
A-level History

7042/2P The Transformation of China, 1936–1997
Report on the Examination

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General

As the first year of this new specification it was pleasing to see so many students tackle these questions successfully both for the compulsory question (Q01) and their choice of essay questions. As this is a depth paper, questions can be focused on a narrow section of the course as was seen this year. On the whole students did manage to address depth type questions well, although some students were limited by their uncertainty over chronology. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session.

Section A

01

In contrast to AS Level, there were two main elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance, tone and emphasis and an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge). Comparison is not a requirement at A-level and where students attempted to compare sources they tended to write much weaker responses as it hindered their evaluation of each source and they tended to take sentences of the sources out of context. The best responses took the sources one at a time and treated them completely separately, perhaps with a short conclusion weighing up the value in relation to the question before moving on to the next source. It was also generally best to evaluate the content in light of the provenance, in other words, assessing the provenance first, before moving on to the content. This tended to help students give a more holistic assessment of the source rather than seeing the provenance and the content as being completely separate. There was no need for a final conclusion beyond the one given to the third source. For this paper in particular, it made sense to deal with the sources in the order presented, as each marked a natural progression from the next. A few students chose to deal with them in a slightly random order and this did not aid their understanding or their response.

Most students were able to engage well with these sources and used them quite successfully to address the question of improved relations between the USA and China in the years 1971/72. On the whole provenance was addressed and understood, for example a pleasing number recognised that the Nixon was having to employ a persuasive argument to convince Congress of the need to make such a big change in their policy towards China, and many recognised both the value and limitations of the joint communique in Source B. The better responses evaluated both the content and provenance of the sources using contextual knowledge, tightly linked both to the source and the question. Weaker responses sometimes wandered from the source, for example going into great detail about the breakdown in relations between the USSR and China, which, whilst valid in helping to evaluate the source, had the danger of wandering too far from the question which was about relations between the USA and China. Another tendency amongst some students was to focus on events a long time in the past or in the future in order to challenge or support sources. This could be relevant, for example the refusal of the US to allow Communist China its seat at the UN, or the example of the Korean War to help illustrate the tension which dominated their previous relations. It was less useful when students cited such examples to suggest that their relations were somehow immutable and that Sources A and B were in some way dishonest as a result. The more able students kept their contextual knowledge relevant to the question and to the point, using that knowledge as a tool to evaluate the sources rather than to dominate or detract from them. As stated above, some students were keen to compare sources, sometimes extracting a line from one source and comparing it with a line from the other. On the whole this approach was not successful as it detracted from the focus of the question which is the individual evaluation of the content and provenance of each source separately, in context. It also led to sentences and

phrases being taken out of context and only partial evaluation of the sources. The strongest responses were those which took the sources one at a time from A to C, which made sense chronologically, and wrote a short conclusion on the value of that source before moving on to the next one.

Finally some students clearly understood the arguments of the sources as well as their provenance but failed to offer any kind of judgement on value. This is an integral part of the question and the failure to make explicit comment on value did reduce the ability to score highly in this question.

Section B

Q2

This was a popular question and many students knew a lot about the importance of military tactics and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the CCP and the GMD to the outcome of the Chinese Civil War. Unfortunately where students tended to be weaker was on this question of foreign intervention. It was important to examine ways in which foreign intervention can be said to be significant even if it wasn't felt to be the most crucial factor, as it was the main focus of the question. It was a failure to fully engage with the question being asked which limited the marks in this question and meant that some students were unable to go beyond level 3 even where their balance was good. However, where students did address this factor both as being significant and not significant, they tended to do very well.

Q3

Where students were able to accurately identify the role of the PLA, for example their propaganda value, or extending communism to areas which were not fully under CCP control at the end of the Civil War, they tended to do well as they were often able to identify balancing factors such as the use of the campaigns or land reform. However, some students were unsure about the PLA and therefore wrote little about them or assumed they were involved in every aspect of consolidation which weakened their responses as their balance was then limited. As the PLA was the focus of the question it was difficult to get above level 3 without some fairly good comment and a number of responses were limited by this.

Q4

A lot of students were able to write quite accurately about economic reforms, some of them supporting their points with precise statistics. Some of them were able to go beyond that to focus on their impact on society, examining the differences between rural and urban areas and the impact of the SEZs. However, some students wrote too much about the reforms themselves and too little about how they impacted on society which was the focus of the question. It was this factor most of all which limited marks on this question. Even so a good number of students were able to offer some convincing comments on both sides of the argument.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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