



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2012**

**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 students displayed good knowledge of the subject and a developed understanding of the concepts and issues involved in the study of Chinese history. Students 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.

### Question 1

- 01** This question asked students to compare *views* from two sources about the people's communes. Although some students 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 the communes were established with the voluntary co-operation of the peasants and that of Source A which argued that the communes were regarded by the peasants as 'an instrument of terror'. The better students were able to identify similarities and differences and place these in their specific historical context. Some contextual knowledge was present in most answers. A number of students displayed good awareness of the provenance of the sources but students 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. Students also need to be aware that the date of publication of a source is of limited relevance in answering a question where the focus is on a comparison of views. For Level 4 students 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 students to use all three sources and their own knowledge to assess how far the peasants were responsible for the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Although Source C was most useful in this respect, there was material in all three sources which students could use in response to this question. Students 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, students 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 students answered the question in these ways.

### Question 2

- 03** This was the most popular of the two optional questions and there were some very good answers to this question. The question required students to have some knowledge of the geographical position of Manchuria (in the north, adjacent to the frontier with the USSR) as well as its strategic importance at the start of the Civil War. Although a number of students thought that Manchuria is a city, or that Beijing is in Manchuria, the majority of students did show an awareness of the military importance of the area and were able to offer a range of reasons why it was the main battleground at the start of the Civil War.

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 students who attempted this question had a very good knowledge of the reasons why the Communists won the Civil War and the majority of students achieved at least a Level 3 mark but there were also a significant number who produced Level 4 or Level 5 responses. Students were able to analyse a range of factors which accounted for Communist strengths and Nationalists weaknesses in the Civil War. The best answers were those in which students offered range, balance and judgment about the relative importance of guerrilla warfare within the overall story of Communist victory.

### **Question 3**

- 05** Although less popular than Question 03, this question was generally very well done by those students who attempted it. They were able to identify the threats that the Red Guards posed to the PLA and to Mao's determination to retain control over the Cultural Revolutionary process. The growing factionalism of the Red Guards was identified as a factor by a large number of students. The best answers were those which linked the factors together, or categorised them in terms of the political situation and Mao's ideological aims.
- 06** The quotation in the question invited challenge and most students were able to offer an effective counter-argument. It was, of course, possible to agree with the quotation to a certain extent, in that the peasants, especially in the more remote rural areas, were relatively untouched by the power struggles of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, students were well-versed in the various ways in which the Cultural Revolution impacted on the lives of the Chinese people and were able to offer range and balance in their answers.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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