



A-LEVEL HISTORY

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

7042
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General

This is the third year of examining the new A-level specification and centres continue to prepare students effectively, with strong subject knowledge being demonstrated by many students. Across the ability range, the overwhelming majority of scripts seen by examiners made conscientious and diligent attempts to answer the question set. The general approach to the compulsory question (01) has been further improved, although there were some issues that centres might wish to address for future examination sessions. Of the essay questions, question 04 was answered by the great majority of students, with 02 and 03 appearing with similar frequency to each other. Question 04 was not as precisely answered by many students as examiners had hoped to see, although for all essays most students were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

Section A

Question 01

Virtually all students chose to respond to this question by considering each source in turn. This is by far the most effective approach, since there is no requirement to compare the sources. Students on the whole were effective with their time management, spending similar time on each source and across both content and provenance, allowing access to Levels 3 and higher. Contextual knowledge was often used well, with some students able to demonstrate sophisticated conceptual awareness of the issues the sources were testing. That said, many students paid less attention to the provenance of the sources than should have been the case, and comments about the value of provenance was sometimes limited to rather ‘stock’ material; this was often a barrier to accessing higher levels. Similarly, whilst most students referred to the tone of the sources, this was often an isolated comment without reference to value.

Almost all students were able to focus on issues relating to the establishment of CCP control between 1949 and 1952, and draw upon material from the sources to support this. Many students made good use of Source A’s provenance – especially in relation to the date and how this might reflect a more conciliatory initial period of establishing control – and both Mao and the ‘People’s Daily’ were subjects of evaluation. Comments about the source’s value as ‘propaganda’, however, were often not followed through with an understanding of purpose and so evaluation here was more limited than might have been the case. Common themes drawn out of the source included the ‘soft power’ of the PLA during this period and the façade of democracy constructed around the CCP, with the latter being used well to consider limitations to A’s value. Some students considered A in terms of CCP victory in the Civil War rather than more specifically in terms of establishing control in China; more able students appreciated this distinction.

Source B was accessed well by many students, although some took the sources at face value and used it to consider how the CCP were less oppressive than the GMD; these arguments were not very convincing. There was good focus on Hu’s status as middle class and why this was valuable, with more limited responses offering ‘stock’ comment about B describing the experience of only one man. Many students made effective use of their contextual knowledge of both thought reform and other campaigns of the time, and this was effectively done both to draw out relevant material from B and to challenge its limitations as evidence. Material about ‘self-criticism’ and filial piety was often used well to show conceptual awareness. Depending on whether students accepted B at face value, it was frequently the strongest or weakest source evaluated in an answer. In terms of Source C, many students offered sound evaluation of aspects of the provenance and this was often based around valid motives such as Deng’s eagerness to demonstrate success in a region that had been less exposed to CCP influence than other parts of China. Some students chose to

consider Deng as a 'pragmatist' and offered comment about how this limited the value of C; this was unhelpful in terms of Deng's position in 1951 and was difficult to credit. Similarly, some 'stock' comment based on C showing only one region in China was seen. Almost all students were able to draw out the issue of land reform in C as a method of establishing control, with some strong development seen through contextual knowledge, though many students chose to use the extreme violence of land reform to support the issues seen in C rather than using this to consider C's limitations as evidence. Some strong conceptual understanding of peasant complicity in CCP actions was seen in some answers.

In general terms, students are encouraged to develop sharper reasoning around the 'purpose' or 'motive' of the sources and how the provenance helps to consider these. A greater focus on the limitations of each source as evidence supported by contextual knowledge would have improved the quality of many of the responses seen. Students were well-prepared to tackle the sources and brought contextual understanding to bear, but a greater focus on issues of provenance and limitation would have added balance in many cases, and so access to higher marks in Levels 4 and 5.

Section B

Question 02

This essay question was answered by around half of all students, and many of these offered an approach where genuine attempts were made to consider the issue of 'stability', though some students rooted their responses in terms of problems the GMD faced rather than whether GMD-controlled China was stable in 1936. Some students brought focused material to bear – for example the ramifications of the Japanese presence in Manchuria, methods of GMD control in largely urban areas and the 'Xi'an Incident' – and were able to use these to offer a balanced answer with a focus on 'stability' and so access Level 4 and higher. The question's demand in terms of '1936' caused issues for some students, with material offered that was not well-focused on the year itself. Material offered that was some way prior to 1936 could be credited if accompanied with valid comment and analysis on 'stability' *in* 1936, but some students offered material rooted after 1936 (the Sino-Japanese War was a common example) that was difficult to credit. Other material was sometimes developed only in very general terms; for example, students often referred to the corruption of the GMD but without any tangible supporting evidence. This was also true of references to Jiang Jieshi's relationship with the warlords.

Question 03

As popular as question 02, many students coped well with the demands of this essay, with strong responses seen that constructed persuasive arguments about the relative transformation of the Chinese economy between 1962 and 1966. There were some very impressive answers seen that went beyond the impact of Liu and Deng's policies on economic performance and considered the ideological policy differences that hamstrung transformation; Dazhai Commune, the 'Third Line' and the Socialist Education Campaign were good examples of this. Students were often aided in an effective response in the way they defined 'transformation' at the beginning of their answers, which also allowed some to construct a sustained argument throughout. Some students focused on relative 'success' rather than 'transformation', and without clear analysis of this issue it was difficult for such answers to move beyond Level 3. Many students were able to effectively describe the government policies of the period in some detail, but the material used to analyse the issue of 'transformation' was often less detailed. Similarly, some answers were more rooted in the issues of the Great Leap Forward rather than the policies of the period itself.

Question 04

Almost all students chose to answer this question, and of those the majority certainly demonstrated a strong grasp of aspects of the Cultural Revolution which, as last year's report noted, is a complex topic and so centres should be commended for preparing their students so effectively. There were some very effective responses seen by the examiners, with students showing a sophisticated understanding of the effects the Cultural Revolution had on young people (almost always as Red Guards) and with clear evaluation of how this impacted on Chinese society. These answers frequently offered the impact caused by the destruction of traditional culture, attacks on intellectuals and the effects of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese cities as alternative factors, again with good understanding in terms of the question's demands of 'impact on society'. Young people were frequently cited as being the largest impact, with students considering the long term significance on Chinese society of the issues that affected the youth, such as the loss of education and the rustication movement. Students who took this approach did very well.

That said, a large number of responses did not focus as effectively on 'Chinese society' and many answers instead offered material less relevant to this issue – such as the economy or the political struggles during the period – and without specific analytical comment on how this impacted on Chinese society this was difficult to credit. Examiners looked to credit this material where possible – for example where a student made reference to the PLA during the Cultural Revolution and analysed this in terms of the increasing militarisation of society – but many students did not display the focus required to reach the higher levels, despite possessing strong understanding of the subject matter. It may sound a little clichéd, but students are strongly advised to read the essay questions very thoroughly when making their choices, and to spend a short period of planning time to ensure they have interrogated the question's demands before starting their answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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