

2020 VCE History: Revolutions examination report

General comments

In 2020 the examination was based on the *VCE History Adjusted Study Design for 2020 only*. This had been well-publicised and it was evident that students were aware of the changes and had prepared accordingly.

The study design specifies that students complete a different revolutionary context in each section of the examination paper; however, a small number of students wrote on the same revolution in both Section A and Section B. To correspond with the structure of the examination, the answer booklet was divided into Section A and Section B, and generally students completed their responses in the correct areas. Students used the space provided and indicated by clear labelling if they had continued their written response. To maximise their score and reduce errors, it is important that students be familiar with the examination specifications and the layout of the answer booklet. This can be achieved by practice.

Specific information

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.

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 1a.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
|-------|-----|---|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 0.6 | 3 | 22 | 50 | 21 | 3 | 3.0 |

Question 1b.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 1 | 3 | 21 | 50 | 20 | 4 | 3.0 |

For each revolutionary context, students were provided with an image and two written texts. Each source began with an introduction and included an attribution. The information contained in each helps students contextualise the source. Teachers should practise this with students when doing source based learning activities in the classroom.

In the first question, students were required to use the sources, informed by their own knowledge, to outline an event or policy. In the second question, an explanation of the significance or implications of the event or policy was required. Again, students were expected to use their own knowledge to develop the response. Unfortunately, many responses did not include any additional information or contextualisation; rather, they paraphrased the sources, thereby showing limited historical understanding. Higher-scoring responses used the written historical interpretation and, when required, highlighted the connection with the visual representation. The quality of responses to the five-mark questions can be improved by practising the skill of contextualisation. This involves placing the event or policy in a time frame and highlighting key aspects of the source that relate to wider causes of the revolution.

The sources provided for America focused on the Boston Massacre, an event that erupted from strained tensions in the city due to the increased presence of British troops, which numbered 4000 by 1770. High-scoring responses to Question 1a. highlighted Boston as a 'hot-bed' for revolutionary sentiment and noted that radicals frequently stirred up action in the town. This happened in the days preceding the Boston Massacre, when the funeral of a young boy who had died in a skirmish set the town on edge. In responding to Question 1b., high-scoring responses discussed the perception of standing armies as forces intent on enforcing obedience and how this was viewed by the American colonists as oppressive in times of peace.

Responding to Question 1a. on France, students outlined the reasons for friction as stemming from the actions of the parlements that limited and undermined royal power, such as withholding registration of an edict or presenting remonstrances. The counteraction of the monarchy in then exiling the parlements added to this friction. Higher-scoring responses noted how this impasse between the monarchy and the parlements led directly to the calling of the Estates-General. There were some good responses to Question 1b., which examined the effect the reforms proposed by Calonne would have had on noble privileges. These responses also highlighted that the intention to make taxation more equitable and limit noble privilege was the focus of the 18th-century cartoon in which the nobles were seen to be powerless in the face of reform that would strip them of their tax exemptions.

The following high-scoring response to Question 2b on France, is succinct and demonstrates good use of the visual, linking it to the written text.

The uniform land tax proposed by controller-general Calonne would have sought to reform the fiscal system by reducing exemptions for the nobility. Calonne who claimed that the present vingtiemes 'suffer an infinity of exceptions' (Source 2) sought to instead bring a degree of fiscal parity to France, and its nobility, by demanding they forego such privileges, to an extent. The nobles, as shown in Source 3, felt that such a demand was a violation of their ancient rights. Depicted in Source 3 as Calonne asking a flock of birds 'which sauce would you like to be eaten' in, the image emphasises how the Assembly of Notables (est. February 1787) did not 'want to be eaten at all'. That is they sought to retain their privilege.

The circumstances surrounding the introduction of a Duma in 1905 and Tsar Nicholas' subsequent limitations of representative government were the focus of the source analysis option for Russia. There were good responses to Question 1a., with students using the letter from the Tsar, coupled with their own knowledge, to outline reasons why Nicholas felt he had no option but to grant civil liberties to circumvent a popular uprising. The visual source, which depicted Nicholas 'reining' in the powers of the Duma, was not used well in responses to Question 1b. The important information provided in the introduction to the graphic, including identification of the two key figures and explanation that the horse represented the Duma, was frequently ignored. Conversely, high-scoring responses, such as the example below, saw the richness in this graphic and noted that the choice for the survival of the regime ultimately resided with Nicholas, who could escape the threat of revolution by relinquishing some control.

Nicholas II restrained and weakened the power of the Dumas through the Fundamental Laws and his appointment of Pytor Stolypin as Interior Minister. By producing the Fundamental Laws Nicholas II ensured that the Duma was still subject to his supreme autocratic power (source 2) as is shown by his tight grasp on the horse's 'head' in source 3, as his power (as shown by his grip on the reins) limited the Duma's ability to govern effectively, particularly as Nicholas retained 'veto' (source 2) power over 'any legislation' (source 2). Moreover, Nicholas II's appointment of Pytor Stolypin weakened the Duma's power as Stolypin's dramatic electoral reforms ensured only 'some men' (Stolypin) could vote for representatives to the Duma, meaning only 3.5 million people out of Russia's 130 million strong population could vote in the elections to the 3rd and Fourth Dumas. Thus, the deputies were exclusively bourgeoisie and held conservative views. Ergo, Nicholas' instructions for Stolypin to reform the electoral system weakened the Duma's overall power as it meant that there was nobody advocating on behalf of the lower classes.

The sources selected for Question 1 on China highlighted the event known as the Shanghai Massacre, which signaled the end of the First United Front between the Communists and the Guomindang. Higher-scoring responses used the information provided in the introduction and emphasised the role played by the Green Gang in leading the attack on the communists. They provided accurate information on the number of casualties and highlighted the treachery involved in the massacre. In Question 1b., students were asked to explain the impact of the Shanghai Massacre on the Chinese Communist Party; there were excellent responses which focused on the loss of membership and subsequent withdrawal to the Jiangxi Soviet where Mao consolidated his leadership.

Section B – Revolution 2

Question 2a.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 3 | 3 | 22 | 48 | 19 | 4 | 2.9 |

Question 2b.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 5 | 5 | 26 | 45 | 16 | 3 | 2.7 |

In Section B, students were provided with two written sources: a primary source document and a historical interpretation. The task involved analysis of the perspective each source presented on the consequences of the chosen revolution. Most students demonstrated comprehension of the sources and selected pertinent phrases and quotes from the text to craft a response. They referenced the sources by using sentence stems such as ‘as seen in Source 1’ or a bracketed attribution ‘(Source 2)’. Higher-scoring responses were able to contextualise the source material and their arguments were informed by relevant key knowledge. Although Questions 2a. and 2b. clearly specified that students should include their own knowledge, many students relied exclusively on the information in the sources; their answers, at best, scored in the mid-range.

Students responding to Questions 2a. and 2b. in Section B America demonstrated an understanding that the Articles of Confederation had produced an ineffective system of government and that a stronger, more centralised congress with expanded powers was required. Yet, there was also a realisation that sectarian and parochial interests would hamper the work of the Philadelphia Convention. Many students missed the final challenge, mentioned in Source 2, regarding the secrecy of meetings at the Convention; this rule was a further constraint on the delegates and another obstacle to be overcome in the writing of a Constitution.

Responses to the sources for Section B France required students to focus on the revolutionary leader Georges Danton. In their responses to Question 2a., students focused on the credentials of Danton that equipped him for the role of a revolutionary, including his bourgeois upbringing and familiarity with Enlightenment ideas. Higher-scoring responses mentioned his practice as a lawyer, which provided experience that he would carry into his political career, while his oratory skills witnessed in his speeches to the Jacobin Club were also cited as a skill that earned him popularity. Responses to Question 2b. highlighted Danton’s belief that determined action was required to vanquish internal and external enemies and a willingness to sanction violence to achieve these ends.

In response to Question 2a. in Section B Russia, high-scoring responses outlined both the internal and external challenges facing Sovnarkom in the final months of 1917. In addition to these military threats, there were problems such as a collapsing economy and a failure to secure a majority in the elections for the Constituent Assembly. The responses to Question 2b. were not as comprehensive and, while students could precis the speech from Trotsky and list his reasons for Bolshevik success, few students mentioned the harsh and often punitive measures adopted to consolidate control in Russia, nor did these answers mention that Trotsky had a vested interest in outlining positive achievements.

The sources for Question 2 in Section B China focused on the political sphere. The first source, which was a speech by Mao on the challenges facing the new regime, presented students with information such as building a socialist country and addressing economic issues. High-scoring responses either provided evidence to show how these were indeed areas requiring immediate policy development or enumerated other challenges such as population pressure and the uneasy relationship with the USSR. Most responses to Question 2b. summarised the new political system of the communist state, drawing heavily on the text, but did not extrapolate to explain that this made the structure highly centralised, hierarchical and bureaucratic.

The high-scoring response below to Question 2a. on China includes relevant own knowledge to outline the challenges that faced the communists as they established a new regime.

The challenges facing the newly formed communist regime were that of economic setback and a divided and devastated nation after the years of the Civil War (1945–49). As Source 1 outlines, ‘win the support of all our friends abroad’ (Mao) the policies and ideologies Mao wishes to pursue for China is that of incredible strict influence using the USSR economic model. In advancing ‘the cause of human progress’ (Mao) (S1), Mao initiated peoples’ communes to tackle the almost 600 mil population, 80% of that being peasantry. To adopt communes in the countryside would solve that challenge thus allowing major focus to be on ‘industrial [izing the] country’ (S1) through the soviet implementation of the 1st 5 year plan (1st Jan 1953–58) further becoming a self-sufficient economy in line with Russia employing 80% of their budget to industry to aid the ‘economically and backward’ (S1) country.

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 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 0.4 | 4.4 |

Question 2c.

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 13 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 3.9 |

Questions 1c. provided an opportunity for students to engage in a deeper discussion of the causes of revolution, while Question 2c. required detailed focus on the consequences of revolution. In both cases, the sources operated as a context or springboard for this discussion, providing a relevant starting point to begin the response.

The questions posed also included the direction to use evidence in the evaluation or analysis, but again many students failed to do this. However, higher-scoring responses recognised that the sources offered information and a perspective that could assist in the development of an answer. An approach that worked successfully was to begin with a contention about the message conveyed in the sources. These higher-scoring responses then elaborated on the evidence in the sources and referred to their own additional evidence to answer the question.

Some of these high-scoring responses also included evidence in the form of historical interpretations. The use of historical interpretations continues to be problematic, though, with many students merely naming a historian (often in the wrong revolutionary context) or inserting a quote that is neither elaborated upon nor relevant to the discussion. When used effectively, historical interpretations outlined the view of historian and the evidence on which this interpretation was based.

Students responding to Question 1c. on America saw the Boston Massacre as an event situated mid-way through the period 1763 to 1776, where tension had already developed between the colonies and Britain, with the arrival of more troops from Britain exacerbating the situation. Higher-scoring responses then used an array of evidence, including acts of parliament, responses from colonial assemblies and the actions of key individuals and groups to explain how the revolutionary situation built after 1770, resulting in the call for independence by 1776. In Section B, the focus of the sources for America was the Philadelphia Convention. For Question 2c., higher-scoring responses included detailed information about the structure of the constitution, which was drafted at the Philadelphia Convention, and interpretations by contemporaries such as Benjamin Franklin and James Madison about the process.

The example below is a high-scoring response to Question 1c. in Section B America. It begins with a contention, integrates analysis of the source material, and includes a range of relevant evidence.

The Philadelphia Convention was pivotal in consolidating power, by resolving the issues of the Articles of Confederation, and making various compromises to appease various states and people. The Articles of Confederation were built on the promise that 'the government that governs least governs best' (Jefferson), and as a result it could 'quickly tumble to the ground' (Source 1). With only one sixth of the donations being paid to the national government and a \$54 million war debt, the Philadelphia Convention was called, where they 'began debating a brand new constitution' (Source 2). However, the 'delegated needed to reach compromises' (Source 2), which came in the form of the Great Compromise and the Three-fifths compromise. However, the latter institutionalised slavery into the constitution, which would later prove an enormous problem, and as Countryman asserts, 'faced with a fundamental moral problem the delegates chose ultimately to avert their gaze'. To please people who were 'largely united by a fear of the Constitution' according to Greene, the anti-federalists, a system of separation of powers, with the Judicial, Executive and Legislative branch, along with the checks and balances, where 'each branch acted as a democratic check on the other' as Toohey notes. For example the president is commander in chief, but only congress can declare war. Despite this there was still a strong belief that 'the independence of the states was at risk' (Kaplanoff). To combat this, federalists wrote the federalist papers, which contended that 'power ... was not the enemy of liberty but its guarantor' according to Nash. Ultimately the Bill of Rights proved to be the turning point, as it 'was perfectly designed to build popular backing', as Zinn posits. The constitution was ultimately ratified on 22 June 1788 when New Hampshire became the 9th state to ratify. Therefore, the Philadelphia Convention consolidated power by causing a debate which would ultimately lead to the ratification of the constitution.

For students who chose France as their revolutionary context for Section A, the sources focused on the revolt of the notables. High-scoring responses were characterised by a controlled evaluation of the sources and emphasised the determination of the nobles to retain their privileges as a catalyst for revolution. There were also some very good responses to the French option in Section B, where the focus of the sources was on Georges Danton. Higher-scoring responses generally began with a discussion of Danton's popularity and oratory skills, as well as his role in the Cordeliers Club, before moving on to analyse the agency of other revolutionaries such as Robespierre and Marat.

For those students who elected to complete Russia in Section A of the paper, Question 1c. asked for an evaluation of the significance of the Dumas in contributing to the outbreak of the February Revolution in 1917. Higher-scoring responses argued that the Dumas were effectively stymied by the Fundamental Laws and by narrowing of the franchise in the elections of the Third Duma. They noted that the Dumas became more conservative and less inclined towards reform, yet there was also acknowledgment of other factors that contributed to the outbreak of revolution, including World War I and the economic and social inequality that characterised Russia. In Section B of the examination, Question 2c. Russia asked students to analyse the extent to which revolutionary leaders compromised their revolutionary ideals. The highest-scoring responses concentrated on leaders such as Lenin, Trotsky (the focus of Source 2), Dzerzhinsky and Kollontai, looking at how they responded to challenges that confronted the regime.

Students responding to Question 1c. on China reflected on the aftermath of the Shanghai Massacre as a time when the Chinese Communist Party refined its ideology and Mao established his leadership. In higher-scoring responses, accurate information was presented about establishment of soviet bases, congresses held by the communist survivors and ultimately a revision of policy. In Section B of the examination, Question 2c. on China asked students to analyse the significance of the new political system in enabling the Communist Party leadership to consolidate power. The highest-scoring responses understood that concentration of power in party structures allowed Mao initially to wield unchallenged power and introduce plans and campaigns that saw a dramatic increase in communist control over daily life.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 1c. on China. It develops a line of argument and includes relevant information.

The Shanghai Massacre (12 April 1927) contributed to a revolutionary situation by forcing the communist party (Chinese Communist Party) to regroup and refine their plan of attack. By instigating fracture of leadership with the CCP as integral individuals such as Li Dazhoa being executed (April 1927) and destroying the ranks of the CCP; reducing membership, it allowed for a rise in power of figures such as Mao Zedong and Zhe De. Individuals such as Mao and Zhu were able to flee and 'set up bases where they could recover' (Wood) in the remote Jinggangshan mountains. Although several (12) soviets were established it was Jianxi that particularly contributed leading to revolution in 1949. Jiangxi acted as a 'social laboratory' (Biancos) in which the ideas that would be implemented in later years began. Firstly it contributed to the Red Army, which began with 5,000 men composed of outlaws and vandals. These people would then act as the People's Red Army, as if the 'People did not have an army, they would have nothing' (Mao). Use of guerrilla tactics and strict rigid codes of conduct such as the three points of discipline would enable them to use the peasantry as a seeding machine to advance ideas of communism and promote the party alongside provide rehabilitation and refuge. Secondly, it exposed the Guomindang party to division and made them prone to factionalism. Figures such as Wong Jingwei removed Jiang from the Nationalist Party (July 1927) and eakened powers given to him at the launch of the Northern expedition (21 July 1928) that invoked his supremacy in all matters of decision making. Establishing themselves in Wuhan the party (left-wing of Guomindang) would separate themselves from Jiang Jieshi's Nanching government. This schism in the party contributed to the revolutionary situation as it provided time for the CCP to grow in Jiangxi as the Nationalists were resolving the situation.

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 2

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 11 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4.1 |

Question 3

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 16 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3.9 |

The study design clearly outlines the key knowledge for each Area of Study and Questions 2 and 3 requires students to be familiar with the topics listed as consequences of the revolution. To respond successfully, students must relate accurate knowledge and use the skills of historical thinking and historical interpretations to construct their responses. The key knowledge and skills are contained in the study design, which students are advised to consult throughout the year to ensure familiarity. The command word for both questions was 'explain', meaning that a scaffolded response supported by relevant evidence was required. High-scoring responses mounted a structured argument and selected appropriate and accurate evidence. Where historical interpretations were used as evidence, the historians were correctly named, and if a quote from a historian was included it added cogency and substance to the argument. In contrast, responses that did not score well were loosely linked to the key knowledge, lacked additional/depth of knowledge and evidence, and misattributed views to a historian or cited a historian whose work is related to a different revolution. Some students wrote an overly detailed response to either Question 2 or 3 but did not attempt both, suggesting poor time management. Finally, as in Question 1c. Section A and Question 2c. Section B, there were students who included information from the wrong Area of Study.

The responses to the questions on America ranged in quality. There were some excellent responses to the question on Alexander Hamilton but many included incorrect information or only had a superficial understanding of his wartime experience or role in the Philadelphia Convention. Similarly, some responses to Question 3 on the importance of the separation of powers in the Constitution contained excellent information about the role of the executive, legislature and judiciary, but there were many answers that made no mention of these branches of power or the system of checks and balances between them.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 3 in Section A America. It is well-structured and covers a range of evidence.

Alexander Hamilton, a prominent Federalist from New York, made significant contributions to the American revolution, including his time serving in the war as Washington's 'right-hand man', his contribution to the ratification of the constitution, and his role as the treasurer of the United States. Hamilton's most significant contribution was as a leading federalist and his subsequent support for the abandonment of the Articles of Confederation. During the federalist-antifederalist debate from 1788–90 Hamilton along with John Jay and James Maddison under the pen-name 'publius', wrote 85 federalist papers, among which Hamilton himself wrote 51. His proposal of the Hamilton Plan at the Philadelphia Convention (May 1788) was perceived by historians as intentionally radical as to make James Maddison's 'Virginia Plan' seem less so and thus increase support for the latter. Hamilton's support for the constitution led to the consolidation of America's political system as the new powers of the constitution, including the power to regulate trade and impose tax,

allowed congress to resolve a variety of economic and social issues, such as severe hyperinflation and public debt, that it had been unable to do under the Articles of Confederation as ‘a body without a head’ (Wood) thus stabilising the new regime and avoiding further rebellions akin to Shay’s Rebellion (Sept 1786). In addition, Hamilton’s contributions as Treasurer of the United States under Washington, and his subsequent economic policies (such as the creation of a national bank), further relieved the economic recession that plagued America during and after the War of Independence.

Question 2 on France required an explanation of why the monarchy was abolished. Precise information included Louis XVI’s reluctance to conform to the new role expected of him, his use of suspensive veto and the flight to Varennes. However, some responses included information from Area of Study 1 and focused exclusively on the divine right of kings and social inequality. Question 3 on France required an understanding of how external threats challenged the stability of the new regime and included reference to the Brunswick Manifesto (1792), the Declaration of Pillnitz, ‘La Patrie en Danger’ and the Vendée Uprising.

The responses to Question 2 in Section A Russia included relevant information about how the Civil War threatened the survival of the new regime and also identified a range of challenges, such as counter-revolutionary activity and the unintended consequences and lack of support that came from War Communism. However, many responses failed to explain exactly how these challenged the survival of the new regime. Question 3, which looked at how Dzerzhinsky influenced the consolidation of the power in the new regime, brought varied responses. Higher-scoring responses identified Dzerzhinsky as the leader of the Cheka and instigator of Red Terror, but they also included his beliefs and understanding of revolutionary success. Surprisingly, there were some students who incorrectly placed Dzerzhinsky at the head of the Red Army and discussed his leadership in the Civil War; this was incorrect.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 2 on the Russian Civil War. It focuses on the question and uses the date in the question as a parameter. It also includes detailed evidence.

The civil war of Russia, which began almost immediately following the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 threatened the survival of the regime militarily, politically and socially. Militarily, although fighting in ‘disjointed waves according to Kempf, the varied white armies led by Deniken, Yudenich and Kolchak posed a serious military threat to the Bolsheviks. Orlando Figes estimating that at their peak their combined forces had control of ‘six sevenths’ of Russia’s territory. Advances made on Petrograd by Kolchak and Deniken further threatened the survival of the regime which was already lacking at their time of seizure, Lynch stating it ‘didn’t run much beyond Moscow and Petrograd’. Politically forces which opposed the Bolsheviks like the Czech legion also threatened the survival of the regime, although the Komuch, which established on the 8th of June 1918, provided what Forsynth refers to as ‘a democratic, SR based alternative in the countryside’ something which aligned with much of 52% of Russia’s voters in the elections for the Constituent Assembly. Additionally, from a political perspective, the civil war period meant that the Bolsheviks ‘ceased to be a party of the masses’ (Camberlain) through their political policies, namely ‘war communism’. Agriculturally the policies of Kombedy and prodrazverstka led to the starving of 5 million Russians, while also splitting the villages, and ‘turning them against the Bolsheviks’ (Eleary). Industrially, though militarisation of workplaces and nationalisation of industries, under which ‘soviet bureaucracy ballooned’ production was reduced to 30% of the pre-war levels. These industrial measures were taken as a direct result of the Red Army’s requirement for civil war, highlighted through Trotsky’s ‘everything for the front’ and agriculturally as a result of the blockade of Russia’s bread basket Ukraine (first by Deniken, then by the Green forces) directly eroded the political goals and popularity of the Bolsheviks, Corin claiming they ‘were left with a fraction of their support after civil war’.

The two questions on China highlighted the importance of student familiarity with the key knowledge for Area of Study 2. The highest-scoring responses had a detailed knowledge of the policies of Sanfan and Wufan, including their dates, goals and outcomes. Many responses were general and went off topic, including other policies from the early period such as land reform and the New Marriage Law. Question 3 required an explanation of the effects of the ‘Three Bad Years’, but many students incorrectly interpreted the question as asking the reasons for the famine, or the reasons for the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Some students correctly interpreted the question but could not articulate the ideals underpinning the Great Leap Forward and how they were compromised. Only the highest-scoring responses were able to connect the famine to the retreat from Mao’s collectivist policies to Liu Shaoqi’s neo-capitalist policies.

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 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 9.4 |

To assist students in structuring their essay, the assessment criteria were printed on the last page of the examination. These included the four most important components of an essay: construction of a coherent and relevant argument, demonstration of historical knowledge, use of historical thinking concepts and the inclusion of evidence in the form of primary sources and historical interpretations. Few responses took the form of a long narrative, but there were a number of essays in which students focused on the key knowledge from Area of Study 2, that is the consequences of the revolution.

Essays responding to the question set for the American Revolution were generally good. The usual line of argument was that the French and Indian War was a significant cause of the revolution because it ended the period of salutary neglect and introduced revenue raising acts to recoup the cost of the war. Higher-scoring responses built on this and argued that there were other factors at play, including the aspirations that colonists had for America and how these differed from those held by parliament, and the role of Enlightenment ideas, which spurred on the colonists to fight for their rights.

The essay topic for Russia began with a proposition that the success of the Bolsheviks in October 1917 could be found in the words peace, bread and land. There were very good responses that demonstrated how each of these words related to challenges for the old regime; these students showed their familiarity with the key knowledge and used a range of evidence to craft a response. Unfortunately, a significant number of students focused on how Lenin and the Bolsheviks addressed these issues after they seized power in October 1917, which was outside the parameters of the question and related to consequences of the revolution or Area of Study 2.

Students responding to the essay on China were provided with the contention that Maoism was essential for the success of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949. High-scoring responses showed understanding of the ideology of Maoism and could explain how Mao adapted communism to suit Chinese conditions; however, many responses dealt superficially with this concept and did not engage with supporting evidence. A number of students focused on Mao’s success after 1949, which was outside the parameters of the question and dealt with the consequences of revolution or Area of Study 2.

Students responding to the essay question on France were asked to assess whether the demand for equality was the most significant cause of revolution. Many responses acknowledged that inequality was inherent to the Estate system, but emerging philosophies, fiscal crises and inept leadership highlighted the need for reform. Abbé Sieyès' *What is the Third Estate* and Diderot's *Encyclopaedia* were cited as evidence that Enlightenment ideas challenged the existing order. This, coupled with the debt accrued from the American War of Independence, necessitated taxation reform and a review of noble privilege.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. It contains accurate key knowledge and employs skills of historical thinking and historians' views.

Equality, and claims to it, underpinned much of the revolutionary fervour which existed through all the facets of the causes of the revolution. Long-term causes of discontent occurred due to dissatisfaction with the inequality of society, while short-term causes of revolution and trigger events built on this to ultimately result in uprising.

The Old Regime of France, due to its inequality, caused significant revolutionary discontent acting as a long-term cause of revolution. This is particularly seen through the Estates system, which was its basis, whereby the First estate, the clergy and the Second, the nobility, together comprised 1% of the population but owned 43% of the land, nonetheless being exempt from taxation. The Third Estate, in contrast, comprised three groups, the poorest of which- the peasantry- comprised 89% of the population but owned only 32% of the land, nonetheless bearing the greatest burden of tax, such as the gabelle, taille and tithes. The significant dissatisfaction this created is evident in the 1780s image 'Burden of the Third Estate Women', which highlights the class struggle and inequality. Due to this inequality, M. Fielding posits the Regime was 'disintegrating under the pressure of its own deficiencies', as it caused many to be severely dissatisfied with their circumstances. This discontent was brought to the fore through the emergence of the Enlightenment ideas such as equality in the work of the philosophes such as Voltaire, enabling individuals to critique systems of disparity. Peter McPhee suggests this became particularly significant following involvement in the American War of Independence of 1775–83, which he asserts 'sharpened social and political critique at home.' These long-term circumstances of inequality thus created revolutionary sentiment which was expressed through short-term causes of the revolution.

The aristocratic and bourgeois revolts which were short-term causes of revolution were underpinned by demands for equality. As reforms proposed by Finance Minister Calonne required the approval of prominent figures, an Assembly of Notables was convened from 22 February to 25 May 1787, with 144 individuals hand-picked based on likelihood of compliance. Though they approved some reforms, they denied fiscal reform as they believed all should have the opportunity to do so through the Estates General, with Marquis de Lafayette asserting 'we could not think of new taxes until we know the returns of the economy'. Simon Schama thus suggests 'the notables were the first revolutionaries' due to their challenge to the systems of inequality and privilege. This then laid the path for the bourgeois revolt of the 20 June 1789, whereby the Commons asserted their right to equality and representation through taking the Tennis Court Oath as the National Assembly. Peter McPhee suggests this marks 'their first revolutionary challenge to absolutism and privilege', demonstrating their demand for equality through asserting their ability to represent the nation. Thus, these short-term causes of revolution were underpinned by demands for equality, being further consolidated through trigger events.

The trigger events of the popular and peasant revolts were the result of this period of assertion of equality. On 14 July 1789, crowds stormed the Bastille, a symbol of absolutism, privilege and disparity through its housing of those imprisoned via lettres de cachet. Though unknown why, a conflict broke out, which killed 98 civilians and 6 soldiers. When the prison's governor, the Marquis de Launay, eventually surrendered, he was stabbed and decapitated, his head displayed on a pike. As a violent, public assertion of civic power, William Doyle asserts it was 'the climax of the popular movement' highlighting a desire for equality and liberty.

This was reinforced through the phenomenon of the Great Fear, whereby peasants began to form groups and loot the chateaux of nobles to protest systems of privilege, disparity and oppression. This, Georges Lefebvre posits, 'allowed the peasantry to achieve a full realisation of its strength', with violence acting as an assertion of their equal power and status. Thus, these trigger events were crucial in causing revolution and were driven by a desire for equality.

Equality, therefore, underpinned each of the significant phases which caused revolution, resulting in uprising which uprooted the existing order.