembly of Notables claimed to be "gratifying" the voice of the people, they were simply protecting their self-interest, as their resistance led to the calling of the Estates-General, which furthered the tide of revolution. France's involvement in the American War of Independence set in motion a chain of events that forced Louis to hear the grievances of the nation, which ultimately triggered the beginning of the revolution.

Secondly, at the Estates-General, Louis failure to treat the grievances expressed in the cahiers de doléances, specifically from the Third Estate (who demanded removal of taxation privilege, abolished letters de cachet etc), created revolutionary sentiment that marked the formal beginning of the revolution. Angered by Louis' reinforcement of honorific distinctions as well as Necker's decision to double the representatives of the Third Estate but not vote by head (27th Dec, 1788) the bourgeoisie deputies of the Third Estate formed the National Assembly (17th June 1789) before swearing the Tennis Court Oath (20th June 1789), demanding a constitution and refusing to disband even when Louis declared them "illegal and unconstitutional" (23rd June 1789). As Peter McPhee posits, this formal challenge to the King occurred as the Estates General provided a platform for the "expression of tensions and social divisions", allowing the National Assembly to formally challenge the monarchy and only occurred as a result of the financial crisis caused by France's foreign wars. Furthermore this influence can be tracked to the storming of the Bastille (14th July 1789) as following the dismissal of Necker (11th July 1789) Parisian workers stormed the "seat of beast despotism" (Doyle) killing 7 guards and suffering 98 deaths. This was done as the workers felt as per Richard Pipes, "that they alone had saved the National Assembly", with this violent reaction occurring to protect a group of deputies who had only been given a platform as a result of the financial crisis, and as such it is clear that the American War of Independence caused a chain that allowed revolution.

Ultimately, though foreign war made the evolution possible, it was the ideas of the Enlightenment, and Louis' unwillingness to accept limitations to his powers that triggered France's transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. Abbe Sieyès's pamphlet 'What is the Third Estate' (Feb 1789) that called on the Third Estate to "become something therein" motivated the deputies of the Third Estate to declare themselves the National Assembly with this phrase coming directly from Sieyès pamphlet. As Albert Soboul posits, these ideas "undermined the ideological foundations of the established order" encouraging revolutionary change to occur. Moreover, the revolution truly occurred upon Louis forced return, to Paris, as after failing to ratify the August Decrees (8th August 1789) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (26th Aug 1789) both of which enshrined bourgeoisie values and abolished the feudal system, 5,000 women and 20,000 National Guard forced Louis to ratify them (5th October 1789), while also forcing his return to Paris. Louis no longer [could] resist the reform of France (William Doyle), as this return marked France's formal transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, and only came to fruition due to Louis' unwillingness to accept limitations to his power.

Ultimately, France's involvement in the war of Independence set in motion a chain of events that led to the revolution as the financial crisis it created led to political challenges to Louis' authority.

However, though this allowed the potential for revolution, it was the ideas of the Enlightenment and Louis stubborn hold on authoritarianism that precipitated France's formal transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy