



**General Certificate of Education
January 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. 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 Great Leap Forward have tended to be popular with students 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 students had had little more than one term for preparation. Schools and colleges need to be aware that, if they enter students for the January examination, they need to have covered the whole of the course in sufficient depth before students sit the examination.

Question 1

- 01** This question asked students to compare *views* from two sources about land reform in the years 1949 to 1952. 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 land reform was an extremely violent process and the view of Source A that the land reform process was, 'on the whole, non-violent'. 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 backgrounds of the two authors (Jung Chang and Philip Short) 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 the importance of land reform in helping the Chinese Communist Party to consolidate its power in the years 1949 to 1953. 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 by far the most popular of the two optional questions and there were some very good answers to this question. The majority of students were able to identify a range of reasons why the Great Leap Forward was launched in 1958. 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 Great Leap Forward failed. There were some students who displayed only limited awareness of the ways in which poor scientific understanding caused problems in agriculture and industry. Many students, however, did refer to the flawed theories of Lysenko, the problems caused by the 'Four Noes' campaign, and the use of backyard furnaces to produce steel. A pleasing number of students were able to make links between the purge of intellectuals in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957, the withdrawal of Soviet experts in 1960, and the flawed scientific theories which underpinned the Great Leap Forward. Many students were also able to identify a range of other factors which led to the failure of the Great Leap Forward. 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.

Question 3

- 05** The Cultural Revolution is listed in the specification as an area of study and it was, therefore, somewhat surprising that few students attempted this question. Those who did showed good knowledge of the reasons why Mao used the Red Guards to attack the Communist Party leadership in 1966 and were able to identify a range of factors.
- 06** The quotation in the question invited challenge and most students 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. Students showed good knowledge of the position occupied by Jiang Qing and her allies after the Cultural Revolution. They also showed good knowledge of the power struggle in which Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four were pitted against the moderate pragmatists such as Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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