



GENERAL COMMENTS

The students who performed best clearly noted the instructions for the questions, including specific question terms and time frames. Unfortunately, many students needed to pay better attention to these aspects of the examination. The answers showed that students often lacked specialised knowledge and responded too broadly to questions asked. Students needed to show they knew the narrative of the Revolution in terms of the significance and impact of events.

Generally, students' responses to visual sources were not answered as well as their responses to print documents. Students frequently jumped straight to a historian's views or quotes without discussing the document. Students needed to provide some discussion of the ideas in the document. However, skill in applying historiography is evolving and students showed improved ability, with many historians quoted and discussed. Yet this improvement should not be at the expense of discussing the ideas in the document. Responses to Questions 1 and 2 and essays frequently contained historians' views at the expense of factual evidence. Students should learn dates, policies, events and ideas expounded by Revolutionary leaders, which they may quote as supporting evidence in their argument.

Students should be careful to confine their discussion to the period set for the area of study, which is stated on the examination paper. Students should avoid wasting time repeating the question in the introduction.

Section A – Revolution one

Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	11	50	32	7

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	6	11	13	14	15	13	10	6	3	1	4.4

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	11	7	9	11	12	13	13	11	7	3	2	4.4

Questions 1 and 2

These questions assessed students' range of detailed factual knowledge and, overall, students showed a clear ability to handle this section of the exam. The answers were usually successfully signposted 'first, second, third', which set up a good structure for the answer. However, too many students did not read the questions carefully enough. Students should have looked for and highlighted significant words so that they did not overlook the correct focus of the questions.

Students should be advised that using quotations from historians is not demonstrating factual knowledge of the ideas, leaders, movements or events. Another unsound strategy was starting a response with a description of the event and then moving on to the answer. As well as wasting time, this strategy invites narrative answers.

Answers often lacked specific examples of policies, events, names and dates. More work in constructing timelines of events is suggested to support students in learning ideas, events, leaders and movements. Excellent responses used correct and specific historical terms and included dates, places and names. Directly responding to the terms 'in the development of the Revolution' separated good answers from weak ones. These terms needed stronger focus than most students gave them, and links to the phrase in the question should be integrated in the response with each piece of information, rather than referred to at the end in an attempt to tie the answer to the question.

America

Students frequently ignored the parameters of the question in terms of focus and dates. For example, in Question 1, while the focus was on the demand for self-government, the most common problem was for students to view this question as an opportunity to discuss colonists' outrage with British legislation and equate this with a demand for self-government. This was a simplistic approach that ignored the way demands for self-government developed over time. The policy of Salutary Neglect was followed before 1763 and therefore should not have been part of the discussion.



Successful answers identified documents that began the movement to self-government such as the Virginia Resolves in response to the Stamp Act; Dickinson's 'letters from a farmer'; and the calling of the First Continental Congress after the Intolerable Acts, which revealed a move to consensus on the matter of self-government.

Generally, answers to Question 2 began with the Boston Tea Party. Knowledge of the four main Acts was used to show the parting of the colonies and Britain on a number of issues. It was not enough to list the Acts and what they did. Answers had to show the way in which the Acts affected the colonists and how they were linked to the movement for Revolution.

France

Too many students failed to respond to the terms 'food' and 'cost of living'. Successful answers identified three or four examples, such as the effects of weather conditions, poor harvests, the Reveillon riot and specific burdens of taxation using French terms for various taxes.

Too many answers incorrectly focused on Necker's *Compt Rendu* and the story of France's financial problems, the cost of the American war, attempts at tax reform, the resentment at the lavish lives of the nobility – in particular Marie Antoinette's diamond necklace, and even events outside the area of study timeframe, such as the women's march to Versailles in October. These weaker answers showed how important it is to focus on exactly what the question is asking. The part of the question 'contributed to the development of the revolution' was not shown sufficient attention by linking this to the facts as the answer developed.

Question 2 was poorly answered by many students because they wrote about the Third Estate rather than 'Third Estate deputies' as in the question. This again emphasised the requirement to focus on the question carefully. However, most students did refer to the process of the 'development of the Revolution' for this question and knew basic facts such as the question of voting by head or order and the locking of the doors to the meeting hall.

Russia

This context provided assessors with a wide variation in the skill of explaining how events or policies contributed to the Russian Revolution. Too many students simply supplied information, some useful and some not, showing a poor ability to link their knowledge to reasons for the rise of the Revolution.

Questions 1 and 2 required more careful reading than given by most students. In Question 1, the functioning of the State *Dumas* required a response, not simply *Dumas*. Only the better answers explained the performance of the *Dumas* and how that 'contributed to the development of the Revolution'. Answers showed that this question was accessible for most students who could identify the four *Dumas* and state that they started radically but then became conservative.

There were also answers that confused *Dumas* with Dual Authority. The majority of answers did not link in an integrated way to the 'how did' part of the question. The focus of Question 2 should have been on 'the exercise of Dual Authority'; however, many students simply referred to the Provisional Government or the Bolsheviks rather than the concept of why Dual Authority failed. Stronger answers explained its changing nature and how this contributed to a revolutionary situation.

China

Students provided better responses to Question 1 when they explained the events in Wuhan in a number of related steps. Good answers first showed the explosion of the bomb; then the provinces joining each other in declaring independence; the return of Sun-Yat-Sen and his three principles; the actions of the warlords which led to Yuan Shikai and finally showed how this strengthened a desire for national unity and the creation of the *Guomindang*.

For Question 2, most students showed a good ability to sequence information by starting with the Boxer Rebellion and spheres of influence and then mentioning the invasion by Japan from 1931 to 1937. Very good answers mentioned the influence of the Comintern and the aid given by Russia to advance communism. Once these key pieces of information were in place the students could discuss the influence of foreign intervention in 'contributing to a revolutionary situation'. It was important that students explained why a revolutionary situation erupted by 1949.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 1, France. This answer contains precise information and constantly links information to the development of the Revolution. Some even better answers contained precise costs for bread and the amount of increase. Also, some excellent answers referred to the Reveillon Riot in April 1789.



The cost of food and living contributed to the development of the French Revolution by heightening the existing tensions generated by the political crisis. First the Day of Tiles (10 June 1788) exemplifies how the cost of food and living contributed to the Revolution as it demonstrated support for the Parlement and inevitably led to the bankruptcy of the government (August 1788). The rising food costs across cities like Grenoble in response to the bad harvest of 1788 directly led to the rioting in support of the Parlement known as the Day of Tiles. This rioting not only challenged Louis' authority as given by Divine Right but allowed the Parlement to continue to criticise the government. Consequently this developed the Revolution by forcing the government to call the Estates General (August 1788) after the resistance by the parlement bankrupted it.

Second, the price of bread reached its highest point in July 1789 which compounded the escalating tensions between the sans-culottes and the monarchy. The result of the inflation of bread prices was a heightened revolutionary situation in Paris inflamed by Louis' response to the National Assembly's declaration and challenging of his authority (17 June 1789). Combined with the increased tension from the high bread prices the sans-culottes responded by the invasion of Les Invalides and capture of the Bastille (14 July) which consolidated the Revolution. Third, the high cost of living for the peasants under the various taxes like the tithes (8-10% of income), taille (8-10% of income), feudal dues (10-25% of income) and gabelle (indirect salt tax) compounded by the suspicion and fear over the capture of the Bastille resulted in the Great Fear (20 July-6 August 1789). This contributed to the Revolution by directly causing the night of patriotic delirium (4-5 August 1789).

Creating a new society

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	31	64	1.6

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	12	23	65	1.6

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	10	17	22	21	15	11	4	2.6

Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	11	13	13	13	12	10	9	6	3	1	4

Overall, the students' responses to visual sources were not as good as those for print sources. Students needed to be aware that the captions accompanying the image were tools to help them and to which they should have paid more attention. Students struggled to identify key features of the visual; they did not identify groups in society with precision and misunderstood the literal and symbolic meaning.

In Question 3c., students did not use or analyse their knowledge particularly well. Once again, poor reading of the question was a problem for many students, as was not supplying precise factual knowledge. It was not appropriate to simply describe what was presented in the image and doing this denoted a weak answer. The instruction to **explain** was the vital part of the question that students too often ignored. The instruction to 'refer to different parts of the representation' in Question 3d. helped students to work with the source; however, frequently answers jumped straight into historians' views rather than first discussing the ideas emanating from the image, which was a necessary step. It was good to see that students knew could quote historians views but often this was at the expense of a balanced response that actually answered the question.

The most successful answers showed students were able to step back from the graphic and examine it in terms of their knowledge of events in the period. Weak answers clung to the graphic, relying on it for information. Some students signposted their use of the graphic by the phrase 'as shown in the image' or 'seen here with ...', which was a useful strategy to build on with their own information. Others used a highlighter to mark their use of the graphic.

America

The graphic included the caption 'Federal Superstructure. The Pillar of the Great Federal Edifice rises daily'. This provided students with at least two pieces of information: the title revealed that this graphic was focused on the



formation of the federal republic and the term ‘rises’ suggested that it was being built, not falling down. The symbolism of God’s hand sanctioning the construction (a cause for celebration) was frequently missed.

Some poor answers suggested the pillars were falling over. The answer for Question 3c. should have focused on explaining the issues that affected different states in ratifying the Constitution. These factors included representation and the plans presented at the Constitution Convention, the nature of slavery and the need to compromise. There was a lack of depth to some answers. Too many students quoted only leftist historians; more information was needed on the Neo-Whigs as to the brilliance of the Constitution and the vital importance of the Bill of Rights. Students should have avoided an approach that used the terms ‘they said’ or ‘they did’, which was just summary, not evaluation of the usefulness of the source.

France

The graphic for France was easily accessible to most students; however, a very large number of students could not correctly identify social classes. Many answers identified the crowd pictured as peasants and could not name them as *sans-culottes*. Quite a few answers said the *sans-culotte* holding the sword was a noble since nobles had the right to carry swords – clearly not understanding that feudal privileges no longer existed by the date of the graphic. Other misinterpretations were that the bonnet on a pike in the background was a head or was a sack for Louis’ head. Louis was frequently incorrectly classified as being in the First Estate.

Question 3c., which asked students to ‘explain the tensions’, gave rise to many answers outside the area of study. Too many students referred to events before 4 August 1789 or just beyond it, such as the march of women to Versailles. However, most good answers identified the flight to Varennes as a starting point and showed good knowledge of the clerical oath, Louis’ refusal to pass laws for deportation of refractory priests and the war against Austria as causes of tension.

Question 3d. was well answered by those who picked up the clues to violence in the graphic and the role of the *sans-culottes* in driving the Revolution. Good answers then discussed Schama’s view or Marxist historian’s views about the power of the popular movement. However, more students need to be confident in challenging the depiction and refer to McPhee’s recognition of the gains of the moderate phase of the Revolution, including the work of the 1789 and the Constitution of 1791 or that of 1795.

Russia

Despite the caption supplied with the graphic, ‘Cossack, with whom are you? With us or with them?’, many students did not note this or read the graphic closely. Frequently, students misinterpreted the graphic by mistaking the Bolshevik as the single figure and the Cossacks as the group at the left of the image. The questions about social groups were often incorrectly answered with most only able to say ‘whites’ or ‘Bolsheviks’ instead of proletariat, soldiers, sailors, peasants, capitalists or Tsarist generals, and students could not identify problems such as Bolshevik uncertainty of support, division in social class, the problem of the Cossack position or threats from capitalism or white armies.

Assessors expected students to identify distinct social groups in the revolutionary society. Some answers to Question 3c. also lacked insight and showed little knowledge in explaining ‘political and social conflicts in the Civil War period’. They focused on terror as an outcome without explaining conflicts. Many students narrated the problems of War Communism without linking to decisions taken by the Bolsheviks that caused the conflicts. Many answers went beyond the time of the Civil War and discussed Kronstadt.

Answers to Question 3d. showed that most students could identify this as Bolshevik propaganda and were confident in mentioning Pipes and to a lesser extent Figes, while many discussed Fitzpatrick. Stronger students could compare and discuss the views, medium answers mentioned them or used quotes with varying relevance and weak responses simply labelled the views.

China

The graphic provided was rich in information for analysis, yet few students saw the industrial chimneys and smoke in the background and referred to this detail in their answer. The caption read, ‘The commune is like a gigantic dragon, production is visibly awe-inspiring’, followed by the date, 1959. With these two pieces of information, students should have easily been able to respond to the period of the Great Leap Forward. Most students were successful in identifying two social classes and two advantages that arose from the Communes, which were suggested by the representation.

Most students were able to supply information about the outcome of the People’s Communes in terms of the number of deaths and how initial enthusiasm was eroded, but they did not provide much knowledge beyond these ideas. Few



explained the breakdown of family units, backyard furnaces, unrealistic expectations or the size of collectives with 5000 households and 25 000 people.

In Question 3d., answers usually noted the poster was propaganda. They successfully evaluated the lack of reliability with reference to levels of starvation, cannibalism, decline in grain output and referred to Chung and Halliday or Fairbank and Spence.

The following high-scoring response to Question 3c. Russia contains the typical features of a very good response. The answer starts by referring to the representation. Then the response demonstrates the student's knowledge, returning to the source and its identifying features. There is a structure to the answer: it takes the reader in to the source and out to discussion throughout the response.

The representation accurately demonstrates the division that was occurring in Russia (beginning in 1918) through the physical separation of the groups pictured. Indeed from 1918-1921 Russia would be divided by Civil War, as the Bolsheviks sought to repress opposition to their consolidation of power. As demonstrated in the source by the presence of the Russian soldier, the military victory of the Red Army was seen as paramount by the Bolshevik government. Trotsky demanded that 'everything [be] for the front' as food supplies and ammunition were desperately needed. The effects of this on urban Russia however, were crippling food shortages under the harsh measures of War Communism (such as grain requisitioning in the countryside) and a growing social discontent throughout 1920-1921. The 'crusade for bread' as Lenin called grain requisitioning, resulted in discontent among the peasantry. This is not however, demonstrated in the source, as the peasants in the depiction appear decidedly to be fighting for 'us'; for the Bolshevik cause.

The following high-scoring response to Question 3d. China also adopts a structure that provides a strong basis for discussion. By starting with an evaluative statement, the answer begins with the representation. It next explains the symbolic meaning and makes links to a historian's views. The student compares other views and provides knowledge to continue the discussion of reliability. The structure goes in to the source and out to viewpoints and other evidence or knowledge, which is an excellent way to manage the response.

This propaganda poster depicting the Great Leap Forward as 'awe-inspiring' is highly unreliable in its depiction of the outcomes of the movement. It reflects the CCP's desire to portray the Great Leap Forward (GLF) as highly productive and successful when this was not the case. John King Fairbank would refute this representation, labelling the GLF a 'Mao – made catastrophe'; not at all 'like a gigantic dragon'. Similarly Jung Chang and Jon Halliday would label this source as blatant propaganda, pointing towards the deaths that arose as evidence of Mao's evilness and callous disregard for human life. Indeed the outcome of the GLF was in stark contrast to the depiction within the image; the resulting famine during the '3 bad years of 1959-1961 caused 30 million deaths which Jasper Becker cites as the most reliable figure. The only sense in which this poster may be seen as reliable is in terms of the aims of the Great Leap Forward. As its name suggests, it was intended by Mao to create a prosperous socialist society, as is depicted in the image. Yet the source is incredibly unreliable, presenting the alarming utopian (Chang and Halliday) and idealistic approach that characterised the Great Leap Forward. The image fails to depict the problematic policies of the GLF including Lysenkoism, backyard steel production and the poor outcomes of People's Communes, showing the outright denial of problems by the CCP which occurred following the Wuhan Plenum and the expulsion of Peng Dehuai from the Party.

Section B – Revolution two

Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	8	16	55	21

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	11	85	1.8

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	10	84	1.8

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	14	25	23	16	11	4	2.7



Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	9	12	13	13	13	11	9	6	3	1	4

Question 1

The questions worth two marks did not prove too difficult for most students, who usually extracted information from print sources more accurately than visual ones. It was disappointing that the majority of answers showed little skill in balancing discussion of the ideas in the documents with their own knowledge of the event or period. Too many students relied on the content of the extract by summarising it, showing little use of their own evidence or, at the other extreme, answers frequently ignored the extract and students described what they knew in a narrative about the period; both strategies were not what the answer required. Assessors commented on the need for careful reading of the extract, looking for inferences. This is also needed for Questions 1c. and 1d. where terms in the question were often ignored.

America

The 1772 extract from Samuel Adams about liberty and freedom gave students information about the way these ideas influenced the direction of the Revolution. Yet students had difficulty linking these ideas to key events and often just resorted to paraphrasing sections of the extract. A useful strategy would have been to take the ideas mentioned and tie them to events that spurred the Revolution; for example, **liberty** can be tied to the way Colonists believed their liberty was infringed by legislation such as the Quartering Acts. The concept of **property** can be linked to the colonists' claim that parliament had no right to impose taxes on internal trade without consent.

In response to Question 1d. better answers mentioned that although Samuel Adams is not remembered for his role in organising and leading the Sons of Liberty, the views expressed by him were those common to articulate leaders of the Revolution. These were men of property and they were concerned to protect their wealth.

France

Almost every student was able to answer the comprehension questions and find the humiliating actions such as beating the ponds or being harnessed to ploughs. However, most students did not note any inferences. Question 1c. asked students to 'explain the ideas and events which influenced noble deputies' and too few students linked 'in this enlightened century' to the influence of the ideas gained through the American war, although many referred to Sieyes. Too few answers noticed the clue given by the phrase 'restore calm to a distracted France' as referring to events such as the storming of the Bastille, the presence of troops in Paris, the Great Fear or burning of Chateaux and manorial rolls. Students needed to read the extracts more closely. Similarly, answers to Question 1d. required students to think more deeply. Answers should have discussed the notion of the nobility as leaders, drawing upon enlightenment ideas or that the Revolution had become a popular movement. Very good answers could discuss these concepts and referred to historians such as Rude, Soboul and Schama. Only the most successful answers analysed the historians' views.

Russia

Most students understood the comprehension questions but the responses showed that they needed to be more careful reading Questions 1c. and 1d. Students tended to ignore the extract and Lenin became interchangeable with the Bolsheviks. The role of the Bolshevik party was limited to Lenin and the April Thesis in most answers, with little knowledge of other leaders and the way the party was active in the major cities and within the armed forces through the soviets. Medium and weak answers generally showed knowledge of, or narrated the Bolshevik role in, the July days and the Kornilov affair but frequently the knowledge was not linked well to the concept of advancing the Revolution. In Question 1d., the concept of 'issues confronting the Provisional Government' was answered poorly – most answers did not discuss the Provisional Government but instead discussed the Bolsheviks. Good answers could identify and discuss the question of war, land and Soviet Order No.1 as issues confronting the Provisional Government. Students needed to learn more specific information for the period February to October 1917.

China

Students needed to improve their skills at linking the document to factual knowledge to achieve better success in Question 1c. and 1d. Too many students struggled to explain the reasons why Mao launched the Yanan rectification campaign and link them to the extract. One of Mao's reasons was to purify the party. According to Mao, young students who flocked to Yanan needed to learn the centrality of the peasants to the Revolution and the importance of the principles of Marxism through struggle. Answers often contained too much that was irrelevant and/or narrated information, rather than the students discerning what the question was asking. In Question 1d., most students ignored the part of the question about 'contribution to victory in 1949' and only explained the Yanan period in terms of its



effectiveness in pushing Mao’s philosophy. Very few students were able to understand the hypocrisy in Mao’s beliefs as suggested by the document.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 1c. Russia. This answer starts by responding to the question and provides a view. The knowledge is all linked to the question of ‘advancing a revolutionary situation’. The extract has been quoted.

The Bolsheviks were paramount in advancing a revolutionary situation. Lenin’s return to Finland station, Petrograd on April 3 1917, was powerful in declaring the February Revolution (February 1917) illegitimate and ‘parliamentary bourgeois’. In doing so, Lenin and the Bolsheviks inspired the people of Russia that ‘no support must be given to the Provisional Government’ as stated in the document, heightening the possibility of further revolutionary action. In addition, Lenin’s April Theses (April 1917) combined with the Bolshevik Party’s slogan ‘Peace, Bread, Land’ and ‘All Power to the Soviets’ laid the foundation of simple Bolshevik policy.

The following is a successful answer to Question 1d. China. It starts with the source and correctly identifies the view, then begins evaluation by measuring the source against historians’ views. The strategy of addressing the source and moving to historians’ viewpoints sets up an excellent structure for the response. The answer is correctly focused on the question.

The source attempts to describe the Rectification Campaign of 1942- 1944 as a ‘terrifying’ event in which a human ‘machine’ was created. It depicts life at Yan’an as a desolate experience, characterised by inequality. It is perhaps useful in understanding the ‘fundamental’ change that many underwent during the Rectification Campaign as well as comprehending Mao’s aims to secure a ‘power base’ by which his leadership would not be challenged. Historian Tom Ryan supports this notion in part, suggesting that by 1942 Mao’s actions were ‘shaping up to be a purge’. However, Ryan takes a more moderate stance, commenting also upon ‘re-education’ aspects of the Rectification Campaign. In terms of understanding the Yan’an period as a whole, this source encounters significant limitations. Whilst the source describes Yan’an as being characterised by ‘inequality and privilege’, the widely accepted view is that during the Yan’an period, Maoist values of self-sufficiency, resilience and integrity were promoted. As historian Ryan comments, Yan’an provided a ‘framework for Mao’s future revolutionary work’. The suggestion made in the source that this was a ‘terrifying’ time for most volunteers is therefore largely inaccurate. The Maoist values of the period, combined with the notion of ‘mass line’ – leadership, ‘from the people to the people’, is not explored in the source, thereby contributing to its limitations. Lastly the source fails to depict the formulation of Mao’s revolutionary thought at this time, choosing instead to depict the period as one of terror. In reality, however, the Yan’an period is known for its contribution to the CCP victory in 1949, due to its role as a ‘framework’ for Mao’s revolutionary ideals.

Creating a new society

Question 2 – Essay response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	6	3	3	4	5	4	4	6	5	5	9	6	8	8	7	5	4	3	2	1	1	9.3

Responses to the essay question showed that the majority of students only provided general knowledge of the new society. Many students didn’t appear able to define distinct groups’ responses to actions and events, or to say how these actions and events affected groups in different ways during the creation of the new society. Frequently, answers contained information outside the dates set for the area of study.

A positive feature of most essays was the ability to structure answers with introductions and the use of topic sentences. However, there were too many attempts to tailor pre-learned essays to the question, which did not produce a meaningful result. This practice is to be discouraged. Good exam preparation including timelines and analysis of events by linking them to the original aims of the Revolution, evaluating whether they were fulfilled or compromised, will prepare students for unseen essay prompts. Assessors are looking for thoughtful essays that develop a personal view, showing reflection on the Revolution and certainly not just listing historians’ views.

America

The essay asked students for an opinion about the extent to which a new order was established for the American people. Generally, students acknowledged that the severing of ties with Britain was a new order. They discussed the ways in which Americans debated the structures and balance of different branches of government. Many students mentioned that the new order did not extend to all Americans such as Native Americans. However, students often fell into condemning the new society because of these aspects. Many overlooked the radical element of the Bill of Rights and the three-tiered system of government. Students should have the ability to quote from the Preamble to the Constitution as a ‘framing’ intention of the Founding Fathers.



France

Student responses to this question required them to provide a careful definition of who the poorer classes might be. This was a clear example where students needed to define their terms. Assessors expected a good response to refer to the peasantry and *sans-culottes* as experiencing the Revolution quite differently, and while many answers dealt with the *sans-culottes*, fewer dealt with the peasantry. Answers did not challenge the prompt and show enough recognition of the gains made in late 1789 to 1791: the moderate phase, defined by the work of the bourgeoisie and nobles. Too many answers were limited to the Terror. Weak answers seemed to only show knowledge of the Bastille, the Great Fear and the National Assembly and seemed stuck in 1789, which was not within the dates for the Area of Study for ‘creating a new society’.

Russia

Many answers showed students’ lack of skill in defining ‘the people’ and many students wrote about them in generalisations. It was necessary to define the effects of the Revolution on the proletariat, party members and women, and on the peasants and former nobles separately. Many answers were confined to the Civil War and the *Cheka* without demonstrating knowledge of political outcomes such as Lenin’s Decree on Party Unity. Most answers contained statistics that were used simplistically to demonstrate ‘tragedy’ and there was too much focus on cannibalism and torture methods. Only the most successful answers challenged the prompt to note the benefits to education and women’s rights.

China

Generally, this question elicited some well-structured responses but most took a simplistic view by describing how initially Mao oversaw social and economic reforms but by the introduction of the second five-year plan any benefits were reversed. It is far too simple to suggest that on the one hand, 70 million died but on the other hand, women got the right to divorce, which is the level of thinking that many answers displayed. Students showed knowledge of The Hundred Flowers Campaign, Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and the most successful answers analysed them and explained why they held little benefit for the people.

The following is an extract from an excellent essay on Russia responding to ‘a people’s tragedy’.

The historian’s view that the Russian Revolution was a ‘people’s tragedy’ can be argued to some degree...

The first few months of Bolshevik rule witnessed a pronounced change in Russian society. Such a period, recognized as State Capitalism, witnessed the Bolsheviks genuine attempt to reform society for the better, in tune with Marxist ideals. The 116 Decrees launched within State Capitalism were designed to ‘inspire, excite and instigate’, Service, allowing the Bolsheviks to officially legislate desires to positively change the lives of Russians. The Decree on Land (November 1917) and the Decree on Marriage (December 1917) positively affected the lives of the peasants and women respectively, ‘aimed at encouraging participation in the Revolution’...

The outbreak of Civil War in 1918 compelled the Bolsheviks to adopt pragmatic yet draconian measures in a bid to survive in rule. The inevitable response was War Communism which can be labelled a ‘people’s tragedy’ directly due to the oppression that the people of Russia experienced...

The Bolsheviks were forced to further reassess policy pragmatically implementing the NEP... The NEP can be considered a ‘people’s tragedy’ due to the fact that it contradicted Bolshevik desires for a wholly classless and socialist society... Bolshevik Russia can only be argued ‘a people’s tragedy’ when considering how Bolshevik rule was a result of pragmatic responses to crises. It can be argued that originally the Bolsheviks genuinely attempted to reform society in tune with their communist core, but were forced to reassess policy in response to an economy in disarray, a Civil War and vast social unrest. Thus in many ways Russian society was not negatively impacted by Bolshevik rule forcing many to consider such a period and such an infamous reign ‘a people’s tragedy’.