



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS20

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS20

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

General Comments

The paper for this alternative worked well. Candidates, on the whole, displayed sound knowledge of the subject and there was a good range of responses to all questions.

Question 1

Question 01

In this question, where candidates were asked to compare the views of two sources on the reasons why Lin Biao fell from power in 1971, most candidates were able to identify differences between the sources. There were very few candidates who made no reference to the sources in their answers. The question asked 'how far' the sources differed, and in order to access the higher levels there needed to be some reference to both differences and similarities, with some contextual knowledge, and some explicit evaluation of the degree of difference.

Question 02

This question required candidates to use all three sources and their own knowledge to assess how important was the fall of Lin Biao in bringing about changes in Mao's policies in the years 1971 to 1976. Candidates who ignored the sources and answered the question solely from their own knowledge penalised themselves, although only a minority of candidates did this. There were references in all three sources to the impact of Lin Biao's fall on Mao and his policies and the majority of candidates made effective use of these. There were many answers which showed a well-developed knowledge of the period and in which the candidates were able to identify a range of factors which brought about policy changes in the years before Mao's death.

Question 2

Question 03

This question was about the reasons why the Communists used a guerrilla warfare strategy at the start of the Civil War. This was a very popular question and there were a large number of high level responses to it. The majority of candidates were able to identify a number of reasons and a pleasingly high number were able to make links between and/or prioritise the factors.

Question 04

This question required candidates to assess the importance, in relation to other factors, of mass participation in political campaigns in Mao's consolidation of power in the years 1949 to 1953. There were a number of very good responses in which candidates showed impressive knowledge of the process of consolidation and of the part played by mass campaigns in this process. There were some, however, who penalised themselves by introducing irrelevant material from outside the period. Material from the earlier Civil War period can be made relevant here but references to the Hundred Flowers campaign of 1957 or the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1969, as examples of political repression or mass campaigns, were of no relevance at all. The Specification is divided both thematically and chronologically and an understanding of the periodisation in the Spec would be of value to candidates.

Question 3

Question 05

Question 05 asked candidates to explain why the people's communes were established in 1958. The vast majority of those who answered this question were able to place the people's communes in the context of the Great Leap Forward and to identify a number of reasons why the communes were established.

Question 06

Question 06 asked candidates to assess the impact of the failure of the Great Leap Forward on the Communist Party and balance this against its impact on other aspects of Chinese society. There were some candidates who misinterpreted this question to be one about the causes of the failure of the Great Leap Forward but the majority correctly identified this to be a question about the results and were able to put forward well-constructed answers in which they balanced the impact of the failure on the Communist Party against its impact on the peasants. Although the mark scheme envisaged answers which would focus on the short-term impact of the failure on the CPC (purge of Peng Dehuai, Mao's self-criticism and growing tensions within the Party leadership over economic policy), a more long-term view was taken by many candidates in which they linked the fall-out from the failure of the Great Leap Forward to the launching of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This was entirely legitimate and candidates who answered in this way were rewarded accordingly.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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