
AS

History

2P The Transformation of China, 1936-1962
Report on the Examination

7041/2P
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General comments

In general terms, the paper was more effectively answered by students than the 2017 paper and this was especially the case for the compulsory source question (1). Question 2 was the more popular of the optional essay questions though question 3 saw stronger responses overall. A wide range of student performance was seen across the mark range.

Question 1

This is now the third year of the current AS level specification and the great majority of students approached the question using the structure highlighted in the 2017 report, though some students offered the majority of comment for one of the two sources rather than attempting balance, and a small number of students omitted an attempt at comparison. Most, however, deployed reasonable contextual knowledge in order to offer comment on the provenance and content of both sources and attempted to make a comparative judgment, thus accessing the higher levels.

The sources were accessible to students, though some students did not acknowledge the term ‘freedoms’ in the question and so their focus was more limited. Given that Source A shows initial Party intentions for the Hundred Flowers Movement and Source B shows its consequences the following year there was plenty of scope for students to make some effective comparisons, as many of them did.

Some students were rather confused about the reference to ‘schools of thought’ in Source A and this produced an occasional answer that attempted to focus on CCP education policies. This term was such a central ‘strap line’ for the Movement that it was felt students should not have been daunted by it, and most were not. Most students were able to evaluate the propaganda role of the source and either used it to argue the CCP were trying to tease their enemies out into the open or how the CCP were genuinely seeking moderate and constructive criticism; either approach was valid. There was some good understanding of the reality that lay behind the source, for example of the need to persuade intellectuals to speak out after the oppressive movements and campaigns of the earlier 1950s with the strongest students bringing their context even more fully up to date with the ‘Anti Hu Feng Campaign’. Some very strong responses were seen with sharp context regarding Mao’s role – for example as a ‘wandering lobbyist’ or his lack of involvement in the Hu Campaign in order to support arguments or challenge the source.

In respect of Source B, some students offered surprisingly little comment given that it draws on a recurrent theme in China in the 1950s and 1960s, and some only used tangential contextual knowledge (such as the purge of Gao Gang some years before) but in general students could draw out why Chang’s confession had to be treated with caution and that Chang would have been in fear of his life. This showed the true impact on people’s freedom that stemmed from the Hundred Flowers Movement and many returned to this argument in a final judgment. The term ‘reactionary political programme’ was generally avoided but as with ‘schools of thought’ in Source A it is a relatively common term of the period and students should have been able to understand it. There was some good contextual understanding of the Anti-Rightist campaign that this source reflects and which stemmed from the Hundred Flowers Movement. Some students were able to provide detailed examples of how the criticism was sometimes directed at Mao himself and how that shocked him.

Question 2

There was a greater number of responses to Question 2 than Question 3 but the question was answered less effectively. Students did not always focus on the issue of 'control' and instead focused on the relative success of the GMD during the 'Nanjing Decade' – for example its economic record – and unless these were then analysed in terms of control were of implicit relevance to the question only. Another common pitfall was for students to stray well beyond the time frame of the question and offer material relevant to the Sino-Japanese War or even the Civil War. Other students focused on Jiang's lack of control in China – the Xi'an Incident was commonly used – and whilst these were analysed in terms of the question there was often little evidence offered to show areas where the GMD did have some firm control over China and so answers were often imbalanced. Despite this some students did produced answers that both supported and challenged the question and so accessed higher levels.

Question 3

This question was certainly the more effectively answered essay with a small number of students reaching Level 5. Whilst there was confusion in a small number of answers about whether the issues raised stemmed from Mao and Khrushchev's personal relationship, most answers demonstrated at least some balance and there was good understanding of Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' as a key influence on Mao's attitudes to the USSR. Some students had detailed knowledge of the personal tension between the two leaders. Students could also identify and analyse foreign policy 'flashpoints' – such as the lack of Soviet support for Mao's policy towards Taiwan – and others were able to contrast these with the longer term tensions. There were relatively few instances of students lapsing into narrative.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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