



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS20

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2009 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Unit HIS20

Unit 20: The Impact of Chairman Mao: China, 1946–1976

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 2

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 2 papers were noted:

- In the compulsory source question, 1(b), some candidates failed to use both the sources and their own knowledge in responding to the question. Candidates must be reminded that unless they refer to the sources, by explicit comment on detail or views, paraphrasing or direct quotation (or if they use the sources only and show no additional knowledge), their mark will be limited to a maximum of the top of Level 2.
- Although there were fewer problems of timing than in Unit 1, some candidates clearly spent considerably longer than 15 minutes on the (a) questions and 30 minutes on the (b) questions, and consequently failed to complete their final answer. They should be reminded that even a couple of focused paragraphs could enable them to reach a Level 2 mark, whereas a string of notes would be unlikely to show skills above Level 1.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates were not familiar with the complete content requirements for their alternative. Candidates must be reminded that they need to revise all of the content of these 'depth' units, particularly since this paper features one compulsory question which can be drawn from any part of the specification content, as can the remaining two questions, from which they have to choose one.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

Although entries for this, the first operational paper for the new specification, were relatively few, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions from candidates' responses to the questions. In general the paper appears to have worked well, with most candidates finding the sources and the questions accessible; there was a good range of responses to all questions, with a number of candidates reaching the higher levels.

Question 1

- (a) In Question 1(a), where candidates were asked to compare the views on the aims of the Great Leap Forward given in two sources, most candidates showed themselves to be capable of identifying differences between the sources. Candidates who did not use the sources to answer this question penalised themselves. To access the higher levels candidates also need to be able to identify similarities in order to explicitly address the issue of 'how far' the sources differ, and to place the sources in context. Provenance of the sources can be made relevant here but assertions of the kind that 'T Chen has a Chinese name so therefore must have been writing from the Communist point of view', are wildly inaccurate and are best avoided. For Level 4, candidates must explicitly address the issue of 'how far' and offer a balanced assessment. Conclusions, therefore, need to be more than a summary of the points of similarity and difference if candidates are to access Level 4.

-
- (b) Question 1 (b) required the candidates to use all three sources and their own knowledge to assess how far the resistance of the peasants was responsible for the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Once again, candidates who ignored the sources and answered the question purely from their own knowledge penalised themselves; there were some answers which showed a well-developed knowledge and understanding of the reasons for the failure which did not access Level 3 or higher because there were no source references. Most candidates were able to identify a range of factors which caused the failure and a number of candidates produced well-developed and balanced answers in which they prioritised the factors and showed judgment.

Question 2

- (a) Question 2(a) was about the reasons why the Communists promoted land reform in the Chinese countryside in the years 1946–1949. The question was therefore about the civil war period, as most candidates were able to recognise. The majority of candidates equated ‘land reform’ with the redistribution of land from the landlords to the poorer peasants. Fewer showed an understanding that land reform could also involve the less radical policy of rent reduction, although this distinction was not required even at the highest levels. To achieve good marks on this question candidates needed to identify and explain a range of factors, which many candidates were able to do. To reach Level 4 candidates also needed to make links between the factors and to show judgment, for example by prioritising or differentiating between factors. Only a minority of candidates achieved this level.
- (b) Question 2(b) required candidates to assess how far Mao, through his economic policies, had laid the foundations of a socialist society by 1957. Although the question might appear to present conceptual difficulties for a number of candidates, the responses from the majority showed that they had a reasonable understanding of the main features of socialism. Given that the unit is about the Impact of Mao on China in the years 1946–1976, when he was attempting to establish a socialist society, it is not unreasonable to expect candidates to have an understanding of this basic concept. Thus, some understanding of the meaning of the phrase ‘foundations of a socialist society’ was required for candidates to answer this question but this could be implicit, as long as the candidates were focussing on relevant aspects of Chinese society. The question also asked candidates to focus on economic policies, therefore a general review of Communist policies in the years before 1957 was not what the question demanded. Some candidates took the approach of assessing how far it was the economic policies, in comparison with political and social reforms, which laid the foundations of a socialist society; this approach was acceptable even at the higher levels. There were a number of very good responses to this question in which candidates produced balanced answers supported by well selected, relevant factual information.

Question 3

- (a) Question 3(a) asked candidates to explain why Mao purged the Communist Party leadership in 1966. Most candidates correctly identified this as a question about the purge of Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi in 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution. There were, however, a number who confused this purge with earlier purges and wrote about Gao Gang (1953) or Peng Dehuai (1959). Such responses were largely irrelevant and did not achieve high marks. This question required candidates to identify a range of reasons why Mao launched his purge of these two high profile figures and most candidates were able to place the purge in the context of the power struggle which had been going on within the CPC since the end of the Great Leap Forward. Those

candidates who were able to differentiate between long-term and short-term factors, or who were able to prioritise factors and reach a judgment in their conclusion, achieved high marks for this question.

- (b) Question 3(b) asked candidates to assess the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the CPC. There were a range of responses to this question. Candidates who offered a general descriptive review of the Cultural Revolution, or who gave a general assessment of the impact of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese society, did not give explicit responses to the question and therefore penalised themselves. The focus of the question needed to be on the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the CPC and those candidates who focused on the widespread purge of experienced party members, the enhanced role for the PLA in Chinese political life, or the reduced role for the Politburo, were able to reach at least Level 3. Some candidates equated the CPC with Mao, its Chairman and leading ideologist, and argued that since the Cultural Revolution strengthened Mao it must therefore also have strengthened the Party. Whilst this line of argument was acceptable up to a point, it was unlikely to produce a balanced or developed answer. Since Mao had effectively declared war on his own Party in 1966 ('Bombard the Headquarters') it would be helpful to candidates to develop an awareness of the distinction between Mao and the Party. Nevertheless, many candidates produced sound, balanced and well developed answers and were able to access the higher levels.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.