



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS20

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS20

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

General Comments

The majority of candidates displayed good knowledge of the subject and a developed understanding of the concepts and issues involved in the study of Chinese history. Candidates also continued to show improvements in examination technique. The majority of answers showed a genuine attempt to address the analytical demands of the questions and there were relatively few responses which were driven entirely by narrative. In terms of the relative popularity of the two optional questions, there was a marked difference between questions 03/04 and 05/06. Questions about the Civil war have tended to be popular with candidates in past examination series but in this examination questions 03/04 proved to be overwhelmingly more popular than 05/06, which were on the latter part of the specification period. This probably reflects the fact that this was a January modular examination, for which the majority of candidates had had little more than one term for preparation. Centres need to be aware that, if they enter candidates for the January examination, they need to have covered the whole of the course in sufficient depth before candidates sit the examination.

Question 1

- 01** This question asked candidates to compare *views* from two sources about the Hundred Flowers campaign of 1957. Although some candidates only compared factual details in the two sources, the vast majority were able to select opposing views and make a clear comparison. There was a clear difference in the view expressed in Source B that Mao was unsure what the Hundred Flowers campaign would produce and the view of Source A that Mao deliberately set a trap for intellectuals. The better candidates were able to identify similarities and differences and place these in their specific historical context. For example, some candidates made a link between the statement in Source A that the Party ‘needed to be accountable’ and that of Source B that Mao was trying to ‘combine a totalitarian system with democratic checks and balances’. Contextual knowledge was present in most answers. A number of candidates displayed good awareness of the historiography, particularly the work of Chang and Halliday, but candidates need to be aware that this is not a question about the reliability or the utility of the sources and they will gain no credit for asserting that one author is more reliable than another simply on the basis that he/she is or is not of Chinese origin. For Level 4 candidates needed to address the question ‘how far’ the views in Source B differed from those in Source A. A well argued conclusion can often be the difference between a Level 3 and a Level 4 mark.
- 02** This question required candidates to use all three sources and their own knowledge to assess the extent to which Mao’s leadership was damaged by the anti-Rightist campaign. Although Source C was most useful in this respect, there was material in all three sources which candidates could use in response to this question. Candidates who ignored the sources and answered the question solely from their own knowledge penalised themselves, since such responses are limited by the mark scheme to a maximum top of Level 2 mark. Similarly, candidates who used the sources but added nothing in terms of contextual knowledge also penalised themselves. It was pleasing to note that only a minority of candidates answered the question in these ways. Many candidates used Source C to make a link to the failure of the Great Leap Forward and thus argued that

there was damage to Mao's leadership, at least in terms of his reputation. There was also a reference in Source B to the fact that intellectuals would never trust Mao again. Candidates who used the sources and their own knowledge to argue that Mao's leadership was damaged achieved at least a Level 3 mark. More developed and balanced answers used Source C ('anyone who questioned the leadership of Chairman Mao was cast out and punished') to argue that, in many ways, the anti-Rightist campaign actually strengthened Mao's leadership because it crushed independence of thought and removed opposition to his policies.

Question 2

- 03** This was by far the most popular of the two optional questions and there were some very good answers to this question. The majority of candidates were able to identify a range of reasons why the Communists were weak at the start of the Civil War. Candidates need to be aware, however, that to *describe* the weaknesses, in terms of lack of manpower and equipment, is not the same as *explaining* them. Those achieving the highest marks were able to show some linkage between the various factors, perhaps in terms of prioritisation or in terms of categorisation.
- 04** Most candidates who attempted this question had a very good knowledge of the reasons why the Communists won the Civil war. They had solid knowledge of the weaknesses of Chiang Kai Shek and were able to identify a range of other factors which helped the Communists achieve victory. Among these factors were the use of guerrilla warfare by the Communists, their military and political leadership and their policies towards the peasants. The majority of candidates achieved at least a level 3 mark but there were also a large number who produced Level 4 or Level 5 responses.

Question 3

- 05** The fall of Lin Biao is listed in the specification as an area of study and it was, therefore, somewhat surprising that few candidates attempted this question. Those who did showed good knowledge of the circumstances surrounding his fall from power and were able to identify a range of factors which caused it.
- 06** The quotation in the question invited challenge and most candidates were able to offer an effective counter-argument, showing themselves to be well versed in the intricacies of Chinese politics in the last years of Mao's life. Candidates showed good knowledge of the twists and turns of Deng Xiaoping's career before 1976 and his rehabilitation in the early 1970s. They also showed good knowledge of the power struggle in which Deng and the Gang of Four were engaged. Better candidates understood the significance of the date in the question and were able to argue that by early 1976 Deng's position was becoming increasingly precarious.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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