

History Revolutions GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

There were a number of less successful responses in 2002 than in previous years. Students who responded well in the essay section often did not score well in the short answers. There needs to be practice being concise or perhaps the order (and time) in which students complete questions is being reflected in the weakness of short answers whereas the essays are strong. A significant number of students confused the pre-revolutionary societies of both France and Russia, and generalised by referring to '*bad harvests*', '*starving peasants*' and '*freezing winters*', that can be applied to any revolution as causes. Students generally referred to events over the whole timeframe of the revolution. Fewer jumped to the 'snapshot' than previously, although this still occurred, particularly in the context of France. Skill in using evidence is still a weakness across all sections of the paper as is using prepared essays that are merely change and continuity essays.

Students must be discouraged from attempting to fit two lines of writing into the space for one line in the short-answer section. The space provided was adequate for most students and it was not generally the case that more successful responses required more space or a second script book. Students should also be discouraged from writing in lead pencil, green or pale blue pen, which are all difficult to read. Generally, students are writing more and have at least something to say on their chosen revolution.

Section A – short-answer question

Question 1

Generalised answers show weakness in using a range of specific facts, i.e. evidence. Some students persist in wasting space and time by repeating the question phrasing to introduce their answer. This is not necessary. Irrelevance is still a problem and many students seemed to ignore the part of the question, '*lead to a revolutionary situation*'. It is clear that reading the question carefully and focusing on it closely requires practice. The answer also requires a sense of argument rather than merely a list of events written in paragraph form. Bullet point answers must also be strongly discouraged, as they do not meet the question requirements. The most successful answers made a link between the points raised and the cause of the revolution. A weakness in many answers was that students only related to the first part of the question.

More successful answers were able to name reforming ministers and Louis' failure to heed the advice of his finance ministers, the failure of *parlements* to enact reform, and the blocking of reform by vested interest (France), and numerous taxation acts linking to the colonists determination that there should be '*no taxation without representation*' (America). Excellent answers on Russia recognised various factors contributing to economic crisis. However, they did this by specific reference to *food and fuel shortages*, *bread queues because of bread rations due to shortages because of war*, *strikes for higher wages in February 1917 through the Putilov works and bakery workers which grew to 240 000 with women factory workers celebrating Women's Day on February 23 1917*.

The most successful answers on China referred to the *failed 100 Days of Reform and the Boxer Protocol*, to initiate change which hastened the Wuhan revolution. The excellent answers mentioned a number of specific facts (at least 4), were concisely expressed and limited to the parameters of the question. They were able to establish ideas in a cause and effect relationship. Answers which scored average marks tended to be generally global responses and often only elaborated on one main point. They had poor focus on the question timeframe which started at 1770 and instead focused on the late 1780s (France), where the information was often merely descriptive of the Estates. Some similar standard answers for Russia dealt with an earlier period such as 1905, Bloody Sunday with a lack of emphasis on *economic crisis*. They did not write specifically on details of the economic crisis of January/February 1917, but gave too much background information. Low-range answers were very brief. Some were bullet points, and many contained inaccuracies, such as the idea that Louis refused to reform (France).

A sample of a strong answer is shown below:

France: Resistance to reform the country was evident in the king's weak leadership and indecision relating to the people's demands, evident when the third estate asked for doubling of the 3rd estate and union of orders with the calling of the estates general. Inability to reform meant the country was financially crippled with an enormous deficit. Resistance was also increased by the Parlements who obstructed any reforms introduced such as Calonne's reforms to improve the economy. They stated only an elected body (estates general) could make that decision. The parliaments wanted a share in political power by making France financially weak illustrated the king's inept behaviour and weakness. By surrendering fiscal privileges, the king called the estates general which led to the nation writing cahiers. It built excitement to third estate & they demanded for their voice to be heard. They wanted change, demanded for union of orders, resulting in defiance of King and causing a revolutionary situation.

The underlined sections are where the response makes valid points. Although there is a sense of generalisation in the way the points are made the response builds an argument. More specific facts, such as dates and the amount of the deficit would have improved this response.

Russia: Economic crises brought on by poor leadership & refusal for reforms was exacerbated by Russia's involvement in Russo-Japanese war 1904-5. Their involvement was planned to solve the economic situation or detract attention to it. Ironically their resource input into the war effort made the financial situation worse. It meant working conditions & wages declined, resulting in popular discontent. Bloody Sunday was a movement to express people's hardships yet resulted in a bloody massacre. It led to riots & revolutionary activity subsided with Tsar's October Manifesto as opposition was split yet unrest remained. Economic conditions worsened & reached a crippling point in 1917 with Russia's involvement in WW1. The home front was neglected, food shortages and increase in prices unified revolutionaries.

Although the response does not immediately focus on 1917, the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the reasons for declining economic conditions. This sort of response does not quite reach full marks but is clearly well thought out. The underlined sections pick up on ideas well and there is a sense of argument. This response is clearly superior to those which generalise only on one idea.

Question 2

The second part of the short answers was not done well. Students did not focus on the question which asked: '*how the revolutionary government responded to ...*' Students tended to describe '*civil unrest*' (France), civil war rather than '*foreign intervention*' (Russia) and completely miss out War Communism as a response from the revolutionary government. Many students wrote about *Brest Litovsk* and war with Germany, rather than explaining **how** the government responded to protests, revolts and demands for tax relief. Many students (France) merely applied their answer to 1793 naming the *terror and use of the guillotine* rather than the whole period 1790–1793.

Many answers showed an uncertainty of events in 1790 by writing about events in 1789. The responses on China often wrote outside the timeframe of the 1960s and mentioned the *Great Leap Forward* or *The Hundred Flowers campaign* rather than the *Cultural Revolution* and *extermination of the Four Olds*. The American context needed information relating to the formation of the *Bill of Rights* or *Shays Rebellion* which the most successful answers delivered capably. The careful preparation of timelines in all contexts of revolution may assist students to achieve better skill in linking events to timeframes. More students did not attempt a response in this section of the short answers than in the first part. Better preparation of the challenges to the revolutionary government, and how the governments responded to the challenges, is required by students.

Sample of a strong response:

France: Civil unrest in France was a result of external & internal counter revolution. France's declaration of war against Prussia & Austria due to Brunswick Manifesto meant reforms to fundamental rights were halted. Due to internal enemies harsh & violent policies were established. Revolutionary government known as National Convention led by Robespierre responded by setting up the Committee of Public Safety to maintain the situation @ home and abroad, eliminating enemies. This was done through revolutionary tribunals (law of suspects) which provided the machinery to execute those opposing the revolution. A period known as the Terror where the government compromised their original ideals of liberty, fraternity & freedoms in order to stay in power. Conscription was introduced to provide the man power to fight the counter revolutionaries and revolutionaries on mission executed those who spoke against the revolution.

This response was one of the more successful and covers a range of facts.

Section B

More successful answers use the representation by drawing out the ideas it contains and using them as a framework for their answer about revolutionary ideas, leaders or movements. A pleasing aspect was the willingness of students to challenge the contention contained in the representation. Some students persisted in presenting a global response rather than separate answers to (i) and (ii). Separation of answers is required as it provides students with the best framework for their answer.

Question B

Part (i) assesses the skill in understanding the representation, while part (ii) tests student ability to construct an argument relevant to the representation, provide evidence and demonstrate understanding of ideas, leaders and/or movements. Most students challenged the idea from the graphic (France) which showed members from the three estates working together to forge the new constitution. They recognised that this was a form of propaganda designed to elicit support for the National Assembly, when in fact there were distinct aspirations for members of the three estates. Similarly responses to the extract from *Thunder Out of China, White and Jacoby 1946*, acknowledged that the Communists gained much support on the Long March, but that their Rectification Campaign initially targeted many middle peasants who owned land and that this forced the Communists to soften their policies to maintain peasant support. Less successful responses had little to say for part (i) and usually only attempted to summarise the representation rather than explore inferences. Some ignored the question instruction and the explanation of the representation that was given, and gave a completely wrong interpretation. This happened mostly with the graphic (France) where students stated that the three characters pictured were destroying the new constitution. Quite a few misinterpreted *Pipes* (Russia) attitude to the Bolsheviks.

The following is an example of a response to part (i) that demonstrates very good analysis of the graphic for the question on France. The student has established some inferences that are beyond simple comprehension of the literal and symbolic elements.

... The three figures presented in the illustration are the nobility, the 3rd Estate and the Clergy. Together in unified fashion they are hitting the constitution, working, redesigning and re-establishing it to contain the ideals of the revolution (fraternity, freedom and liberty). They are using instruments used by the third estate in their role and function of farming and agriculture. This indicates the process was conceived by the 3rd estate ... The artist is suggesting that there is now equality between the three orders ... the fact that the third estate member is the one holding the constitution is another indication that he is in charge of the direction it will take ... Yet the illustration demonstrates change, alteration to the previous order. This was the ideal situation for the moderate third estate revolutionaries that they would work together to create a new society. The absence of the king suggests his vote is no longer vital or necessary in France. That it is the will of the people that will direct the action and direction of the country.

In part (ii) there seemed to be shorter responses in the second part than in other years, perhaps as a result of the criterion '*relevant response to the question*'. Generally, students tried to meet this requirement although some seemed to have prepared answers, obviously from School-assessed Coursework material and were determined to write what they knew regardless of relevance. Less successful answers were often simply narrative and not well connected to the concept of ideas, leaders or movements.

Alternatively students did not move beyond the discussion of the representation and only expanded the part (i) answer. The most successful answers drew on a number of other sources quite effectively. For example, some excellent responses (Russia) contained very detailed knowledge of events in 1917 and were able to analyse *Pipes* comments in the context of their knowledge and evidence. The responses showed an ability to link the failed July Days with Lenin's adaptation of Marxism, to focus on a dedicated elite of revolutionaries who worked underground to seize control in the name of the masses. More perceptive students deconstructed the representation. They noted that the extract by *White and Jacoby* (China) was published in 1946 when the Communists were feted as the heroes of China and the Nationalists had lost favour with their Western allies. A particularly perceptive response wondered whether the assessment by *White and Jacoby* would have been so glowing had they not been so reliant on the very positive comments being made by Western journalists (such as *Snow*) concerning the Communists and their Yenan period. Middle to weak standard responses relied on unsupported generalisations and tended to 'give up' on part (ii) or provide a narrative rather than analysis. Poor question focus let many students down, particularly in responding to the ideas contained in the graphic (France) where a significant number of students wrote about the Old Regime estates and the lead up to the calling of the Estates General, rather than the new society. Less successful responses (Russia) seemed to lack specific factual knowledge about the course of events in 1917. They also needed to recognise that even if the representation did not specifically refer to revolutionary ideas in the text, they still need to make a link to them and find a way to use them in the context of their answer.

The following is an example of a very strong response in part (ii) to the graphic for France.

The ideals of 'liberty, equality, fraternity' espoused the beliefs of the liberal stage of the revolution. Although the estates did not work together at the Estates-General, there was unity with the Tennis Court oath, and the Declaration of Man and Citizen applied to all sections of society. The year 1789 was one where the three estates worked together with Lafayette seen as the hero of the revolution. With the August Decrees, the newly formed assembly abolished seigneurial dues, and the Feudal structure of France. France was united, however this unity was not to last.

When France entered war with Austria, it was a signal for an end to the three estates working together. When the assembly declared 'la patrie en danger', a call answered by the sans culottes of the third estate, it acknowledged that it needed the sans culottes for survival. Thus the popular democracy of the sans culottes gained ground. The third estate grew in significance, and with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, all power of the first estate was lost. The sans culottes were against anything noble, and as they exercised great influence, the nobility also lost power.

As the war continued, the unity of France continued to break. The event of the Champs de Mars massacre was a turning point in the revolution as the third estate was turning, not only on the other estates, but on itself and Lafayette lost great support. Division became painfully obvious in France as war heightened the feelings of mistrust and tension. When Marat, who was popular with the sans culottes through his journal 'L'ami du peuple', called for all considered to be counter revolutionaries in the prisons to be killed, 1200 people were murdered by the sans culottes. The fact that these massacres were allowed to continue for four days unabated highlights not only the power and influence of the sans culottes, but also the extremes they would go to, to protect their idea of 'liberty, equality, fraternity or death', rather than the unity of France. When the Jacobins, consisting mostly of radical bourgeoisie, gained power, the suspension and mistrust felt between the people of France intensified as the Jacobins created the Committees of Public Safety and

General Security. To protect from the threat of counter revolution, the Jacobins established Revolutionary Tribunals and sent Armées Revolutionnaires and Representatives en Mission, into the provinces. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was replaced by the Law of Suspects.

With the 4th December Law the Committees severely curtailed the power of the sans culottes, although it was they that brought them to power. At the centre of this terror was Robespierre, who the other members of the Jacobin party believed was using the Terror indiscriminately against anyone without provocation.

Section C

Most students show a sound ability to respond to the essay question. They demonstrated a good understanding of the 'new society' as something that changed and evolved. There was much better balance in the discussion of the old and new regimes, and fewer students went straight to a discussion of the 'snapshot', which was a pleasing trend. Many students did not respond to the question, in particular, the '*to what extent*' prompt, and there were still a large number of narrative essays. While essay length was good and few students used a second script book, relevance remains a problem. Some students are determined to include information regardless of relevance with a great number of prepared essays on 'change and continuity'.

The 2002 examination produced a surprising trend with students linking certain revolutions with a particular question. For example, Question 4 was popular with students writing on the French Revolution and Chinese Revolution, while Question 6 was popular with students writing on the Russian Revolution. This may indicate that students are thinking more carefully about the material they have learnt and are trying to link their material so that it is relevant. Essays on China were denser and students seemed more confident with the spelling of Chinese names.

Question 4

Question 4 elicited a range of answers, the better ones identifying grievances that existed under the Old Regime and assessing the degree to which these issues were addressed in the new regime. Students recognised that sometimes issues were addressed and sometimes they remained. Few essays tackled the last part of the question that '*a revolution does not create a new society*'.

Question 5

Question 5 was not popular and generally attracted weaker students. Few students dealt effectively with the question of whether social division is an '*inevitable*' outcome of the revolution and most answers merely stated that social inequalities existed in both regimes.

Question 6

Question 6 was a popular choice for students writing on the Russian revolution. The essays dealt with the impact of war on Nicholas' reign, but they were less convincing in their discussion of the ways in which war shaped the new regime. Many responses saw War Communism as an inevitable corollary of the civil war in Russia and failed to see that Lenin may have had other options to tackle the economic problems. Similarly, few students argued that Trotsky had a choice about the level of terror that he unleashed through the Red Army. Question 6 was probably not an ideal choice for those who had studied the American Revolution. These students seemed 'stuck' when it came to discussing the impact of war on the new regime. They knew how the war came about but were unclear on how it characterised the new regime. There was a lack of confidence in the discussion of foreign wars with the French revolution. More successful answers used the question terms and structured their responses around social/economic/political themes.

The following are extracts from an essay response to Question 4, in the context of the Russian Revolution. The introduction demonstrates strong control of the question and introduces historical debate.

The revolution is viewed in extreme perspectives reflective of people's bias and attitude towards the revolution. The belief that revolution does not satisfy the grievances of the old regime by creating a new state is a minimalist position. Western liberal historians such as Richard Pipes, believe revolution is just a replica of the old state with new forces on top. He would believe there would only be continuities between the old and new regimes and refuse to acknowledge any changes. Soviet historians on the other hand believe Lenin and his government were instrumental in creating a society that dealt with issues of the old regime, such as war and land. Both these interpretations of the revolution are narrow minded and omit to recognise there are other elements in the revolution that goes against their beliefs ... There are many grievances of the old regime that were not addressed in the new regime such as oppression, violence, war and fundamental social reforms, yet there were changes that demonstrates different actions and responses to crises and the differing ideology is reflective of this ...

Some excellent responses handle the criteria about understanding sources and historians' perspectives as follows. This student has linked the understanding of a historian's perspective, with quoted evidence, to the student's own argument. The discussion of this point is extended by an example that is well supported by statistical evidence.

Minimalist historians such as Pipes, state the tactics used in the new regime were, 'more appropriate to warfare than politics'. He then makes the direct comparison between the violence and oppression employed by the Tsar, which provoked many grievances amongst the people, to the similarities in the new states

policies. Fundamentally the issue regarding support in the government and demand to elect a representative body is overlooked in the new regime. The Bolshevik party had no choice but to allow the constituent elections arranged under the Provisional government to continue. Unfortunately due to lack of support from the peasants the Bolshevik party had 175 elected deputies in comparison to the 370 deputies elected for the Soviets. The use of violence and oppression is evident when Lenin ordered the Red Army to disband the newly elected government with force. This act of oppression was continued mid 1918 when Lenin acted to silence all political parties except the communist party.

The use of evidence in essays was fairly weak. However, in this student's essay, there is good evidence applied throughout the argument. The student uses evidence to support the point, that the grievance to have an elected representative body, existed in the Old Regime.

... is evident in the revolts of 1905. It resulted in the Tsar allowing a Duma to share political power with him. These were empty promises and just acted to split opposition to the attempted 1905 revolution. The Tsar limited, on the first meeting their power, dissolved the first and second Duma and limited the voting for the 3rd and 4th Duma.

The skill of analysis was more sophisticated in this essay than in most essays where 'change and continuity' is usually discussed in simple 'black and white' ways.

... True both regimes had centralised governments with power that emanated from the top. Yet there are fundamental differences which altered the way the new state responded to problems. The Tsar ruled under a Divine Right hereditary monarchy using violence and force to control the people. The Communist party was based on Marxist interpretation and Lenin's adaptation of Marxism to suit Russia. They believed there needed to be a period of totalitarian dictatorship of the proletariat before true socialism could be achieved. This suggests that the force and violence used by Lenin's party was only a temporary measure. This cannot be stated for the Tsarist regime as the brutality and violence were expected to continue forever. This theory is contradicted by the interpretation of previous Bolshevik member Victor Serge. He believed the force, oppression and controlling leadership evident in war communism was the direction the new state was planning to take. He indicates it was only named 'war communism' after its failure. Yet regardless of this matter Lenin was still flexible and adaptive to introduce NEP ...

... Many grievances continued and some were even exacerbated by revolution, yet unlike the Tsar, Lenin was willing to introduce rapid reform to improve the country. The struggle to stay in power meant Lenin negated and compromised several original ideals. This meant discontent grew as people's unmet expectations increased. This was evident in the revolutionary attacks on the Kronstadt naval base.

Criteria performance

Students must refer to all criteria to score high marks. It is disappointing when students write excellent answers but fail to address one criterion, i.e. they do not refer specifically to the Old Regime or neglect to mention *historical sources or historians' approaches*. Frequently, students addressed criteria using descriptors such as '*revisionist historians believe*' or '*liberal historians think*', yet there was little indication that they understood what they were writing about. A better approach is when students refer to historians' opinions and approach the criterion from this angle. For example, when discussing the continuities and changes in the Chinese Revolution, students frequently asserted that *Mao set himself up as an authoritarian leader much like the Emperors of the Old Regime. Harrison Salisbury discusses this at length in his book, 'The New Emperors' and contends that even in the post-revolutionary period the Chinese people looked for an idol who approximated the Son of Heaven.* A student who discussed this in their essay would be fulfilling the criterion. The most competent response is when more than 'name dropping' occurs. A number of middle range answers mention different historians' perspectives, but with little relevance in the context of the essay.

The use of evidence is still not demonstrated strongly by many students. Only the most successful answers applied statistics, historians' viewpoints or referred to policies to support their discussion. Middle-range answers often merely used general knowledge of the period and events to support their viewpoint.

Change and continuity was addressed by most students, although the analysis of it was often fairly simplistic. Middle and lower range essays spent too much time on the new regime, and therefore without good balance between discussion of both regimes, analysis of change and continuity suffered.