



2021 VCE History: Revolutions external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 VCE examination was based on the VCE History study design that was accredited until 2021.

The examination consisted of two sections and students were required to answer on a different revolution in each section. Most students wrote their responses in the correct section and used the allocated space and marks as a guide for the length and depth of their answers. However, a small number of students wrote on the same revolution in both Section A and Section B.

Students were aware that the different parts of the examination required different skills and generally crafted their answers accordingly. For short-answer questions the highest-scoring responses were succinct, and the analysis of sources was supported with relevant historical knowledge and demonstrated historical thinking concepts. For the extended questions and essay option, the higher-scoring responses were further characterised by precise use of primary evidence such as statistics, legislation, quotations, correct names of social groups and events with dates. They also demonstrated a very good grasp of chronology and understanding of the command terms used in the question.

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.

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	3	25	55	14	2	2.9

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	3	27	52	14	2	2.8

In Section A Question 1 and Section B Question 2 students were presented with a range of sources and short-answer questions to test their skills of comprehension and analysis.

In Section A Question 1 students were provided with two written sources, a primary source document and a historical interpretation. Each source had an introduction and an attribution to assist students place the source in context.

The command word 'outline' indicated these questions required students to give a succinct overview of their argument, while 'explain' directed students to give a detailed account, using 'own knowledge', of relevant historical evidence, to support their response and provide context.

Responses that scored full marks addressed all aspects of the question, included relevant evidence from the sources, and integrated this with their own knowledge, which demonstrated an ability to infer. However, most responses lacked detail and relied heavily on quotes from the sources.

The sources for America focused on the battles of Lexington and Concord. Most students were familiar with the Coercive Acts and knew why these increased tensions in the colonies, but few students expanded on the circumstances that led to the powder alarms, which was the subject of Source 1. Responses to Question 1b. relied heavily on a description of the events of Lexington and Concord without addressing the crux of the question, which was how colonists perceived these battles.

In responding to the questions on France most students placed the Réveillon riots in the context of the rising tensions in Paris. Analysis of Source 2, which was a historical interpretation of the effects of the 1789 harvest crisis, presented students with a greater challenge and few connected the economic downturn with growing revolutionary sentiment. The higher-scoring responses did highlight this link and argued the food crisis heightened expectations following the convocation of the Estates-General.

Responses to the Russian option were generally good. Students were familiar with Lenin's April Theses and extracted salient information from Source 1, which was a draft of the Theses. Similarly, there were sound explanations for the increased support for the Bolsheviks after July 1917. However, most responses focused on the capital gained from the failed Kornilov Revolt and did not extend to the period when the Bolsheviks gained majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets.

The following mid-range response to Question 1a. on Russia is succinct and demonstrates a comprehension of the source material informed by some of the student's own knowledge.

Lenin believed that the Provisional Government could give the people 'neither peace, nor bread, nor complete freedom' (Source 1) as it represented the 'capitalists and landowners'. This is due to the fact that the Provisional Government was formed from 12 former Duma deputies, who thus were representative of the old Tsarist regime. Moreover, he believed that it could not 'bring peace' due to it

being 'bound by treaties and financial obligations' (S1), as Russia was funded by Western loans. As well as this, he outlined how it 'cannot give the people bread' (S1) due to their 'lack of supplies' and 'poor distribution' (S1). Overall, Lenin's opinion of the Provisional Government was that it 'promised ...liberties' but did 'nothing to fulfil' (S1) them, and was thus weak and did not represent the needs and interests of the people.

The sources for China contained the revolutionary ideas of two key leaders, Mao Zedong and Sun Yixian. While students seemed familiar with their ideologies, they relied heavily on the sources and provided little of their own knowledge. In contrast, the following high-scoring response included historical information and provided context for the answer.

Mao whom creatively interpreted the complexities of Marxist-Leninism theory, neglected the urban workers as the revolutionary class, and rather elected to favour the peasantry. Described by Chen Duxiu as 'scattered', the peasantry was glorified by Mao to be 'the main potential force for revolution in China' (S2). Encompassing the largest portion of the population (approx. 90%) in China, the peasants synonymously experienced the largest extent of ostracism and disrespect. Mao hoped to utilise the existing dissatisfaction of the peasantry to produce a 'revolutionary arm[y]' (S2). Believing with the promise of 'unconditional redistribution' (S2) of land, the peasants would be encouraged to revolt against the oppressive system. In conjunction with the promise of land reform, Mao and Zhu De's 'people's army' as established at the Jiangxi Soviet, sought to treat the peasantry with the utmost respect, to ultimately aggravate their hatred at the Guomindang and initiate revolution. Belief of an agrarian revolution in conjunction to a socialist one, prompted Mao to greater believe in a CCP victory with the help of the peasantry.

Section B – Revolution 2

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	4	22	53	16	2	2.8

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	4	23	54	13	2	2.8

In Section B, each revolutionary context comprised two written texts and an image that had an introduction to assist with the analysis. Posters, paintings, political cartoons and propaganda are rich sources of historical evidence. The information contained in each helps students to contextualise the source and demonstrate why a particular perspective was held. It is a skill that is integral to the interpretation of the past and should be practised regularly. The higher-scoring responses made good use of the visual representation but generally students did not use the visual sources well and many responses made no reference to the images.

For the American context, a map was provided showing how the Treaty of Paris 1783 changed the boundaries of the United States. Higher-scoring responses noted the position of the Proclamation Line of 1763 and described how the new boundary more than doubled the territory available for exploration and settlement. They complemented the analysis of the map with inclusion of material from the articles of the

Treaty (Source 1) and explained that the new boundaries were also there to prevent disputes arising between the newly sovereign states and Britain. The following high-scoring response uses the map effectively, incorporating it with information from the written text and the student's own knowledge.

The Treaty of Paris (1783) saw that Britain would respect the 'United States...to be free [and] sovereign' (S1), ending the War of Independence (1775-1783) and seeing Britain's 37,000 troops leave the states. Further, the Treaty of Paris saw America's area double, as the 'Proclamation line of 1763' (S2) was abolished and Britain ceded all land West of the Ohio River. Moreover, the Treaty's terms held that the confiscated land of the loyalists (2.5 million acres seized from 59 loyalists in New York) be subject to the 'restitution of all estates' (S1), preventing more land seizures from loyalists. Further, the states received unrestricted access to fishing in the 'Mississippi River' (S2) however the terms that England would leave the Canadian Border forts was not observed until they were 'evacuated by June 1795' (S2).

The image provided for France showed revolutionaries forcing members of the clergy into a press to reduce their size. Higher-scoring responses highlighted how the clergy had previously held privileges reflected in the elaborately dressed and rotund priest. They linked this to the extract of the articles from the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (Source 2), which included the extinguishing of titles and offices as well as a reduction in the number of dioceses.

The following high-scoring response is a good example of visual analysis and clearly identifies the main features of the cartoon.

Following the formation of the National Assembly, many reforms were made to the First Estate in order for the nation to clear its debt and reflect more enlightened principles. In Source 1, the image illustrates a fat member of the First Estate waiting to be 'pressed' by 'The Patriotic Fat Remover'. This highlights the National Assembly's Biens Nationaux (Nov 1789) in which the Church lands were nationalised and the wealth of the First Estate was consequently diminished. Furthermore, Source 2 describes the articles of the National Assembly's Civil Constitution of the Clergy (CCC), which states that 'each department shall form a single diocese', 'all titles and offices...abolished', bishops and priests selected by 'election', all Bishops are to take the Clerical Oath, 'to be loyal to the nation the law and the King' among other conditions. This is significant because it demonstrates the large scale of reforms envisaged by the new society in order to reflect more liberal ideas

Students who responded to the questions on Russia used the written and visual sources on the Kronstadt Rebellion to good effect. The ferocity on the faces of Red Army soldiers as they attacked the naval base was linked to the written text describing the treatment of the Kronstadt rebels. Higher-scoring responses noted that despite the determination of the rebels to hold their position (an important feature of the painting), the Red Army was provided with enough ammunition to quell the uprising and Trotsky was determined that this would be the only outcome.

Similarly, students responding to the questions on China integrated information from the written interpretation of the aims of the Great Leap Forward with material gleaned from the propaganda poster. For example, higher-scoring responses noted that the reference to a 'Sputnik Co-operative' or model province (Source 1) was an important feature in the poster (Source 2). They also highlighted that the poster was a piece of propaganda designed to persuade people that their efforts in the Great Leap Forward would result in unimagined yields.

Section A – Question 1c.; Section B – Question 2c.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	4	8	16	20	18	14	10	4	1	0.5	4.4

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	15	8	10	13	13	13	11	9	5	2	1	3.8

Question 1c. provided the opportunity for students to develop a more nuanced understanding of the causes of the revolution, while Question 2c. gave them the chance to look in more depth at the consequences of the selected revolution.

Question 1c. required students to ‘analyse’: a command word that involves examining a range of factors and the relationship between them to arrive at an understanding of the past. For Question 2c. the command word was ‘evaluate’ and this required the skill of making an informed judgement about a piece of legislation, action or policy in shaping the consequences of the revolution. The sources provided a starting point and effective responses followed the instructions to use them to frame their discussion. Students who gave stronger responses tended to start with a single contention and then organise their arguments and evidence into short, structured paragraphs that periodically referred to the question. The historical knowledge in these responses was comprehensive, detailed and accurate, while the argument reflected sophistication and nuance. Higher-scoring responses also demonstrated historical thinking through critical evaluation of the sources. They acknowledged that each source represented a perspective and explored this in its historical context and where appropriate they compared the opinions with other interpretations. For example, in analysing how Lenin undermined popular support for the Provisional Government, students recognised that the Draft Theses (Source 1), delivered in March 1917, was an example of propaganda and that Lenin promised to deliver on issues important to the Russian people.

In Question 1c. students referring to the causes of the American Revolution saw Lexington and Concord as the moment when armed conflict between the colonists and the British troops became a reality, yet there was a realisation that this was the culmination of years of divergent opinions on Parliament’s right to govern the colonies. Question 2c. asked students to evaluate the extent to which economic development challenged the new regime, and higher-scoring responses concluded that while the Treaty of Paris 1783 provided opportunities for the development of new markets, this was thwarted by debt and recession. However, responses to both questions were characterised by a lack of specific evidence and many deviated from the topic.

Question 1c. for the French Revolution focused on the extent to which economic conditions played a part in causing tensions. There were some tightly controlled responses that built on the material provided in the sources and weighed the contribution of other factors. Question 2c. also drew some good responses that evaluated how the schism within the church affected the outcome of the revolution. The higher-scoring responses were characterised by appropriate historical terminology such as ‘refractory’ and ‘juring priests’.

There were some excellent responses to Questions 1c. and 2c. on the Russian Revolution. In Question 1c. high-scoring responses provided a sustained analysis of many factors that assisted the Bolsheviks undermine the Provisional Government, including the insistence on ‘All Power to the Soviets’ and continued

insistence to withdraw from the war. These responses contrasted with the more common narrative that focused solely on Lenin's April Theses. In Question 2c. students were asked to evaluate the effect of the Kronstadt Rebellion on the decisions made at the Tenth Party Congress. Many responses failed to address the introduction of the (New Economic Policy (NEP) and the resolution 'On Party Unity' even though both were explicitly named in the question.

Question 1c. on China asked students to analyse the importance of revolutionary leaders in challenging the existing order up to 1949. The better responses referred to the ideologies developed by Sun Yixian and Mao Zedong but also included the role of Jiang Jieshi as leader of the Guomindang (GMD). This ability to use and expand on the sources characterised the more effective responses. This was also the case for Question 2c. where students were asked to evaluate the impact of mass campaigns. Most students focused on the Great Leap Forward, which was the subject of the source material, but higher-scoring responses recognised that the question was looking for extrapolation from this campaign to others that were initiated by the Chinese Communist Party.

The following high-scoring response to Question 2c. is an example of how the sources could be used as a springboard to the wider question of the impact of mass campaigns on the Chinese people.

The Chinese Communist Party's mass campaigns continually oppressed the Chinese population, both physically but also through the contradiction of mass-line principles, and resulted in disastrous effects.

Firstly, early campaigns such as the suppression of counter revolutionaries (Mar 1950-Jun 1953). Thought Reform (Sep 1951) and the Three and Five Anti Campaigns (1953) physically oppressed the people. Over 700,000 people were executed in early campaigns with one million being subject to intellectual suppression and public denunciations, degrading the country into a 'carefully cultivated auschwitz of the mind' (Dikkoter). They also banned mass organisations that the people were involved in, such as Christian Churches and Buddhist Temples, and therefore politically and physically oppressed the people.

In addition, the CCP's Great Leap Forward (GLF) resulted in the 'worst disaster of the 20th Century' (Fenby), the Three Years Bad Famine (1959-1962), which resulted in 40-80 million deaths. Not only did the mass campaigns of the GLF contradict Maoist principles of mass line, but the 'reckless nonsense' (Ryan) of the entire affair allowed for the party cadres to accrue the 'powers of life and death' (S3) as food stocks diminished and were misreported (with some 250 Million tonnes being produced with 410 million being recorded in 1958), and hence the 'food supply exhausted'(S3). This also led to the emergence of 'famine culture' eating 'bark and elms' (S3) but also turning to cannibalism with some 456 people in Linxia city 'barbarically consuming the remains' [Lihei] of 358 others, and hence the mass campaigns of the GLF drastically degraded the livelihoods of the people of China.

Furthermore, the CCP's mass campaigns during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1979) also destroyed many people's of China's livelihoods, with campaigns such as the destruction of the 'Four Olds' (old culture, habits, customs and ideas) leading to the persecution and denunciation of tens of thousands of citizens, whereas other campaigns such as the 'clearing of class ranks' movement, encouraged the denunciation of landlords deemed too 'bourgeois' and as 'bad elements', cultivating in 1.5 million deaths, in what Evans depicts as 'the most violent aspect of the Cultural Revolution'. In sum, the mass campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party greatly impacted the Chinese population, through physical, violent, intellectual and political denunciation and persecution, along side misgoverning that resulted in consequences of 'cataclysmic proportions' (Ryan).)

Section A – Revolution 1

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	15	8	10	13	13	13	11	9	5	2	1	3.8

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	18	9	10	12	14	12	10	8	4	2	1	3.6

Questions 2 and 3 were framed by the key knowledge and key skills articulated in the Study Design.

Each question began with the command word 'Explain'. Therefore, to score in the high range, students needed to give a sophisticated and detailed account of how the revolution was consolidated, challenged, changed or showed elements of continuity. The questions contained date parameters, referred specifically to the contributions of an individual, or asked for discussion of two aspects of the government. The highest-scoring responses indicated that they had read the question carefully, and usually began with a contention followed by detailed, precise and accurate information. They also contained reference to primary sources and historical interpretations. Responses that did not score well were narrative in style, ignored parameters such as dates, only dealt with part of the question and lacked historical terminology.

Students responded well to the questions on America. Question 2 required an explanation of how the process of ratification challenged the new regime. Evidence used in effective responses included the protracted debates at the Constitutional Convention, compromises between the North and South over issues of taxation and slavery, and the division between the Federalist and Anti-Federalist camps. Question 3 focused on the impact of the revolution on Native Americans and produced disparate answers. The higher-scoring responses included details about alliances with the British in the War of Independence and how this resulted in Native Americans being treated as a vanquished group in the Treaty of Paris 1783. There was also discussion about how conflict ensued with different tribes once the Proclamation Line no longer existed. Responses that lacked this precision tended to be general and did little more than claim the Native Americans were dispossessed but offered no evidence. A few responses confused Native Americans with African Americans, highlighting the need to read questions carefully.

The following high-scoring response answers the question within its time frame.

The livelihood of Native Americans altered drastically following the Declaration of Independence on the 4th July 1776. Tribes were not unified in their actions during the Revolutionary War, with some serving on the side of the Americans, largely in the Rhode Island battalion after they were offered land grants in 1778. However, the majority of Native Americans who fought did so for the British, under the promise of limiting westward expansion into their territory. Abandoned by the British, who failed to acknowledge them in the Treaty of Paris 1783, Native tribes were often coerced into treaties that granted the Americans significant land rights often 'concluded in an atmosphere of intimidation' (Wood). British officers ordered by the King to maintain forts in the north of America near Canada encouraged Native Tribes to attack Americans, as did the Spanish in Louisiana and Georgia, especially against frontier settlers. Following the denial of all treaties the Western Confederacy of Native Tribes was formed in 1786, with the Northwest Indian War beginning in 1787, which would rage for a decade and leave thousands dead. The famed

'Logan's Raid' in 1789 is an example of this. The 'lure of cheap land outweighed the threat of attacks' (Wood) for frontier settlers, often pushing Native Americans into reserves and out of their traditional land.

The quality of responses to both Questions 2 and 3 for France varied. Question 2 required an examination of the extent to which popular sovereignty and representative government were achieved in the new regime. Most students did not show an understanding of the terminology and seemed unable to differentiate between the two terms. Question 3 elicited some good responses that demonstrated knowledge of Marat as one of the more extreme voices in the French Revolution and a vigorous defender of the sans-culottes. These responses contrasted with those that lacked precise information on Marat's role in the revolution, discussing instead the actions of Danton and Robespierre or focusing on the murder of Marat.

Question 2 on Russia required students to explain how the issuing of new decrees by Sovnarkom after October 1917 sought to achieve revolutionary change. Astute responses noted the date and began with the raft of legislation introduced in the first few months that included no less than 116 decrees. The decrees more frequently mentioned included the decrees on Peace, Land, the Right to Self-Determination and Marriage. Some students focused their entire response on War Communism, which did not come into operation until mid-1918. Question 3 required an explanation of Trotsky's role in the Civil War. Some excellent responses referred to Trotsky's skill as a tactician, citing his attachment of party commissars to each military unit and insistence that soldiers swore a 'socialist oath' of loyalty. Unfortunately, some students mistook Trotsky for Dzerzhinsky and discussed the role of the Cheka.

The following high-scoring response to Question 2 contains a range of historical evidence.

The issuing of New Decrees after the creation of Sovnarkom in October 1917 helping in achieving revolutionary change. For instance, on the 27th of October the Bolsheviks issued two decrees regarding the ability of the peasants to take noble land as well as the Decree on the Press which instituted censorship. These reforms were desired to 'insight, inspire and instigate revolution' according to Donald Sutherland as it attempted to revigorated the peasantry and make them loyal to the Bolsheviks, whilst also allowing the Bolsheviks to consolidate there power through censorship. This paired with the Workers Control Decree on 14th November 1917 marked 'a reversion to the autocratic policies of the Tsar' (R. Pipes) as in order to institute revolutionary change the Bolsheviks attempted to reorganize the system of power around themselves. Additionally on the 2nd of November 1917 the Bolsheviks issued the Decree ofn self determination which allowed for the certain minority groups within the former Russian Empire to reassert their sovereignty. Such a decree facilitated revolutionary change as it contrasted the former draconian Tsarist policies of Russification whereby '44.3% of the population' (Ascher) who were minorities were expected to conform to Russian ways of living. This achieved change as countries such as Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declared their independence in 1917-1918 fulfilling the promises of the new decree. Further it was the Bolsheviks workers control Decree (14th November 1917) which allowed them greater control of the proletariat and allowed for the nationalization of factories under the workers. Ascher notes that 'for every factory formally nationalized by the state, four more were seized by workers' demonstrating how the new decrees insighted revolutionary action and change.

The responses to Question 2 on China included relevant information on the extent to which peasants' lives changed because of agrarian land reform, establishment of collectives and mutual aid teams. However, many responses went off topic by discussing the Great Leap Forward, which was outside the time frame. To answer Question 3 adequately students needed to read the question carefully; the wording was 'explain how the treatment of Peng Dehuai changed the direction of the revolution'. So, while information on what Peng did was relevant, the focus of the question was on the punitive changes that occurred because of his criticism of Maoist policy.

Section B – Revolution 2

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	2	3	3	4	5	7	8	9	9	9	7	8	6	7	4	3	2	1	0.5	0.5	9.2

Constructing and communication in an essay is an important and central skill in history. It requires the development of a tightly structured and coherent argument supported by relevant historical knowledge and a range of evidence. The argument is given cogency by carefully selected evidence drawn from primary sources and by reference to historical interpretations, where appropriate. Unfortunately, the incorporation of historical interpretations remains problematic for students. Many responses made references to historians' views but in a way that did not add to the argument and instead was disruptive to the flow of the narrative. Another practice used frequently as 'historical interpretation' was a single word placed in parentheses and attributed to a historian. This is not historical interpretation and without explanation or elaboration does not add to the argument. Finally, if students refer to historians, they should ensure that the particular individual actually wrote on the revolution in question and they should spell the historians' names correctly.

Each of the essay topics for the different revolutionary contexts included a prompt and students were asked to what extent they agreed with the view presented. The proposition for the American essay option stated that 'popular movements made the most significant contribution to the outbreak of revolution'. Higher-scoring responses understood that there were several popular groups that mobilised and challenged the existing order, including the Sons of Liberty, Daughters of Liberty, Committees of Correspondence and the Provincial Congresses. Successful approaches frequently took a longitudinal view that focused on the interplay between popular movements, ideas and individuals and the British Mercantilist policy. An alternative structure was the chronological approach that examined the revolution as it unfolded and placed an emphasis on the role of popular movements at key moments in the revolution. However, many responses failed to identify the composition of the popular movements and the ideologies that motivated them, and many others focused solely on an incident such as the Boston Massacre or the Boston Tea Party. These arguments did not show how revolutionary activity was sustained over a long period prior to the Declaration of Independence, nor did they discuss the essence of what drove resistance.

Essay responses on France highlighted the calling of the Estates-General as an important cause of the revolution; however, few responses addressed the other part of the question relating to the problems in its regulation. The higher-scoring responses argued that the calling of the Estates-General, which had not occurred for over a hundred years, was significant but it was issues about its composition and voting procedures that created intense debate. Unfortunately, many responses focused on food shortages and rising bread prices and left discussion of the convocation of the Estates-General to the concluding remarks.

Generally, students engaged well with the question on the causes of the Russian Revolution. The higher-scoring responses argued that there were myriad tensions in Tsarist Russia such as social inequality, reluctance to enact political reform and failure to embrace technological change. They then explained how World War I exposed those weaknesses and that without a responsible form of government blame was directed at Tsar Nicholas. As in the other three revolutions there were responses that seemed prepared and were extremely general, demonstrating little engagement with the question.

Students responding to the question on China were presented with the contention that the actions of the GMD towards the Chinese people led to their defeat by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949. High-scoring responses situated the discussion in the period of the Chinese Civil War and explicitly linked long-term tensions such as corruption within the GMD to short-term causes. A number of narrative responses focused on the communists without forming any clear links to the question.

The following high-scoring essay is a response to the French Revolution option. It is a structured and sustained argument, backed by historical evidence and relevant historians' interpretations.

The calling and regulation of the Estates-General (EG) (2 May 1789) was the most important cause of the French Revolution of 1789 in that it exposed the divisions between nobility, bourgeoisie, and royalty. The EG's calling, a result of the Aristocratic Revolt (1788), directly undermined the King's authority enabling revolution. The EG's regulation was the key issue that prompted an enlightened bourgeoisie to form the National Assembly (NA), and seize power- thus it was a key cause of revolution. However, the actions of urban workers were a key cause and securing factor in the revolution, but were unrelated to the EG.

The EG's calling enabled revolution as it demonstrated the nobility's ability to undermine royal authority- allowing the same to be done in 1789. The EG was called as a result of nobles' refusal to pass Calonne's plan for the improvement of finances (20 August 1786) to solve the financial crisis, which included a universal land tax. This tax would remove the first two Estates' tax immunity, which 'denied the royal treasury desperately needed funds' (Schama). However, this prompted noble opposition because 'their own cherished fiscal immunities were threatened' (Rude) and instead, they demanded the calling of the EG to consider reforms instead. The nature of noble opposition to reform undermined the King, cynically manipulating the language of popular sovereignty against perceived ministerial despotism to appear as 'the echo of the public of Paris' (de Lamoignon). This contradicted the King's divine right to rule, and thus, arguments that 'taxes should be consented by those who had to bear them' (Paris Parlement remonstrance), undermined the regime. Never was this more evident than on the Day of Tiles (7/6/1788) the first instance of political violence in the revolution which 'signified the breakdown of royal authority' (Schama). This gambit succeeded forcing the King to abandon the land tax in September 1787 and bring forward the Estates-General (8/8/1788). Robespierre argued that 'the nobles... gave the original impulse to the revolution' because by calling the EG the King admitted his political loss to the language of popular sovereignty undermining his authority. Thus, the EG's calling was a key cause of revolution.

Divisions over the EG's regulation prompted the bourgeois revolt, and thus were a key cause of revolution. By 1789, much of the bourgeoisie had become 'an enlightened generation' (Bailly) with beliefs such as Rousseau's that 'no man has any natural authority over his fellow man'. These ideas formed the basis of debate over doubling the Third Estate's representation and voting by head- those of natural equality. Yet, they contradicted the absolute monarchy and estates system which were institutions of inequality. Thus, the proposal to regulate the EG by giving deputies equal rights, regardless of Estate, 'undermined the ideological foundations of the established order' (Soboul). This idea was promoted by Abbe Sieyes in 'What is the Third Estate' (January 1789), a pamphlet that argued that because of the debate over EG regulation 'the Third Estate must assemble apart' (Sieyes). This idea came to fruition on 17 June 1789 with the National Assembly's (NA) formation, a body of enlightened equality between deputies and a protest against the King's failure to allow EG deputies to vote by head. Prompted by the issue of the EG's regulation the NA seized power in further acts of defiance such as the Tennis Court Oath (20/6/1789) and Séance Royale (23/6/1789). Thus, it was the EG's regulation that sparked the bourgeois revolution acting as a key cause.

However, the actions of the workers, unrelated to the EG, helped cause and secure revolution. Worker unrest was material, prompted by the Harvest Crisis of 1788. According to Rude, the crisis 'added a particular intensity to public agitation: which first manifested at the Revellion Riots (April 1789), for which 'the pretext [was] the high price of bread' (Marquis de Ferrieres). Worker unrest was again demonstrated at the Storming of the Bastille (14/7/1789) which while partially prompted by Necker's dismissal (11/7/1789), was undoubtedly intensified by bread prices rising to 15 sous of worker's 20 sous daily wage. Yet, it was this event that 'saved the Assembly' (McPhee) because it forced the King to withdraw his 25,000 troops from Paris (15 July 1789), an admission of his loss of absolute authority. This event solidified that the 1789 revolution was indeed a revolution, not just a procedural dispute about the EG's regulation. Worker power over the King was again demonstrated in the October Days (5-6 October 1789),

in which he was forced to move to Paris. Once again workers' actions had intensified, influenced, and solidified the revolution. As such, McPhee argues that 'the revolution of bourgeois deputies [was] only secured ...by the active intervention of the public of Paris'. Worker action, with motivations unrelated to the EG was a key cause of revolution.

The EG's calling was a key cause of revolution in 1789, as it was the result of Aristocratic Revolt which undermined royal power, allowing the same to be done in 1789. The regulation of the EG was a crucial cause as it was the issue that prompted the bourgeoisie to seize power, becoming the revolution's basis. However unrelated worker action was a hugely significant cause of revolution as well.