

2018 VCE History: Revolutions examination report

General comments

The 2018 History: Revolutions examination assessed the outcomes, key knowledge and key skills indicated in the *VCE History Study Design 2016–2020*. The examination comprised two sections and students were required to select a different Revolution in each section.

Some students wrote in the incorrect section of the answer book and/or incorrectly labelled the responses. Familiarity with the answer book would assist students to organise their responses.

In the highest-scoring responses, a direct link was made to the question that incorporated accurate factual information and there was reference to a range of evidence, including primary sources and historical interpretations.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Revolutions chosen

Section A

Revolution chosen	none	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	12	35	46	6

Section B

Revolution chosen	none	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	14	23	40	23

Section A, Question 1 – Causes of Revolution

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	5	28	46	18	3	2.9

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	5	29	44	18	3	2.8

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	4	9	15	18	16	14	11	6	2	1	4.6

Section B, Question 2 – Consequences of Revolution

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	7	31	41	15	4	2.7

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	10	32	35	13	3	2.5

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	12	9	11	14	14	12	11	9	6	2	1	4

Section A, Questions 1a. and 1b., and Section B Questions 2a, and 2b.

In Section A, Question 1, two sources were provided for each of the Revolutions. Students were required to 'outline' or 'identify and describe' features of the historical sources and to incorporate their own knowledge into the response. Generally, students indicated an understanding of what the command words demanded and showed comprehension of the written historical sources by judiciously selecting quotes, phrases and statistics to develop a response. Students with high-scoring responses were able to present a clear synthesis of the historical sources and to elaborate by weaving facts, figures and events into their answers.

In Section A, America, Question 1a., students identified the three key groups and the characteristics that distinguished them, while recognising that each shared an interest in making the American economy strong. Own knowledge included the names of key individuals and foundation groups and the reasons for joining these groups. Many students quoted the phrase 'they occupied a place between the elite and genuine plebeians' to describe the Sons of Liberty, but few explained that this meant they had wide appeal and straddled the various social strata. Answers to Question 1b. demonstrated knowledge about the methods used by the Sons of Liberty

to resist British authority. The material in Source 2 was supplemented by evidence such as the attacks on the homes of Andrew Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson and the enforcement of the non-importation agreements. Very few responses mentioned the importance of the Daughters of Liberty groups in the domestic sphere. These groups recycled to avoid purchase of British goods and hence widened the economic impact on the import market.

The following response on America, Section A, Question 1a. uses the source material and provides own knowledge, demonstrating further contextualisation.

The groups and individuals who became members of the Sons of Liberty were varied. Source 1 identifies that “three sorts of men were central to the Sons: dissident intellectuals, small intercolonial merchants and artisans”. The intellectuals “enjoyed political argument” (Source 1), whereas the merchants and artisans “shared an interest in making the American economy strong” (Source 1) and as a consequence, they “could organise a popular resistance movement because they occupied a place between the elite and genuine plebians (Source 1). Key Revolutionary figures such as Samuel Adams and John Hancock were members and with Adams the prominent agitator and Hancock a disgruntled wealthy merchant, they reflected the diverse range of members. The Sons of liberty had a strong grassroots membership, with many...joining as a result of a radicalisation as well as an organic desire for reform/revolution.

The responses to the questions on France correctly identified financial issues as a reason for calling the Estates-General. Evidence used in support included the financial debt, sizeable loans and the actions of finance ministers, Calonne and Brienne. In responding to Question 1b., most students highlighted the procedures of voting by order as a source of conflict triggered by the calling of the Estates-General.

The following response on France, Section A, Question 1a. demonstrates comprehension of the historical source and an ability to succinctly weave in additional information. The use of historical terminology adds to the success of the response.

Louis XVI's decision to convene the Estates General stemmed from the pressing need to pass taxation reform. As described by Source 1, Brienne was 'forced to revert to Calonne's programme of reforms' and therein encountered much opposition from the nobility and clergy. The refusal of the parlements Parlements of Paris to endorse Brienne's reform package without the 'consent of the people' saw it issue a scathing remonstrance, stating that 'only the Estates General were competent to approve new taxation' as representatives of the entire nation. Moreover, Calonne's refusal to disclose the state of France's finances saw the Notables rise in the revolt of the notables, declaring that it 'did not possess the authority to approve tax measures' and indeed, refused out of suspicion of Calonne. The rejection of both the parlements and the Assembly of Notables forced Louis XVI to call the Estates General in order to legally pass taxation legislation.

For students responding to Russia, Section A, Question 1, the explanation for entry into World War I was handled competently but only the higher scoring responses focused on the reasons why there was support for the decision. The extract from Service noted that advisors were hoping to quieten tremors of revolution at home and that nationalism was endemic. The middle-ranging responses quoted this, but only higher scoring responses mentioned that the Russian Imperial armed forces were feared by the German high command and this was another source for optimism. Few responses contained any additional information. Similar comments apply to the responses to Question 1b., which focused on the hardships experienced by Russian soldiers in World War I. High-scoring responses mentioned the dilemma of the Provisional Government who were conscious of public opposition to continued commitment to war; however, the flow of foreign funds required Russia's involvement in the conflict.

The responses on China, Section A, Question 1 demonstrated knowledge that the First United Front offered benefits to both the Nationalists, who would have a powerful sponsor in the Soviets, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which at that time had a tiny membership and therefore

much to gain from the alliance. The highest scoring responses provided additional information about the warlords who posed a threat to Sun Yixian and the new republic, and that Soviet support was only sought after western powers and Japan had not answered Sun's request for assistance. In reference to the conflicts that developed within the First United Front, many responses merely paraphrased the source and did not offer additional information. The higher scoring responses mentioned that after the death of Sun Yixian, internal contradictions became more pronounced and Jiang Jieshi's authoritarianism was more apparent.

In Section B the historical sources for each Revolution comprised an image and two written sources. This section of the examination assessed the skill of analysing historical interpretations about the significant consequences of a revolution. Many responses simply described the images and paraphrased the texts rather than analysing the messages conveyed in the historical representations. The distinguishing feature of the high-scoring responses was the ability to identify the purpose and audience and to make clear concise statements about the implied messages of the representations.

Responses on America, Section B correctly identified the congruence between Source 1 and Source 2, noting the highly romanticised depiction of the supporters of the new Constitution. High-scoring responses highlighted the unity of purpose among the delegates, their wisdom, integrity and passion. The attire of the signatories of the Constitution was mentioned, as was their sombre demeanour. Only the highest scoring responses could explain how the ratification of the Constitution sought to enshrine principles of democracy and representation. These responses included relevant evidence such as the election of delegates to the ratification conventions, candid and respectful debate between the federalists and anti-federalists, and the requirement for nine states to vote in favour of the Constitution.

Students responding to France, Section B, Questions 2a. and 2b. demonstrated only a general understanding of the escalating unrest in 1792. The extract from Rudé highlighted increasing tensions following military defeats, poor harvests and inflationary prices, and a suspicion of bourgeois hoarding, but few students could elaborate on these developments. Similarly, the responses to the significance of the storming of the Tuileries struggled to make a connection with the fate of the monarchy. High-scoring responses looked beyond the slaughtered Swiss Guards (in the foreground of the painting) to discuss how the day would unfold with demands from radicals that King Louis be handed over to them and his subsequent suspension from office.

Students responding to Russia, Section B, Questions 2a. and 2b. were able to name the opponents of the Bolsheviks. They successfully identified groups shown in the poster, especially the Tsarist supporters and added other protagonists referred to in Source 2: the Right Socialist Revolutionaries and the bourgeoisie and officers. Although many students described Wrangle, the central figure in the poster, in detail and commented on his grotesque features and large, claw-like hands, few specifically mentioned him by name. Nor did they explain his role as a White Army General, although this information was included in the attributions.

The following response demonstrates skill in identifying key information from the sources, which is supported by the student's own knowledge.

The Bolshevik regime was opposed by both non-Bolshevik political groups and the White armies during the Russian Civil War (1918-1921). As depicted in Source 1 "proletarians were forced to arms" during the conflict as the White armies as seen by the foreign interventionists and members of the bourgeoisie were determined to advance "to Moscow" to reinstate the Tsar as the leader of Russia. These groups forced the Bolsheviks to adopt the 5 million men Red Army to prevent the Bolshevik regime from being overthrown. Additionally as illustrated in Source 2, the "murder of Volodarskii", the "murder of Uritskii" and the "attempt to murder... Vladimir Illyitch Lenin" on 30th August 1918 by non-Bolshevik parties such as the left Socialist Revolutionaries (including Kaplan), convinced the Bolshevik regime to put an "immediate end of looseness and tenderness" through the issuing of the Decree on Red Terror on 5th September.

Such measures were designed to use brute force to silence the “resistance” that opposed the Bolshevik regime. Such resistance was depicted in propaganda, such as Source 1 as people “among the bourgeoisie” (2) and “White Guards” (2) who had to be eliminated to ensure the Bolsheviks maintained power.

There were good responses to Section B, China, Questions 2a. and 2b. that used the text from Liu Chun-hua to provide a message about the way in which he and his fellow students wanted to portray Mao. Responses referred to the depiction of Mao’s revolutionary spirit, his energy and determination – a symbol of hope for the Chinese people. This was used as a platform to explain the conditions in 1965–1969 that made images of Mao so important (Question 2b.). Students’ own knowledge of the Cultural Revolution was used to explain how this was a movement to restore Mao as leader and remove those who had assumed control after the failures of the Great Leap Forward. Disciplined and controlled responses (such as the response below) were confined to the aims of the Cultural Revolution and did not digress into the excesses of the period or the activities of the Red Guard.

Source 3 outlines how the lack of “power” Mao had prior to the Cultural Revolution made images of Mao significant. After the failed Great Leap Forward, which saw Mao deemed “responsible” (Liu) for the death of 40-80 million people, Mao’s power was deteriorated, with his attempt at an ‘Early Ten Points’ revised twice. As such, the images of Mao became significant as they recounted and justified Mao’s “return” to leadership. Images of Mao acted as “revision of history” (3) that were significant in expanding the rise of Mao’s leadership, after his lack of power. Source 3 also depicts how the “nationwide” hysteria around the “Cultural Revolution” meant images of Mao increased his power and adoration. With Mao placing importance on culture in his May 18th Circular, (1966) in response to the Hai Rui (Spring 1965) play and February outline report (1966) images were used to help propagate Mao’s ideas, as people became involved in the culture of the nation. The importance placed on culture during 1965-1969 meant images of Mao could work at promoting his agenda on an “extraordinary” (3) scale.

Section A, Question 1c. and Section B, Question 2c.

Section A, Question 1c. and Section B, Question 2c. instructed students to ‘Use evidence to support your response’. These questions drew on the key skills of the study design, for example, in Outcome 2, ‘construct arguments about the consequences of revolution using primary sources and historical interpretations as evidence’. This meant that students could use their judgment about what kind of evidence was most relevant and appropriate in answering the question. This evidence could include primary sources, historical interpretations from secondary sources or a combination of both. If appropriate and where relevant to the question, students were also able to draw on the historical sources provided on the examination.

High-scoring responses included a range of evidence, including primary sources and/or historical interpretations. Approaches that worked successfully placed the sources at the centre of the analysis or made a contention about the message conveyed by the sources as a starting point. These responses then had a line of argument they used to explore the question. Responses that did not score well presented information in a narrative style, frequently ignoring the sources.

Students responding to America, Section A, Question 1c. used information from the sources to highlight the importance of the Sons and Daughters of Liberty in mounting effective opposition to British authority. The range of evidence used included economic and political tactics through boycotts, intimidation and organised mob violence, and raising public awareness through printed materials and public meetings. Historical interpretations included the work of Pauline Maier, whose research on the Sons of Liberty led her to argue that the chapters had an important role in maintaining a threat of violence, that could be reined in for negotiation. Higher scoring responses were distinguished by their understanding that historians form their interpretations from evidence; these successful answers referred to the evidence used by the historian or the historians’ ideas rather than merely naming a historian.

This skill of citing historians and referring to the evidence they use was also seen in high-scoring responses to Question 1c. for France, Russia and China. For example, students responding to the question about the significance of Louis XVI's contribution to the outbreak of revolution made reference to McPhee's contention that there were also long-term changes in French society that challenged the social order.

The following response is an example of a high-scoring response to France, Section A, Question 1c. It uses the sources and has an array of evidence, including historical interpretations.

Louis XVI's inability to pass meaningful reform coupled with his political ineptitude was highly significant in the outbreak of revolution in 1789. As Louis' feeble grip on power was repeatedly exposed by the obstruction of the parlements and the Assembly of Notables, Louis proved himself as unable to pass reform. Louis' decision to exile the Parlement of Paris to Troyes provoked the Day of the Tiles which saw a 'complete breakdown of royal authority' in the face of popular anger as described by Simon Schama. The exile of the Parisian parlement aggravated the French population, who saw the parlement to be the 'guardians of the people against encroaching royal authority' as McPhee notes. The indecision and inability for the king to assert his will saw the financial crisis bloom into a revolutionary situation by May 1789.

The King's decision to involve France in the American War of Independence in 1778 in which France contributed 1 billion livres to the American war effort further catalysed revolution. Against the advice of his financial advisers, Louis XVI followed Foreign Minister Vergennes in his insistence that it was an occasion of 'divine providence' to avenge French humiliation by the British. Coupled with debt from the Seven Year's War, Louis' decision amplified the French financial crisis, leading John Shovlin to remark, "it is a truism that the French Revolution was touched off by the near bankruptcy of the state. Louis' decision to call the Estates General in May 1789 effectively sealed the death of the Ancien Regime, through orchestrating the replacement of the monarchy. Louis' invitation for the people to write up the cahiers de dolences exaggerated the flaws of the Ancien Regime and invited the people of France to criticise the monarchy. The convening of the Estates General further precipitated the creation of the National Assembly which would come to replace Louis XVI, as noted by McPhee. Louis' decisions ultimately fuelled revolutionary sentiment while failing to pass reform, leading to the outbreak of revolution in 1789.

While many students responding to Russia, Section A, Question 1c. knew about the impact of war on Tsarist Russia and the causes of the February Revolution, their discussions of the link between the ongoing conflict and the October Revolution were brief and rarely substantiated with evidence. Similar comments apply to China, Section A, Question 1c., where there were many generalised responses. In contrast, the high-scoring responses used evidence linking the schism between the Nationalists and the CCP that emerged in the First United Front, with the eventual revolution in 1949. The higher scoring responses referred to historical interpretations like that offered by Spence, claiming the aftermath of the failed United Front was a time of rebuilding and reorientation for the CCP.

Many of the observations made above also applied to Section B, Question 2c. The command word 'analyse' was understood by students and high-scoring responses used an array of evidence. For the American option, arguments centred on the economic and political challenges confronting the creation of a robust political system. These arguments were based on evidence such as the ineffectual Articles of Confederation and the uprising led by Daniel Shays and his followers. In high-scoring responses to the question on France, there was precise knowledge about the actions of urban workers including the September Massacres and the direct democracy of the Sans Culottes. Responses on the use of the Red Terror to consolidate Russia's new regime frequently listed the range of torture techniques employed to force compliance but the high-scoring responses referred to historians' interpretations of whether terror was endemic to the Bolshevik movement or forced on them by the war. For China, Section B, Question 1c. high-scoring responses were

characterised by knowledge of Mao's aspirations backed by historical interpretations debating his motivations.

Section A, Questions 2 and 3

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	7	10	13	14	14	13	10	6	3	1	4.3

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	15	9	10	12	12	12	11	9	5	2	1	3.8

Questions 2 and 3 in Section A were framed by the key knowledge and key skills articulated in the study design. The questions began with the command word 'explain'. Responses showed that students were confident with the skill of explaining causes and effects, yet this needs to be developed with more depth. The highest scoring responses began with a contention and were directly focused on the question; they were detailed, precise and scaffolded. These responses also contained primary sources and historical interpretations. In contrast, responses that did not score well were narrative in style, ignored parameters such as dates and lacked historical terminology.

Students responded very well to America, Section A, Question 2, explaining how Washington featured in several critical points as war threatened the independence of the new nation. Evidence included his perseverance, willingness to modify military tactics and use of political ideology to inspire and motivate his troops. There was also reference to Washington's handling of the Newburgh conspiracy and his agreement to re-enter politics as chairperson of the Philadelphia Convention. Question 3 on America related to changed conditions in the lives of Patriots and Loyalists and was also handled well. There was acknowledgment that both faced challenges, although the Patriots had the advantage of victory on their side. Evidence cited included the confiscation of land from those who sided with Britain and the exodus of 80 000 Loyalists to Canada or Britain. But there was also a realisation that economic downturn, which found farmers in debtors' courts, meant that even victors suffered in the short term.

Question 2 on France required explanation of how international war was a contributing factor in the development of the revolution. Precise information included the Declaration of Pillnitz and the Austrian threat to intervene, which divided opinion about whether France should declare war. The French declaration of war and the subsequent defeat were identified as causing further divisions in the nation, a sense of panic and desperation that resulted in the September Massacres. After the issuing of the Brunswick Manifesto, the revolution was again radicalised and the Convention enacted policies (levees and price controls) that triggered reaction across the country that was countered by emergency measures. Question 3 on France required a focus on the contribution of Robespierre, and while most responses explained his role in bringing in the Reign of Terror and inciting violence few responses dealt with the complexity of Robespierre's contribution. High-scoring responses made reference to Robespierre's earlier contribution as a tireless advocate for liberty and defence of the principle of the rights of man.

The responses to both Questions 2 and 3 on Russia were varied. Question 2 required an examination of the economic effects of War Communism, but frequently students included a discussion of social and political consequences, which was not required. Many even extended to the period of the NEP, and again this was outside the parameters of the question. The highest scoring responses were therefore tightly focused on state monopoly of food supply and nationalisation of industry, with statistics employed as evidence of the economic effects. Similarly

Question 3 elicited many responses that deviated from an explanation of the challenges caused by the Kronstadt Revolt to include descriptions of how the Bolsheviks dealt with the rebels and again ventured into narrative of the Tenth Party Congress and the decision to implement the NEP. A number of responses confused the Kronstadt Revolt with the attack on the Winter Palace in October 1917. Other inaccuracies included confusing the CHEKA with the Kronstadters.

The responses to China, Section A, Question 2 included relevant information but there was limited understanding of land reform as a means of making the peasant population complicit in the violence of the campaign and thus fearful of the power of the cadres and the CCP. Question 3 on the political conditions that led to the fall of Lin Biao elicited some high-scoring responses reflecting a good grasp of his rise to power and subsequent demise. Low-scoring responses spent too much time narrating details of the plot to kill him in a plane crash.

The following response is a high-scoring response because it focuses on the question and uses the date in the question as a parameter; it also includes detailed evidence.

America, Section A, Question 1

George Washington's leadership during the Revolutionary War (19th April 1775 -3rd September 1783) and his influence over the formation of the new government, were pivotal to the development of American society by 1789.

Washington's leadership and actions during the War of Independence were crucial to the Continental Army's victory. The Continental Army, according to Friedrich von Stuben were "ragtag, barely trained, half-starving and woefully equipped" at the start of the conflict, however Washington was able to prevent the complete collapse of the army. He used floggings to enforce military discipline, hands on leadership to earn respect and endured the adversities of the soldiers to boost morale. He led the army to victory at the Battle of Trenton (26th December 1776), pressured Congress to supply his soldiers at Valley Forge (19th December 1777 – 9th June 1778) and ensured final victory for the Continentals by defeating the British at the Battle of Yorkton (28th September-19th October 1781). As best phrased by historian Ernst Breisach, Washington has become the "personification of the virtues the young republic wished its citizens to have" through his inspiring leadership during the war. Evidently George Washington's ability to achieve victory during the War of Independence permitted America's permanent separation from Britain.

Furthermore Washington's influence over the creation of the new government was crucial to the post-war American society. Washington's decision to criticise rather than support the Newburgh Conspiracy (10th March 1783) and Shays' Rebellion prevented the complete capitulation of Congress. Additionally, as expressed by Washington himself, post-war America needed a "power that could pervade the whole nation". His support for a more stronger central government, enabling the signing of the Constitution (17th September) at the Philadelphia Convention (27th May – 17th September). Furthermore by "having not only grown grey, but almost blind in the service of (his) country", Washington's letter of approval persuaded many Anti Federalists to support the Ratification of the Constitution (21st June 1788). Ultimately, George Washington's contribution to the new regime was clearly significant, as on the 30th April 1789, the American citizens inaugurated him as the first president of the United States.

Similarly, the following response avoids the temptation to narrate and focuses on the specifics of the question.

Russia, Section A, Question 2

Justified by Lenin on the premise of 'war and ruin', War Communism (1918-1921) sacrificed the economy in order to ensure a Red victory during the Civil War and the distribution of popular communist thought. Firstly, whilst the previous economic policy of State Capitalism was established largely to transition between the previous government and the Bolshevik's 'seizure of power' (Pipes), War Communism actively degraded the economy. Grain requisitioning, a form of ensuring 'everything for the front' (Trotsky), deprived the peasantry of the capacity to sell

surplus, abetted by the ban on private trade and small business. War Communism actively deprived the countryside therefore not only of economic means of profit, however also the capacity to survive. The 9.5 million deaths of starvation due to War Communism during the Civil War (1918-1921) were perceived to be a necessary sacrifice, the deteriorating economy merely symptomatic of the 'party's authoritarian tendencies' (Fitzpatrick). Secondly, War Communism deprived the cities of an industrial workforce. The nationalisation of industry found within 'the siege economy with a communist ideology' (Nove) forced strict measures to be adopted within industry. Compelling an exodus from the cities to the barren countryside, the 1/3 wages during 1913 for workers merely accentuated the declining economic climate. By exacting close quarter control, funds generated from industry during the Civil War actively declined. Thirdly, the burden to the economy due to War Communism ensured that continuation of the economic policy was impractical during the post-Civil War tensions. Depicted to be 'a society that remained at war with itself' (Schlesinger), the enactment of the New Economic Policy (1921-27) was depicted as 'economic concessions to avoid political ones' (Bukharin). The lift on War Communism bans of private trade and small business revitalised the economy enabling 'an economic breathing spell' (Lenin) intended to ultimately enable the Bolsheviks to safeguard the regime and 'cling to power' (Deutscher).

Section B, Question 1 – Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	3	4	4	4	5	6	6	8	5	8	6	8	7	7	5	4	3	2	1	1	9.4

The assessment criteria for the essays were printed on the last page of the examination. These provided guidelines about how students should have approached the task, including the 'construction of a coherent and relevant historical argument that addresses the specific demands of the essay question'. However, a number of essays were long narratives covering the whole Area of Study and gave the impression of prepared answers. Another assessment criterion for the Essay was the use of primary sources and historical interpretations as evidence. Only the highest scoring responses included accurate and relevant primary sources.

Essays responding to the question set for the American Revolution were generally good. The high-scoring responses saw the two events specified in the question as falling on a continuum of events and policies that divided Britain and the American colonies. The Boston Tea Party was identified as representing colonial determination to resist British authority, while the Coercive Acts were indicative of parliament's intransigence. There was acknowledgment that the two events could not be seen in isolation and that there were many causes of the American Revolution. Essays characteristic of the middle range described the events of the Boston Tea Party and outlined the contents of the Coercive Acts.

The essay question for France asked students to comment on the essential nature of the *Cahiers de Doléances* and political pamphlets in mobilising society and contributing to the outbreak of revolution in France. High-scoring responses dealt with both the written texts and showed an understanding of what they entailed and how they acted to either focus criticism on the Ancien Régime or inspire rebellion. They could name documents (primary evidence) and explain the contents. While most students referred to Abbe Sieyès's 'What is the Third Estate?', many responses were very general, lacking in dates and evidence and inclined to list numerous causes of the French Revolution without addressing the question.

The essay topic for Russia began with a proposition that the October 1917 Revolution was dependent on Lenin and asked to what extent this view was accurate. High-scoring responses answered the question directly, but many presented narratives that began in 1905 and gave the impression of being pre-prepared. Factual errors in the form of incorrect dates and names (for

example, the Red Army instead of the Red Guard) and poor use of historical terminology characterised many responses.

Students responding to the essay on China were provided with a prompt about the political effects of the Sino-Japanese War 1937–1945. High-scoring responses used a range of evidence to show that the Guomindang (GMD) was weakened both by its own decisions and strategies as well as by the circumstances that saw them engage more directly with the Japanese. There was acknowledgment that although the GMD and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had initially joined in a Second United Front, this quickly disintegrated, with the CCP retreating to Yanan.

The example below is an essay that scored in the high range. It uses evidence to support the argument and is a clearly structured response to the question.

China

The Sino-Japanese War of 1937 to 1945 revealed the limitations of Guomindang strategy whilst nevertheless strengthening the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party's revolutionary aspirations. Numerous defeats and perpetual political shortcomings throughout this period highlighted the lacking leadership of the GMD party to wage effective war, for the CCP's minimal, yet nevertheless effective engagement created a truly battle-hardened force. This would ultimately amalgamate in the CCP's effective and penultimate methods of warfare utilised successfully throughout the Civil War of 1945 to 1949.

The Sino-Japanese War exposed the unequivocal pitfalls of Jiang Jieshi's leadership and the GMD overarching strategy relying on America's Lend-Lease Program; the GMD accepted weaponry and aircraft from the USA, engendering popular dissatisfaction considering the existent widespread desire to transcend reliance on international powers. This "stupidity" would extend to the GMD's inadequate mobilization strategies, for an unwillingness to employ conventional guerrilla strategies engendered defeats at the Battle of Shanghai in 1937 and a disastrous orgy of rape, assault and murder at the Rape of Nanjing in 1937. Popular perception of Jiang as an inexperienced, incompetent "peanut" is reflected in his ill-informed decision to stockpile weapons for future use against the CCP, with his decision to break the dam walls of the Yangtze River, flooding over 3000 peasant properties, catalysing further widespread disillusionment. Despite his belief that the Sino-Japanese War could be the nation's "rebirth", Jiang's campaign severely weakened the GMD.

On the other hand, the cunning methods adopted by Mao through his direction of the CCP Red Army brewed further support for the assertion that the "masses can do anything" is evidenced in his unwillingness to conscript soldiers, dispelling the repressive and brutal methods adopted by the GMD whilst presenting the Red Army as an inviting and respectful force. Additionally, the extension of further freedoms to females within the Red Army throughout this campaign notably the abolishing of foot binding and slavery, strengthened the perception of the Red Army as a truly egalitarian fighting force, supporting Mao's belief that "women hold up half the sky". Furthermore, the Red Army is credited with "advanced" mobilization strategies (Fairbank). Reliance on guerrilla warfare, despite participating in a mere 500 of 40,000 skirmishes throughout the CCP-GMD joint campaign, allowed the CCP to secure a key victory at the Hundred Regiments Offensive in 1940. Through asserting its Red Army as an inviting and progressive force, whilst nonetheless securing key victories, the CCP strengthened their revolutionary campaign throughout the Sino-Japanese War.

Ultimately, it is through the experiences garnered throughout the Sino-Japanese War that the CCP would emerge victorious from the Civil war in 1949 and complete the Revolution. The CCP is credited with possessing and wielding an advanced propaganda machine largely developed through the distribution of revolutionary posters and pamphlets throughout the Sino-Japanese War. This would ultimately allow Mao to "engage with the peasantry" (Fairbank) throughout the Civil war, in fact receiving logistical support from 2 million peasants in Nanchan. This rivalled Jiang's prioritization of acquiring land albeit at the expense of men. In fact whilst Jiang is said to have accessed 173,000 square kilometres of land, the loss of approximately 200,000 soldiers,

although statistics differ among historians, reveal the consequences of a poorly developed military strategy throughout the Sino-Japanese War. As such Mao's ability to engage peasants "without coercion" (Fairbank) and adopt adequate military strategies throughout the Sino-Japanese War would ultimately strengthen the CCP's Civil War Campaign prior to 1949 Revolution.

The Sino-Japanese War exposed the shortcomings of Jiang's leadership and the GMD whilst illuminating the CCP's advanced strategy and ability to engage the masses. This would ultimately result in the CCP's success throughout the Civil war of 1945 to 1949.