

# 2023 VCE History: Revolutions external assessment report

## General comments

The 2023 VCE History: Revolutions examination was based on the accredited 2022–2026 study design. It comprised two sections. Section A comprised four questions, of which students were only required to answer two. Section B, an essay, also comprised four questions, of which only one was required to be answered. The total of marks awarded for this examination was 70.

Students chose two revolutions from Section A and one from Section B. Very few students chose to complete more or less than two questions from Section A or more than one essay from Section B. Typically, responses were fairly balanced between both sections of the examination. There was little to suggest that students were sacrificing time for one section over the other.

Students clearly specified the revolution they were addressing and effectively utilised the designated writing spaces. The lines provided beneath each question serve as a guide, indicating the expected amount of writing for each question. There was a clear indication when responses moved into extra writing space and clearly labelled responses in the extra space. Navigating the question-and-answer booklet is a vital skill for all History: Revolutions students, which was done well in 2023.

Some general suggestions for improved performance include the following:

- For lower-order questions (such as ‘identify’ and ‘describe’ questions), when own knowledge is not required, students should aim to clearly transcribe all source material and explicitly use quotation marks to indicate when a source has been used. Dot points are sufficient for a two-mark ‘identify’ question; however, for the four-mark ‘describe’ question, students were expected also to include their own signposted arguments in addition to identifying relevant source material.
- For medium-order questions (such as ‘explain’ and ‘analyse’ questions), students were expected to provide multiple on-topic arguments that combined source material with their own knowledge. Students who transcribed the source material did not score well here, as own knowledge was explicitly required.
- For the higher-order extended response questions (using the ‘evaluate’ command term), a more developed response was required. As detailed in the VCAA glossary of command terms, ‘evaluate’ questions require students to make a clear judgement. The best responses were able to create clear and relevant discussion that addressed the specific demands of the question rather than simply describing as much as they could of the history the students had studied.
- Essay questions require careful consideration of the question asked and a thorough development of ideas, with explicit inclusion of own evidence. Direct reference to source material from Section A should be avoided here. Overall, the essay questions were tackled with mixed success. Students clearly had a lot of detail to provide on their various revolutions; however, many responses developed into simple narration of events. Here, students should aim to provide multiple on-topic ideas and justify all arguments with relevant own knowledge.
- Quotations by contemporary figures can be used throughout the examination when own knowledge or evidence is requested; however, students need to be more critical when utilising historical interpretations. Historical interpretations are not a mandatory element of providing evidence or own knowledge, but they can add great depth and sophistication to a student’s writing when adequately evaluated and contextualised. Simply name-dropping a historian following a short quote is to be avoided. Higher-scoring responses primarily utilised the students ‘own voice’ as the vehicle driving their ideas and not the

considerations of historians. In some cases, students identified a historian relevant to a different revolution or used a historical interpretation outside the context in which it applies. These both indicate a lack of understanding and are to be avoided.

- The VCAA study design clearly indicates the time period relevant to each revolution. Background information provided from outside these ranges is not an acceptable form of own knowledge and should be avoided. Examples include the initial colonisation of the Americas, Alexander II's reign of Russia and the Qing dynasty in China.

## 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 of more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A – Short-answer questions

Section A consisted of four questions, one for each revolution, divided into multiple parts. The Sources book contained the stimulus material and, in each case, comprised a single visual representation, a single written primary source document and two written historical interpretations.

Each revolution option in Section A contained two entry-level questions designed to assess students' understanding of historical material. The questions utilised the command words 'identify' and 'describe', and students were required to use the stimulus material to demonstrate these skills; they were not required to go beyond the source into any own knowledge. Overall, most students demonstrated a high capacity to excel here.

High-scoring responses used dot-points to clearly identify two concrete features in the two-mark questions. Signposting was also used; however, this was not required for the two-mark question. In the four-mark questions, students who described the various features and connected them to clear elements of the source scored quite well. However, in some instances, students substituted references to the source material with their own knowledge. This is to be avoided as both entry-level questions did not require the use of own evidence. When using the sources, students should aim to explicitly transcribe the source material, as paraphrasing of source material sometimes led to errors for these students. Furthermore, in a few cases, students simply rewrote the sources at length as the entirety of their response to the four-mark question. This does not indicate an understanding of the demands of the question, and thus also did not score well.

There were two 'middle-range' questions for each revolutionary context. They were based on the sources and began with the command words 'explain' and 'analyse'. Students were instructed to use their own knowledge in the answer.

All 'explain' and 'analyse' questions across the revolutions required students to write in detail on a closed subject matter, whether that be an event, individual, idea, action or movement. Students were expected to write to the time and topic parameters presented to them and not deviate from the subject matter. Higher-scoring responses were able to successfully weave between the question, their own contentions, and the source material, and provide their own relevant knowledge to justify their arguments. Lower-scoring responses tended to narrate topics without explicitly connecting them to the specific demands of the question, went off topic with information outside the time period, or simply transcribed the source material.

Each revolution also contained a higher-order 'evaluate' eight-mark question. These evaluation questions required students to form a judgment of their own and support this judgement with their own evidence. The

source material was not requested for this question, and therefore was not needed in order to be awarded full marks. Students who utilised source material here were neither advantaged nor penalised. Evaluating key knowledge from both Areas of Study was required as part of these questions.

Higher-scoring responses were able to cover the whole time period when addressing the topic, and more sophisticated responses were able to identify continuities and/or changes within an Area of Study, rather than just simply between the pre- and post-revolutionary period. However, this was not required for full marks. The best responses were comprehensive in their discussion of events, flowed effectively from idea to idea and provided highly relevant, judiciously selected evidence to justify all the arguments made.

Lower-scoring responses simply narrated events surrounding the topic in question or veered off topic to make irrelevant statements that did not address the specific demands of the question. Each revolution required a particular focus: for America, liberty; for France, the power of the church; for Russia, the experience of the peasants; for China, political changes made by Mao. Discussions were to be contained within these topics, except for America, whose question phrasing allowed for the inclusion of other influences (however, evaluation on the topic of liberty should still have been both the initial and dominating focus of discussion).

Students should avoid including own knowledge from outside the timeline outlined in the VCAA Study Design for the revolution. For example, references to Alexander II's emancipation of the peasantry in 1861 is outside the Area of Study.

## Question 1 – The American Revolution

### Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	3	20	23	51	3.2

### Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	3	10	87	1.9

Responses to both Question 1a. and Question 1c. were generally handled well. Most responses to Question 1c. identified two clear criticisms of the Articles of Confederation in dot-point form, and descriptions contained in Question 1a. were able to accurately portray how colonists demonstrated their objections with clear references to features such as the effigy and banner dominating responses. Students then matched these features with a short description for each.

The following is an example of a high-scoring 1a. response.

*The riots illustrated in Source 1 depict how the protests had high attendance of colonists who all collectively protested against the stamp act of 1765. These protests themselves, out in public was an example of gesture politics on a large scale, demonstrating to the British the popular objection of a large crowd to the stamp act of 1765, and the British policy of taxation without representation in general. The burning of an effigy in the background of the illustration also depicts how the colonists directly attacked or humiliated British officials in the colonies to demonstrate their objection to British taxation without representation. The effigy in this case could have been the burning of Andrew Oliver's effigy, which is a direct act of humiliation and propaganda intended to galvanise support against British taxation policy.*

## Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	6	30	33	17	6	1	2.7

Question 1b. from the American revolution asked students to analyse how events from April 1775 to July 1776 led to the Declaration of Independence. Many students were able to correctly identify events such as Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill being relevant to the discussion, and were able to effectively use the source in this way to springboard discussion as to how they led to the Declaration. Unfortunately, many students did not move beyond the source material and failed to provide their own knowledge, which was explicitly requested. Weaker responses also departed from the timeframe and referenced events and ideas outside the dates provided. Higher-scoring responses were able to connect appropriately chosen events to the provision of the Declaration of Independence.

The following high-scoring response clearly integrates own knowledge with relevant quotes from the source.

*Events from April 1775 to July 1776 led to independence as they radicalised the situation where previously Americans had sought a 'settlement of their difficulties' (John Hall Stuart), but now wanted to sever the connection. Source 2, historical interpretation by Middlekauff conveys how the events of Lexington and Concord (April 1775) had 'made compromise all the more unlikely' (Source 2), as the war of independence had already then been sparked. The subsequent Second Continental Congress of 1775 conveyed how British 'legislative tyranny' (Miller) could compel the colonists to unite, whilst the battle of Bunker Hill, where 1054 British lives and 400 patriot lives were lost, further 'hardened resolves' (Source 2) in the Congress. The final attempts of the colonists to reach a 'happy and permanent reconciliation' (Dickinson) in the olive branch petition on the 5th of July 1775, were flatly refused by the king who declared America 'an open and avowed rebellion' (Source 2), whilst the Declaration for the Causes and Necessities for taking up arms (July 1775) signalled an end to the relationship. The subsequent American Prohibitory Act of December 22 1775, removing trade between Britain and the thirteen colonies, and the removal of the King's protection detailed that the British crown thought the same way. Thus, those 'effective means' (Source 2) chosen by Britain espoused the Declaration of Independence (4 July 1776) as it became clear that 'Reconciliation is now a fallacious dream' as detailed by Thomas Paine in his Common Sense.*

## Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	5	28	43	18	2	2.7

Question 1d. asked students to explain the key debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists regarding the proposed Constitution. Students were generally able to identify the major ideas that divided the two camps, and most used the source material well here. Some students failed to provide their own knowledge and clung to the source material, or in turn omitted references to the sources, only providing their own knowledge, both of which characterised the more mid-range responses. Most students did incorporate their own knowledge well here, with the higher-scoring responses providing a nuanced explanation of ideas on federal authority vs. individual rights, with the very best juxtaposing argument and counter-argument.

The following is a high-scoring response using a combination of source material and own knowledge to address the prompt.

*In the debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists about the planned new constitution, the Anti-Federalists 'mounted their assault on the constitution' (Source 4). They argued over the key issue of the protection of individual and state liberties, criticising the constitution to have 'failed even to include a Bill of Rights that might stand as a protector of the individual liberties that had been won in the revolution'*

(Source 4). They were concerned also about the issues of the republican model adopted in the great compromise, as the new head of state (the president) was feared to be the re-emergence of a new monarch figure mirroring the British regime, as identified by George Mason. States interests were also a key issue for the anti-federalists, as they 'feared that the states would be swallowed up' (Harrell) by the interests of the larger states.

The federalist debated that there would be protection of liberties, They not only had to 'convince doubters that the existing situation under the Articles of Confederation was disastrous' but also that 'the proposed government would not destroy the liberties Americans had fought for' (Source 4). Indeed, the articles of confederation were defective as it prolonged congresses' bankruptcy. James Madison also highlighted that, relating to the protection of liberties, 'ambition must be made to counteract ambition', which could then prevent the possibility of an extremist or corrupt faction from overtaking the current regime and endanger the political and social liberties of citizens.

## Question 1e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	10	7	19	25	17	11	7	3	0	3.1

Question 1e. asked students to evaluate the significance of liberty as a revolutionary idea from 1754 to 1789. While this question allowed students to move beyond the concept of liberty to discuss other factors, the best responses were able to prioritise the discussion of liberty as a guiding revolutionary principle in both causing the revolution and framing the major decisions made in the new regime, before incorporating their other ideas. Lower-scoring responses tended to dismiss the importance of liberty as a revolutionary idea, did not cover the entirety of the time period, or tried to make pre-prepared responses fit the question. Most students understood that Question 1e. required the discussion of both Areas of Study, with stronger responses effectively spanning the time frame in their discussion, while lower-scoring responses tended to focus primarily on the colonial pre-revolutionary period and dismiss the significance of liberty in the period following 1776.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response that evaluates the significance of liberty as a revolutionary idea between 1754 and 1789.

*The idea of liberty, emanating from the Lockean Natural Rights (1690) that were 'quoted everywhere in the colonies' [Bernard Bailyn] played a significant role in instigating the revolution, however, in the end, homogeneous liberty wasn't achieved for all Americans.*

*It was the American ideals of liberty that 'made them hypersensitive' (Bailyn) to the British tax revenue acts, as Gordon would points out, 'the Americans were not an oppressed people, but to them, the ideal of taxation without representation made them feel oppressed' as they 'aroused fears of legislative tyranny' (Miller) and threatened their perceived liberties as Englishmen under the English Bill of Rights (1689). Thus in defence of liberty, they orchestrated the Stamp Act Congress in response to the Stamp Acts (1765), the events surrounding the Boston massacre in 1770 in response to the Townshend duties of 1767, the Tea Party of 1773, destroying 342 chests in response to the Tea Act of 1773, and the first Continental Congress of 1776 in response to the Coercive Acts of the same year. Thus by the introduction of the Declaration of Independence" (4 July 1776), it was clear that the perceived encroachment of liberty had provoked the colonists to declare independence and create a new society on the principles of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' (Jefferson).*

*However, once they have achieved their goals, the 'great virtues' (Bailyn) no longer needed to adhere to the principles of liberty as they had 'united just enough whites to fight a war against England without addressing either slavery or inequality' (Zinn). The new society's suppression of Shays Rebellion in 1788, with 1400 troops and Articles 1, section 11 and 18 of the constitution declaring slaves 3/5 of a person,*

*and that slavery could not be addressed until 1808, proved that the founding fathers didn't really care about liberty, as the direct impelling motive was economic advantage' (Beard).*

## Question 2 – The French Revolution

### Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	1	9	20	68	3.5

### Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	3	95	2.0

Both lower-order questions here were correctly addressed. Students were able to correctly identify each Estate and the Bastille in the background of the visual and made clear inferences as to how the Third Estate challenged the existing order. The majority of students were able to make a clear connection to the ideas that represented challenge in the visual source, the determination to use violence, the successful capture of the Bastille etc. Very few students failed to provide either a reference to the source or a description of a challenge. The response for Question 2c. was largely tackled well, with students confidently providing two ways the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen aimed to create equality for French citizens. Students used dot points and clearly identified explicit statements from the source, and for the most part received full marks. Students who did not succeed as well here either made incorrect identifications, or poorly paraphrased the source.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring 2a. response.

*The third estate challenged the existing order of absolute authority with the storming of the Bastille (14 July 1789) depicted in source 5 as crowds gather with heads on pikes next to the Bastille where workers chip away at the top, indicative of the lettres de cachet granted to the monarchy, and the despotism which the third estate challenged through urban disorder. The third estate also challenged the existing order by countering the system of privilege, seen in source 5 as a member of the third state reaches for a bayonet, while the nobility and clergy appear shocked.*

### Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	6	27	36	20	6	1	2.9

Students demonstrated good knowledge on the Great Fear here; however, some students missed the question's focus on the 'causes' of the Great Fear. Better responses kept their emphasis on the causes and interwove the source well into their discussions, with the top students being able to effectively discuss a combination of long-term (such as the harvests) and short-term (the Bastille) impacts in causing the Great Fear. Weaker responses tended to describe the elements of the Great Fear, or provided a deep discussion of its effects, thus failing to concentrate on the causes as the question demanded.

The following is a high-scoring response using a combination of the source and their own knowledge on the causes of the Great Fear.

*The Great Fear (20 July-6 August) was caused by the ‘fear of the brigand’ (Lefebvre), as well as ‘fear and hunger’ (S6) which had been inflamed by famine and ‘news of the Bastille’ (S6). Following the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, news of this uprising travelled throughout rural France through newspapers and broadsheets, and provoked ‘fear of aristocratic revenge’ (S6) in response to this act of defiance. These fears were exacerbated by the increasing number of troops in rural areas after the Louis XVI deployed 20,000 soldiers from the capital on the 15th of July 1789, as well as the increasing number of ‘bands of beggars’ (S6), which amplified suspicions that ‘every vagrant, every rioter...[was] a brigand’ (Lefebvre), or, someone hired by a noble to execute retaliation on disobedient peasants. These fears were all the more compounded by ‘hunger [which] made the countryside a tinder box (S6), as anger was heightened following the failed harvests in July 1788. These tensions led to the Great Fear as they ‘provided them excellent excuse to arm the countryside’ (Lefebvre) against purported threats from the nobility. Consequently, this led peasants to ‘turn their weapons on the seigneurial system itself by forcing seigneurs to relinquish their feudal documents and burning down manors, with one deputy reporting that this led ‘the law to be powerless, the magistrates without authority’.*

## Question 2d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	5	28	43	17	2	2.7

Question 2d. provided a historical interpretation of laws passed during The Terror and asked students to explain how the new regime consolidated its power during the aforementioned period. Similar to other questions, many students clung closely to the source and failed to provide much in the way of their own knowledge. Better responses were able to not only provide own knowledge on The Terror, but also to focus on how the new regime used it to consolidate its rule. Higher-scoring responses provided additional sophistication and insight, such as contending that the new regime used a combination of economic terror as well as violence and repression, or how it sought to de-Christianise society through the establishment of the Cult of the Supreme Being, springboarding from the ideas of the source material to clear, detailed and relevant own evidence.

The following high-scoring response displays how the source could be effectively used in conjunction with relevant knowledge to respond directly to the question.

*The new regime consolidated its power by making ‘terror the order of the day’ (S8), on 5 September 1793. Adopting this mentality, the national government implemented legislation such as the Laws of Suspects (17 September 1793), which allowed them to consolidate power by removing any political threats, as this decree broadly mandated that the arrest of ‘all enemies of liberty’, which could virtually include anyone. This was further reinforced by ‘a decree passed on 10 October 1793’ (S 8) called the Decree on Revolutionary Government which suspended the 1793 Constitution and the rights that accompanied it. As the convention passed legislation ‘for the next 10 months’, they use this to consolidate their power by suppressing ‘almost all individual rights’, with the law of 14 Frimaire (4 December 1793), for instance, marking the return of ‘many of the principles of the ancient regime’ (Townson), as power was centralised under the committee of public safety and the National Convention. The new regime also consolidated its power through the factional purges of 1793-94 as the executions of dissenting individuals such as the Herbert (24 March 1794) and Danson (5 April 1794) were used to ‘silence political opposition’ (S8).*

## Question 2e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	9	5	13	21	21	16	10	4	1	3.5

Question 2e. required students to evaluate the power of the church in France between 1774 and 1795. Students needed to draw upon key knowledge from both Areas of Study 1 and 2, while framing their discussion on the idea of continuity and change. Most students were able to adequately discuss the power of the church, while the best responses referred to key moments across the whole timeline that typified the peaks and troughs of its authority.

Lower-scoring responses tended to provide a running narrative on the history of the church, with little evaluation of the significant continuities and changes to its power. Some students also referred to source material, which was not necessary, but did not lose marks for doing so. While the majority of students delved into the transformations in the power of the church, some overlooked the continuities, weakening the overall response. The best responses covered the entirety of the time period, and provided a critical evaluation of how the church was profoundly reformed by the revolution, with the very best forming value judgements on the 'most significant' continuities and changes.

The following extract from a high-scoring response shows how both continuities and changes can be discussed at length.

*The power of the church officially declined greatly being a major change which brought both the positive and negative for France. However, a continuity of the power of the church was its support from French people, particularly in rural areas which led to great conflict.*

*Firstly, the most significant changes to the church resulted in cruel opposition and violence being a significant negative change. Indeed, from 1774 when the church enabled the ascension of Louis the 14th to the throne by divine right the power of the once great body had been shattered. Indeed, the civil constitution of the clergy [July 1790] resulted in the clergy needing to be 'faithful to the nation' (CCC), removing its right to serve God only. The civil constitution of the clergy was then followed by the clerical oath (27 November 1790) an oath which forced clergy members to swear allegiance to the nation. These changes in power were unprecedented and cruel as their significance resulted in the division of juring and non-juring priests. The non-juring priests who 'serve God only' (McPhee) were killed in the September massacres [2-7 September 1792], as 2400 were slaughtered while in prison. Hence, through the brutal hangings committed, furling by the Great Fear and Law of 22 Prairial (10 June 1794) clergy were relentlessly killed, therefore, conveying how the loss in power of the church in France was a negative change due to the brutality it brought...*

## Question 3 – The Russian Revolution

### Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	3	12	24	60	3.4

### Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	1	4	95	1.9

Students generally responded well to the entry-level questions of 3a. and 3c. In Question 3c. students typically correctly identified two criticisms of the new regime, using dot points and direct quotations appropriately. A small minority of responses provided their own knowledge or paraphrased ideas poorly, which indicated a lack of understanding. For Question 3a., students tended to interpret the source well, correctly identifying elements such as the Russian people, Plutocracy, Nicholas, the falling crown and collapsed throne. Some students misinterpreted this event as relating to the October revolution, despite the clarifying text below Source 9 identifying this as 'an untitled cartoon of the February Revolution'. Most students were able to correctly identify a feature, such as the broken chains, and awakening of the Russian people, and provide a matching description of a consequence of the February Revolution. At times, their own knowledge was provided to extend these responses; however, this was not required to achieve full marks and should be avoided.

The following are two examples of high-scoring responses from different students.

#### Sample 1

*One consequence of the February revolution was the end of the monarchy, depicted in Source 9 with the Tsar's crown and throne falling off to the side as they flee. Another consequence of the February revolution was the realisation of the power of the masses, represented in Source 9 as a large person labelled 'Russian people' breaking free of chains that previously held them down.*

#### Sample 2

*One consequence of the February revolution seen in Source 9 is the freeing of the shackled man with the words open 'Russian people' on his shirt. This shows a positive consequence of the Russian Revolution as the people who had been oppressed by Tsardom were now free. Another consequence seen in Source 9 is the end of monarchic power, represented by the Tsar running away with his crown falling off his head, and the nobility with the man with 'plutocracy' on his back. This visual in Source 9 reflects the consequence of the February revolution in taking power from the Tsar and nobles, resulting in them being powerless.*

### Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	3	22	39	24	9	1	3.1

Many students handled this question well, providing a good analysis of Lenin's contribution to the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Despite the source being grounded in Lenin's actions of October, students were able to correctly include elements such as the April Thesis here, in setting a foundation for opposition that was developed by Lenin. This was then typically paired with his efforts in October in initialising the revolution. The source was used well by most students; however, some lacked own knowledge and simply transcribed from the source material to compensate. A few pitfalls of this question included students evaluating Lenin's contribution and then focusing on other individuals such as Kerensky or Trotsky and their roles in October, which was outside the specific demands of this question. Furthermore, there was quite some discussion on Lenin's actions during the July Days, which, while valid, tended to be followed by a narration of how Lenin fled Petrograd during this time, failing to connect their premise to any form of contribution to the October Revolution. The very best responses used the source as a springboard for discussion and focused completely on an analysis of Lenin's contributions without delving into a simple summation of the period.

The following high-scoring response analyses Lenin's contribution to the Bolshevik seizure of power.

*As seen in source 10, Lenin's determination to seize power in the name of the soviets, made evident in his April Thesis (4 April 1917), as he declared 'Peace, Bread and Land' and 'All power to the Soviets' (Lenin) contributed significantly to growing radical support for the Bolsheviks by October 1917, as Bolshevik numbers rose from 44 in July to 108 in September 1917. Furthermore, Lenin's demands for an*

*insurrection (Source 10), returning 'in secret' (Source 10) to Petrograd, formerly St Petersburg on 10 October 1917, and enforcing a centrally coordinated force, served as a crucial factor in the Bolsheviks eventual takeover of the Winter Palace on 25 to 26 October 1917, as historian Hill argues that 'without Lenin... revolution could not have happened'. Indeed, Lenin's genius 'guiding... of the masses' CPSU, serving as the Bolsheviks 'principal strategist' (Figes), and partnership with Leon Trotsky, ensured the coordination of 'military units backed by...Red Guards' (Source 10), of 800,000 Bolsheviks and MRC, taking control of strategic points (Source 10), and overpowering Alexander Kerensky and the Cossacks, thus underscoring the significant role of Lenin in ensuring Bolshevik victory and seizure of power by October 1917 in the storming of the Winter Palace (25-26 October 1917).*

### Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	3	26	48	19	3	2.9

Question 3d. was handled well by students, with most providing an awareness of the terror, its methods and how it was used by the Bolsheviks from late 1917 to May 1921. Students typically identified the various methods of the terror (glove trick, spiked barrels etc), but higher-scoring papers additionally provided a discussion on the premise of 'how' it was used – as a tool to ensure compliance, a method to pass Bolshevik decrees, to deal with opposition/class enemies etc.– and provided relevant examples of decrees, events and statistics to justify their assertions. Weaker responses were inclined to fixate on the methods of terror themselves, paraphrasing the source material, and tended to not provide much in the way of specific own knowledge.

The following high-scoring response explains with comprehensive detail how the Bolshevik regime used terror from late 1917 to May 1921.

*As seen in Pipes' extract, the Bolsheviks implemented terror 'from the day they seized power', in order to solidify the ideal of 'All power to the Soviets' (April Thesis, 4 April 1917), using measures of violence and encouragement of the proletariat (4% of the population) to 'loot the looters' (Lenin), eradicating 'class enemies' (S12) such as the capitalists power by 1918. Furthermore, the creation of the CHEKA (S12), the All Russian Extraordinary Commission against Counter Revolution (Oct 1917), resulted in intensifying the policies of Terror' (S12), as the Bolsheviks used this force to eradicate threats to the continuation of the Sovnarkom's authority throughout the Civil War of 1918-1920, combating the forces of the White Armies by 'isolating [them] in concentration camps' (S12) and by inflicting immediate executions" (S12) of 140,000 class enemies by mid-1921, thus underscoring the role of Terror in eradicating threats to Bolshevik power by May 1921. Furthermore, Terror was implemented as a means of "general intimidation" (S12), evident in the execution of the Romanovs (April 1920) as Trotsky argued the necessity of "reinforcing fear, reminding Russians that the only outcomes of Civil war were "total victory or total failure"...*

### Question 3e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	6	15	22	21	15	10	3	1	3.5

Question 3e. proposed an evaluation of the most significant continuities and changes experienced in the lives of the peasants between 1896 and 1927. Generally, students were able to write quite a bit here. However, most students did not understand how to properly evaluate in this question. Lower-scoring responses fell into narrating or describing the plight of peasants during this time period, only addressed one Area of Study (typically 1917 onwards), provided discussion outside the Areas of Study (such as the peasant emancipation of 1861) and/or included references and discussion of the plight of the working class, which

was outside the scope of this question. Better responses placed the peasants as the focal point and provided specific references to events that caused significant change in their lot, or provided a robust discussion of similarities in the pre- and post-revolutionary periods with clear own knowledge to justify their contentions. The highest-scoring papers were able to provide a thematic idea that their discussion revolved around, such as economic and political rights and freedoms or access/control of land, and evaluated how this fluctuated across the period as a continuum. These responses signposted their arguments well, provided comprehensive evidence to justify their contention and then concluded with an overall assessment that brought all their ideas together.

The following high-scoring response evaluates the experiences of Russian peasants between 1896 and 1927, forming key contentions surrounding the continuities and changes they experienced.

*While Russia's peasantry, 82% of the population, experienced significant economic change and reform from 1896 to 1927, the continuation of hardship and mass poverty and starvation within their population resulted in little long term beneficial change by 1921.*

*Firstly, the introduction of modernisation within Russia resulted in significant change for many peasants by 1905. Sergei Witte's reforms, resulting in the Great Spurt and industrialization of 1893–1903, prompted a significant surge in urbanisation as peasants flocked to the urban cities, 'snatched from the plough, and hurled straight into the factory furnace' (Trotsky). This long-term change, as peasants left behind the backward and inefficient agrarian farming of the old regime (Lily) searching for urban jobs, resulted in a significant long-term change for thousands of peasants, a change that continued into 1927.*

*Secondly, the events of the civil war resulted in economic hardship and continued struggles for peasants by 1921. Despite Lenin's seizure of power 'in the name of the Soviets' (S10), promising 'Peace, Bread and Land' (April Thesis, 4 April 1917), the continuation of economic hardship through the Civil War and War Communism, as 7 million people starved due to being 'without bread or kerosene' (S11) due to requisitioning efforts, evident in the propaganda poster, 'feed the hungry of the Volga region', depicting a skeletal peasant in a barren field, resulting in little positive change for Russia's peasants by mid-1921. While this was somewhat alleviated by the introduction of the New Economic Policy (8 March 1921), with agriculture increasing by 100% by 1925, and agricultural goods prices decreasing to 89% of their 1913 levels, the long-term consequences of civil war, and 'bloodthirsty' (S11) actions of the Bolsheviks resulted in the little long term positive economic change by 1927.*

*Lastly, land ownership following the Bolshevik takeover of 25-26 October 1917, resulted in the long-term beneficial change by 1927. The Bolsheviks 116 decrees, and 'Decree on land' (October 1917), in particular, effectively returned the land to those who worked it (Pavel Milyukov) allowed for significant long-term change, as peasants now had the right and greater ability to purchase and own land, unlike during the majority of the Tsarist regime. While this land autonomy was somewhat undermined during War Communism (8 June 1918-8 March 1921) as the Bolsheviks implemented grain requisitioning, 'inflicting [intense policies] of Terror' (S12), against suspected kulaks, the ultimate continuation of this land ownership served as a significant beneficial change, underscoring the immense social change experienced by peasants from 1896 to 1927.*

## Question 4 – The Chinese Revolution

### Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	2	15	35	46	3.2

### Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	12	82	1.8

As with the lower-order questions for the other revolutions, for Question 4c. students were mostly able to identify two criticisms in Source 15. Some students fell into the trap of paraphrasing the source at length or identifying the regime's response to these criticisms, which did not satisfy the requirements of the question. Question 4a. required students to describe two features of Source 13 that highlight how the May Fourth Movement challenged the existing order. The vast majority of responses correctly identified elements such as the banners, flags, the diverse mass of people protesting together, and the prominence of university students/youth in the visual. Students who received full marks then connected two of these features to challenges to the existing order, typically the dissent towards the 'unfair' Treaty of Versailles and the desire to modernise the nation ('down with Confucianism').

The following is a well-written response that addresses the demands of Question 4a.

*Firstly, the banners labelled 'Down with Confucianism' highlight that the May 4th movement appointed the traditional values of Chinese society as the cause of the failure of the 1911 revolution. As Immanuel Hsu describes this event as the start of an 'intellectual revolution', it can be observed that the questioning of old values challenged the existing order by calling for the consideration of new ideas. Secondly, the inclusion of the first flag of the Chinese Republic in the source indicates the desire to challenge foreign imperialism as the 3000 university students that took part in the protests desired an end to warlordism and imperialism, flying the nationalist flag in a call to strengthen the nation, a significant challenge to the existing order.*

### Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	2	15	36	31	11	1	3.3

Many responses mishandled this question, providing narratives about the actions of Chiang (Jiang) during the Northern Expedition, especially events such as the Shanghai Massacre, without directly and explicitly connecting them to how they were used to achieve his aims. Better responses were able to form direct links between Chiang's actions during the Northern Expedition, such as turning warlords, and how they assisted in him developing the strength to form a power base to rule the nation. Identification of Chiang's aims, explicit reference to the source material and the provision of their specific own knowledge as to how the Northern Expedition was used to achieve those aims were all required to score well on this question. Weaker responses generally showed a misreading of the question, provided narratives on the history, or clung to the source material in lieu of providing their own knowledge.

The following is a high-scoring response of how Chiang utilised the Northern Expedition to achieve his aims.

*The Northern Expedition was utilised by Chiang to unify the party and nation by removing warlord armies from authority, while also removing the threat of the CCP. Source 14 highlights the need to 'eliminate the*

*remnants of the Beiyang warlord network', done through his 85,000 strong military and the bribery of 'silver bullets' (Fenby) as many of these armies were absorbed into Chiang. As such, Chiang was able to use the Northern Expedition to 'secure his leadership of the party and the government' by leading the campaign to eliminate the corrupt and overwhelmingly unpopular warlords. Furthermore, Chiang fear that the CCP was growing powerful enough to challenge him motivated him to utilised the northern expedition to openly 'purge the party, government and army of all communists' as in the Shanghai massacre of April 1927, 5-10,000 communists were killed, and in the subsequent White Terror, Chiang aimed to completely eradicate the existence of the CCP, causing the Party's membership to drop from 60,000 to 10,000 by December 1927. This aligns with Chiang view that the Communists were a 'disease of the soul', and thus his use of force and purging of the CCP during the Northern Expedition went generally unquestioned by the population, just as his leadership of the GMD was thus supported.*

### Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	3	18	46	25	5	3

Question 4d. required students to provide an explanation of the consequences of the Great Leap Forward. Students typically had a lot to say on this topic. However, while many responses provided additional information on the causes of the Great Leap Forward's catastrophes, such as the development of backyard furnaces and/or descriptions of Lysenkoism practices, they were not able to explain in sufficient detail the consequences. The best responses narrowed their discussion purely to the consequences of the various programs, the famine, Mao stepping back, the waste of resources and the denunciation of Peng Dehuai, who is the source of the letter extract. Students generally had their own knowledge to provide, with few clinging solely to the source material for this question; however, the focus of discussion was the prime concern of note.

The following is an upper-middle-range response on the consequences of the Great Leap Forward. Some more of their specific own knowledge would have led to this scoring in the top bands.

*The consequences of the GLF included a disastrous famine, Party corruption and environmental damage. The most notable consequence of the GLF was the 'all time, first class, manmade famine' (Fairbank) and the three bad years (1959–61), in which 45 million people were reported to have died of starvation. The famine was largely a result of irrational policies and poor government management, which had a consequences of a rise in false reporting and increased requisition triggered widespread famine. Another consequence of the GLF and it's 'lack of sensible policies' (Ryan) was the 'waste of material, money and manpower' (S16), seen most explicitly in the backyard steel campaign. This campaign gripped the nation with ferocity, 'too many small blast furnaces' (S16) built in a bid to overtake British steel production within 15 years. In combination with a waste of material, the campaign had massive agricultural repercussions, as almost half of China's forestation destroyed to fuel these furnaces. A final consequence of the GLF was the increase in party corruption. The famine saw party cadres abuse their power to supply their families by withholding from the masses, cutting off peasants and wielding disproportionate authority over the people they were meant to serve.*

### Question 4e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	12	6	13	20	20	16	9	4	0	3.4

Question 4e. required students to evaluate the most significant political changes made by Mao Zedong (Tse-Tung) in China between 1912 and 1976. As with the other extended 8-mark questions, students were not required to utilise the sources here, though many students tended to use this material to supplement lack of

their own knowledge. The focus of discussion was to be on the most significant *political* changes Mao made; however, many students provided a general discussion on the various social and economic policies Mao introduced. As this question spanned a significant portion of the timeline, some students felt compelled to include as many topics as they could from Mao's political beginnings in the 1920s to the end of the study period. There was a lot to draw from and students did not need to cover every topic. However, including elements from both Areas of Study was required to achieve the upper mark bands. Higher-scoring responses were able to identify and evaluate the most critical political changes, with the highest-scoring papers offering a controlled discussion that formed valid judgments and was backed by the students' highly specific and relevant own knowledge.

The following is an example of a response detailing the most significant political changes made by Mao Zedong in China between 1912 and 1976.

*Mao Zedong's political rhetoric caused profound change for both China and the Chinese Communist party (CCP) through 1912–1976, seen most notably at the Yan'an Soviet, the implementation of the new political system and during the Cultural Revolution.*

*Mao's development of the CCP's political ideology at the Yan'an Soviet (1936–1949) was a significant change. Here Mao developed the notion of 'from the people, to the people', his key ideal of the mass line being imbued in CCP politics. In encouraging the CCP and their cadres to adapt policies in response to the demands of the Chinese people, Mao fundamentally changed the political workings of the party, embracing a fairly democratic approach in their dealings with the masses, something which had not been seen within China prior.*

*China's new political system implemented following CCP victory in the civil war (1945–1949) was another major change made by Mao. The new system saw the CCP become highly centralised, with the process of democratic centralism projecting a facade of democracy, however, real political power remained concentrated within the Politburo, and most importantly Mao. The permittance of eight political parties reinforced this notion, with Fenby describing them as 'flower vases there for decoration' as they held no feasible power.*

*However Mao's most significant political changes were made during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, in which Mao weaponized the Chinese youth, in the form of the red guards, to tactically undermine his political rivals. Described by Kraus as 'China's greatest experiment in person participatory democracy' The Cultural Revolution saw the common people give an opportunity to directly participate in the political situation of the country, enabling them to 'seize politics from the dead hands of faraway bureaucrats' (Karl). Mao succeeded in achieving his aims to completely rebuild the CCP, as, as a consequence of Mao's actions, only 9 out of 23 politburo members retained their positions and 66% of the National People's Congress were made up of the military, an organisation that became personally loyal to the Chairman.*

## Section B

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	1	2	3	3	4	6	5	7	7	8	9	11	8	9	6	4	2	1	0	0	9.9

In Section B, students chose an essay topic from four revolutionary contexts. The VCAA website outlines the assessment criteria and descriptors for holistic essay marking. The criteria include constructing an argument, demonstrating historical knowledge, applying historical thinking concepts, and using evidence to support a historical argument. Students who were familiar with the expectations confidently tackled this part of the exam.

Overall students wrote responses that generally addressed the questions. Most students were able to provide a clear introduction that presented ideas, and three separate discernible paragraphs and a short

conclusion. Each of the topics this year confined discussion to the post-revolutionary period, and generally students understood this and were able to raise ideas and provide evidence that fell within these bounds. Lower-scoring responses did not follow these restrictions and included arguments and knowledge from outside the time frame. While on the most part evidence, including various policies, dates, laws, events, formations of movements etc., was used effectively to justify claims made, some students utilised material from the provided Source booklet to substantiate their ideas, highlighting a deficiency in their own knowledge.

Some students attempted to make pre-prepared essays fit the parameters of this year's questions. These responses typically failed to adequately address the specific demands of the various topics, and this did not score well. More effective responses spanned the entire time period in the provision of ideas and evidence to address the prompt, rather than skipping to one noteworthy event, while ignoring what came beforehand (such as Shays Rebellion for America or the GLF for China).

Historical interpretations found their way into several essays this year, and it is noteworthy that, for the most part, they were employed with a depth that surpassed previous superficial usage. While these interpretations are not necessary for achieving higher marks, certain students adeptly incorporated them to enrich their ideas. They skilfully integrated perspectives from various historians into their own arguments, presenting a strong synthesis of ideas. It must be reiterated that the inclusion of a historical interpretation contributes to the depth of a response; however, it is dependent upon its comprehensive explanation within the argument's context. Some students unfortunately misattributed a quote to a historian. Such inaccuracies detracted from the value of the response. Conversely, some students chose to forgo these interpretations entirely, relying exclusively on their own knowledge to substantiate their claims.

Higher-scoring essays were able to form their own contentions that were highly relevant to the topic, justify all claims they made with their specific own knowledge and form evaluative judgments that led to a singular conclusion based on the demands of the question. These essays demonstrated a consistent ability to seamlessly integrate their responses to the question throughout the entirety of the essay. They effectively employed signposting techniques to ensure ongoing alignment with the prompt, avoiding the common practice of merely restating the question at the beginning and end of a paragraph.

## Question 1 – The American Revolution

The topic for America asked students to discuss the War of Independence and how it devastated the American economy and caused challenges that threatened the new society. Most students grappled with this topic by addressing initially the economic challenges before arguing other, in some cases more pressing, issues relating to political and social challenges. Less successful essays often engaged in a narrative approach, recounting major events of the revolution, such as the Articles of Confederation, Shays Rebellion and the Constitutional debate. Unfortunately, they fell short of analysing how these events interlinked with the War of Independence or in critically assessing the follow-on impacts on the emerging society. Some students adopted a compartmentalised structure, dividing their essays into pre-prepared paragraphs on political, social and economic challenges. However, these responses generally offered a cursory overview of events, lacking the substantive arguments and supporting evidence characteristic of the more successful responses. Higher-scoring papers constructed their own judgements and expertly formed connections between the War of Independence and the various challenges that proved a threat to the new society. Their own evidence was chosen carefully and was provided in abundance to justify all assertions.

The following is an example of an upper-middle-scoring essay on the American revolution.

*... The war of independence was significant in devastating the American economy as it caused social inequalities and anger amongst the continental army soldiers. The war challenged the new regime economically as it caused serious social inequity, as most soldiers hadn't been paid through their war bounties. This was illustrated in Sam and John Adams Massachusetts constitution which 'favoured the rich and disregarded the poor' (Wood) as they only allowed people with 20 pounds to vote or 60 pounds to be elected, which caused for social inequality as the war had caused people to be unable to pay debts*

*due to the 'economic grievance of inflation' (Wood) which increased debtors courts by 262% and thus the everyday people didn't have the money to be represented in parliament. Furthermore, the war of independence economically challenged the regime as it illustrated through Shays rebellion, which saw Daniel Shays leading 6000 angry Bostonians to 'rise, and put a stop to it' (Shays), angry as they hadn't received their money from the war despite being promised it. This cause James Bowdoin to hire a private militia of 1200 to stop Shays and his men, illustrating how after the war, the government didn't have money to defend themselves and thus caused for the everyday person to become a potential threat to the new society. Therefore, the war of independence devastated the American economy as it caused social inequality and challenged the new regime due to economically motivated uprisings...*

## Question 2 – The French Revolution

The French revolution essay began with the assertion that the revolution totally changed the way France was governed, but that life for urban workers and peasants remained largely the same. This topic was effectively broken down into three paragraphs by most students, that the revolution eliminated the absolute monarchy and introduced the concept of popular sovereignty, and then a discussion on the impact of the revolution in improved life for the working class and the peasantry.

Nearly all students effectively discussed the impact of the revolution on the urban workers and peasants; however, fewer students effectively discussed the topic of the governance of France, suggesting a lack of own knowledge/evidence on this topic. Lower-scoring responses lumped discussion of peasants and workers together and omitted the topic of governance entirely, forming three pre-prepared paragraphs breaking down the general impacts of the revolution without showing a clear understanding of the nuance of the question. Even lower-scoring responses were typified by excessive use of the material from the Source booklet.

Higher-scoring responses grappled with all aspects of the question and typically challenged the assertion that the revolution 'totally' changed the way that France was governed. They effectively discussed how the revolution marked the transition from an absolute monarchy to a republic, one characterised by the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, but they also challenged this premise, arguing how the emergence of new elites replacing the old aristocracy still harkened back to power dynamics representative of the old regime. The discussion surrounding life for urban workers and peasants was also critically analysed by the higher-scoring responses, with many drawing the conclusion that workers typically suffered more than peasants as a result of the revolution. These more thorough examinations of the continuities and changes for these social groups were comprehensive, utilising relevant, judiciously selected evidence to justify all claims, and thus tended to fall into the higher mark bands.

The following is an extract from a French revolution essay that details the impact of the revolution on the urban workers.

*...Despite a temporary gain of political and social power, the urban workers were left largely devoid of power or influence by 1795. The popular movement of sans-culottes in revolutionary journee's such as the storming of the Bastille (14 July 1789) and October March (5-6 October 1789), during which 6000 sans-culottes marched 20 kilometres to Versailles, resulted in a significant shift in power, as historian Schama argues 'the National Assembly and King were now very much under the influence of the radical Parisian crowds'. Indeed, the Jacobin's passing of the Law of the General Maximum on the 29th of September 1793, following the radical enragés protests of 4-5 September 1793 demanding the 'right to subsistence' (Roux), heightened this change in political power, 'radicalising so quickly that the Jacobins struggled to keep up' (Schama), and helping to alleviate economic hardship. Yet, short term was the nature of this positive change, as the law of Maximum was subsequently abolished following the Thermidorian Reaction (1794-1795) and abolition of Jacobin clubs in August 1794, following the fall of the 'tyrant' (Adock) Robespierre (27-28 April 1794) food prices again rose to 750% of their 1789 levels by 1795, and the harvest crisis of 1794, resulted in a significant loss of beneficial change for urban workers, resulting in the continuation of the urban movements 'economic distaste' (Doyle). Furthermore, the loss of political voice, and indeed power, evident in the failed Journee of 12 Germinal, Year 111, during which 26*

*Montagues and 800 sans-culottes were arrested, and Journee of 1-4 Prainal, with 10,000 sans-culottes being exiled following demands for their continued 'right to insurrection' (Jacobin constitution, June 1793), underscored the significant delve in positive change with urban workers by 1795...*

## Question 3 – The Russian Revolution

In Section B, the essay topic for Russia was the most popular option, positing the idea that between October 1917 and 1927 the Bolshevik revolutionary leaders failed to achieve any of their revolutionary ideals. In addressing this perspective, most students chose to adopt a response that utilised an approach centred on discussing Lenin's slogan 'Peace, Bread and Land'. Here again, some students chose to use material from the Sources provided for Section A rather than their own evidence, which typified the weaker responses. Students generally outlined a Bolshevik ideal and then discussed the extent to which the Bolshevik leaders succeeded or failed in providing it.

Lower-scoring responses tended to argue that the Bolsheviks failed completely in achieving any of their aims, with no real justification for their contention or analysis of competing perspectives. These responses simply narrated post-revolutionary Russia, or merely described policies such as War Communism and its effects, rather than grappling with the ideals of the Bolshevik leaders, highlighting a lack of clarity and certainty about what constituted a revolutionary ideal.

Higher-scoring responses were able to cover the entire period requested in the question, identifying pertinent examples that applied to the ideal in question. Some students offered more complex ideals beyond Peace, Bread and Land, such as Dictatorship of the Proletariat, paving the future for socialism or creating a command/moneyless economy as the frame of their discussion. Regardless of the ideal chosen, these higher-scoring papers were typically more critical of the question as a whole, and usually contended that the Bolsheviks did not fail to achieve all but were forced to compromise on some of their ideals in order to accomplish those of more critical importance to them.

The following are extracts from two different Russian essays. The first is a more conventional structure that most students utilised to address the question; the second one provides an example of a more nuanced approach to the question.

### Sample 1

*... However, this would ignore the fact that Bolshevik leaders did fail to achieve their ideal of converting Russia from a capitalist state to one which followed communist principles alone. Lenin were initially successful in implementing a transition to socialism, indeed, he and other leaders introduced state capitalism (April 1918) which Lenin himself refer to as 'a step into socialism', as well as War Communism later in 1918, marking a 'leap into communism' according to Trotsky. However, due to the devastating failures of War Communism, one which led to 'one of the worst famines in modern history' according to Tom Ryan, which killed over 5 million Russians, Lenin was forced to make a 'leap out of socialism' (Latsis) with the implementation of the New Economic Policy during the 10th Party Congress in March 1921. This policy not only reintroduced capitalist economic elements to Russia, such as the free market and private trade of goods, but hereby also reintroduced inequality between 'vast wealth [and] dire poverty' (Ryan), something Lenin despised during Tsarist times. Certainly, because of the NEP, increasingly common NEPmen and kulaks (rich peasants), were able to accumulate vast wealth, a significant effect which highlighted the failure of Lenin and Bolshevik leaders to achieve their ideal of implementing a workable communist economy by 1927...*

## Sample 2

*... When the actual aims and ideals of the Bolsheviks are understood, their often counterproductive, brutal and unexplainable decisions begin to make more sense, and their success can be more easily perceived. For example, why did Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders dissolve the constituent assembly on January 6? They claimed their reasons for doing so was because 'the Soviets are already a form of democracy superior to any parliament in the world', and then betray this commitment to democracy by centrally expanding their own power and eventually reach the 'logical climax' (Lynch) of this policy of suppression with a ban on factionalism in 1927? Why did the Bolsheviks flip flop between working with those 'old elements of the bourgeoisie' during the period of state capitalism from 1917-18, then abolish all money with their radical War Communism of 1918-21, only to 'leap out of socialism' (McCauley) with the NEP in 1921? These logical and ideological uncertainties only make sense when it is understood that Lenin was only an ideologue in the grand scheme, and more of a pragmatist in domestic affairs. Bolshevik leaders were willing to contradict and betray their ideological principles (even negotiating and working with the Kaiser) simply to navigate any problems facing communist control over Russia. Their answer to economic turmoil? State capitalism. Civil war? War communism. Popular unrest, such as the Tambov revolt where 40,000 peasants rose up in arms against the Bolsheviks? Red terror. Workers opposition and the Kronstadt revolt of March 1921, more terror and a ban on factionalism. A collapsing economy? A new economic policy containing formally derided capitalist qualities which were now touted as a required 'breathing spell'. Lenin perhaps put it best himself when he stated 'we are prepared to give... [a] little bit of capitalism, as long as we keep the power'...*

## Question 4 – The Chinese Revolution

China's essay for Section B required students to form a contention discussing the idea that the Chinese Communist Party was the only group that truly benefited from the revolution. Overall, this essay was not handled as effectively as others. The topic required students to centre discussion on the Chinese Communist Party. However, many students briefly spoke to this (if at all), and then immediately departed from the question and instead dominated the discussion with a description of how other social groups benefited or lost as a course of the revolution, with no real link back to the CCP. In some cases, students provided an evaluation of the consequences of the revolution on peasants, workers and the party, or a narration of the 100 Flowers, GLF and GPCR. Such pre-prepared responses did not address the demands of the question and thus scored poorly.

Higher-scoring responses carefully chose examples of events and policies that benefitted the CCP across the entirety of the time period and did discuss the (mostly) negative effects they had on the various social groups. However, these responses always concluded with an assessment on the effect they had on the CCP directly, which was absent from lower-scoring papers. These responses also typically challenged the assumption that the CCP as a whole benefited. They argued that both cadres at the grass-root level and even senior leaders such as Peng Dehuai and Liu Shaoqi also lost out during events such as the GLF and GPCR. Higher-scoring responses were able to identify these more nuanced discussion points and provided highly detailed evidence to justify these claims.

The following extract is an example of a China essay that argues beyond the idea that the CCP was the only group that benefitted from the revolution.

*Alongside the Chinese Communist party, youths of China further benefited from the revolution and the new revolutionary society. The formation of the Red Guards in 1966 as part of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was one such instance of youths being afforded a new position within the hierarchs of China despite once being 'angry, repressed, and aware of their powerlessness' (Short), as Red Guard youths were afforded the ability to 'bombard the headquarters' (Mao) and end such powerlessness. As one million Red Guards initially attended rallies, numbers soon grew to 11-12 million as revolutionary sentiment became increasingly commonplace within Chinese youths. Through the experience of 'linking up' and travelling the countryside to experience different elements of the revolution, many such Red*

*Guards subsequently 'felt as if they had the best day of their lives' (Mitter). In a profound shift from pre-revolutionary China, youths saw their power and revolutionary thinking rewarded and encouraged, as those within the party inspired their actions to be 'more brutal and more revolutionary' (Jiang Qing), providing them the voice and power they had deeply desired for generations. It is through efforts of individuals such as Mao to 'put the revolutionary process in action as he had always interpreted the revolutionary process to be' (Spence) that allowed youths in the new China to thrive and attain similar benefits to that of the CCP.*