



2005

History: Revolutions GA 3: Written Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, students seemed to have been well prepared to respond to the different questions within the given time and space. However, there needs to be increased familiarity with the new Study Design. References to material from the old Study Design 'snapshot' were too frequent. Historiography skills also require more careful attention as some students seemed poorly prepared for questions about the usefulness of sources. Students need to discuss the extent to which the source is reliable, and the strengths and limitations of source material. Other viewpoints could be compared with the view given in the source.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Students should attempt to contain their answers to the space provided and not write more in an extra script book. Management of time is critical and the space allocated for answers should be sufficient for students' responses.

Section A – Revolution One

Part 1 – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	1	9	43	37	11

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	5	7	9	13	13	15	13	10	6	5	5.3

Most students were able to identify the obvious associations to the leaders mentioned in this question. The use of factual information was satisfactory, although many students would have benefited from giving more detail. Students should refer to four or five different points in their explanation of the importance of ideas or leaders in the development of revolutionary situations. To gain full marks it was insufficient to simply identify and describe one feature in a general way, which many answers did.

Good students used their knowledge to define the contribution of the leader and his ideas by referring to a number of specific examples. There was a weakness in real understanding of cause and effect and although students may have written 'this led to,' they didn't seem to grasp exactly what the outcome was. Good answers signposted their response with words such as 'this highlights'; 'this influenced'; the leader/ideas 'polarised', 'gave voice to' or 'articulated'; 'this enabled' and 'this provided motivation for'. The term 'catalyst' was used to strong effect in many high quality answers.

- Students' knowledge of Thomas Paine's contribution and the ideas contained in *Common Sense* was fairly sketchy.
- In comparison, nearly all students mentioned *What is the Third Estate?* but few knew more detail about Sieyes, such as his contribution to voting by head versus by order, that he recommended the term 'National Assembly', or his role in drafting *The Tennis Court Oath*.
- Most students knew of the *April Thesis*, *Peace*, *Bread*, *Land* and *All Power to the Soviets* but very few could expand on the ideas of Soviets as a power base. Some knew of *What is to be Done?*, and the better answers referred to the way that Lenin asserted the need for a takeover in July and how this was a mistake. They mentioned his condemnation of the Provisional government.
- Students were able to name Sun Yat Sen's Three Principles, but they seemed to lack further knowledge of how these might relate to events.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response on the Russian Revolution.

Lenin's adaptation of Marxism ensured the communist revolution was shaped around Leninism rather than the traditional Marxism. It was Lenin's 'April Thesis' that became the blueprint for the Bolshevik revolution, detailing not only key policies of Leninism, but also methods of implementation. From Marx's theory of 'workers of the world unite', the revolution passed into the hands of the Bolshevik elite, 'the vanguard of the revolution', who would carry out an insurrection on behalf of the proletariat. Additionally, although his slogan was 'Peace, Bread, Land', Lenin encouraged further revolution in order to achieve a global

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communist uprising, hence promoting violent situations. Hence Lenin transferred revolutionary action into the hands of an elite violent minority.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	5	8	9	11	13	13	12	10	7	6	5.3

Most students paid attention to the dates indicated, while others wrote everything they knew. Students need to provide specific details as evidence for their answer. They should link the event to an outcome rather than merely describe the event itself. The question specifically asked students to explain how an event/idea/leader contributed to the development of the revolution; therefore, the focus must be placed on the contribution to the development of the revolution.

- Students who chose to explain the importance of the Stamp Act responded well in general. Some students fell short in their answer, as they only explained what the Stamp Act was, rather than making links to why it was important in the development of the revolution. Many students who answered on the other revolutions also seemed to respond with this approach, and did not show a strong ability to relate their knowledge to the question in an argument form.
- The storming of the Bastille was accessible to students and most students who selected this question were able to describe the event. Higher marks were awarded to answers that linked the event to possible outcomes. In this case, the Great Fear and August Decrees were mentioned by some students, but the immediate impact on the king and National Assembly escaped most students. Only the best answers linked the storming of the Bastille to the king's acceptance of the National Assembly and withdrawal of troops.
- The impact of the Tsar's abdication was poorly answered. The best responses discussed a power vacuum and the significance of that vacuum. They showed a grasp of the problems with Dual Power and the release of political prisoners by the democratic Provisional Government, which then allowed the Bolsheviks to launch their attack. They also mentioned the significance of the continuation of problems left by the Tsar and unresolved by the Provisional Government.
- Most students who answered the question on the Shanghai Massacre responded well.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response on the Russian Revolution.

The abdication of the Tsar and consequential collapse of the Tsarist regime in February 1917, left Russia to be ruled dually by the unelected Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet which had little authority. The Provisional Government attempted to reform the problems of the previous regime but failed to address the real problems; the mass food shortages and constant demand of peace from the people. The lift on censorship and freedom of speech allowed clever opposition to further damage their reputation and the release of Bolshevik prisoners to deal with the Kornilov revolt in August further damaged their competence in the eyes of the people. Nicholas II's choice to abdicate left Russia ruled by an incapable and unelected body, and the mistakes of this body, which were further capitalised on by Soviet revolutionaries, led to the 'classic coup d'etat' of October 1917, which, though not entirely supported gave the people of Russia a better alternative to the failed Provisional Government.

Part 2 – Creating a new society

Question 3

3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	8	21	70	1.6

3b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	31	58	1.5

3c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	15	78	1.7

3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	6	15	21	23	19	13	3.6



3e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	6	6	10	15	16	13	13	10	9	4.3

Overall, if students read the extracts carefully and comprehended the information given they could score very well on the short-answer parts of Question 3. Students also had to show skill in applying their own knowledge and their ability in applying skills of historiography by evaluating the usefulness of the extract. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of the extract in providing a reliable outline of the event or period was then required. Other views could have been compared with the view given.

Part e. of Question 3, on the usefulness of the extract, proved to be the most problematic. Many students ignored the concept of 'usefulness' and did not even refer to it as a starting point for their answer. Most students merely reiterated the content of the extract or provided their own narrative of the event. This suggests a weakness in students' preparation for a discussion of historiography in relation to actual selected sources, as opposed to the generic comments used in the past in essays. More practise in working with extracts and document sources, and defining the limitations or strengths in providing a reliable source of information about a specific time frame is required. Students need to explore why the source is an incomplete view, whose view is reflected (in terms of a socioeconomic group), or philosophically what stance is asserted and what may be left out. It was common for students to express that 'it only shows one aspect' (or point of view) and to stop there, rather than identify and explain other possible ways of viewing the events.

The following are high-scoring student answers to Question 3e.

This extract is limited in its usefulness, as it is written as an interpretation of Lenin's psyche from a Liberal perspective. Liberal historians generally concentrate on the 'revolution from above' and tend to ignore the influence of the people in establishing the new order. As a Liberal historian, Pipes is obviously biased against the communist ideas of Lenin and therefore focuses on his and the Bolshevik's 'political program' and does not acknowledge the tactfulness and sheer determination that other historians may credit Lenin for. Though Pipes points out Lenin's 'apparent' agenda for civil war, he fails to recognise the underlying political factors that influenced the people of Russia to deal with threats of counter-revolution from royalists and moderates alike.

The extract is useful as it presents key Bolshevik leaders' views on the role of the civil war in consolidating their power. It displays the militaristic and violent nature of the party and consequently, the new political order. It also implies that violence was a key aspect of shaping the new society. This extract however, does not include factors such as economic pressure and social discontent that also played a vital role in determining the new society. Although not affecting the militaristic nature, it does not account for the impact of War Communism that undermined the support for a socialist state, nor the growing unpopularity of the Bolsheviks that pressured for a change from the communist ideals.

Section B – Revolution Two

Part A – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	1	5	25	49	19

Question 4

4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	18	78	1.8

4b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	33	61	1.6

4c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	31	60	1.5

4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	6	13	22	22	18	14	3.6

4e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	6	6	10	16	17	14	13	10	8	4.2



Question 4 proved to be relatively easy for most students. However, it was disappointingly obvious that many students were unclear about the differences between peasants and bourgeoisie or peasants and workers. Students should be able to recognise these differences in visual material.

Students were generally able to apply their knowledge to 'explain the causes' but were less able to 'explain the viewpoint' suggested by the representation, which perhaps suggests that more practise is needed with this task. Part e. of Question 4, on the 'usefulness', was not answered very well overall. Students need more practise in relating the visual image to their knowledge of the event and testing its strengths and limitations.

The following are high-scoring student answers to Question 4e.

The representation, although implying certain inequalities perceived by the Third Estate, is not useful in explicitly displaying all inequalities that contributed to the revolution. As the focus of the image is on the three estates, it implies that inequalities in social position and privilege were key concerns of the Third Estate, driving them towards revolutionary activity. It also suggests the merit of the Third Estate was also a key factor. However, the representation does not clearly show such inequalities, nor does it include such specific grievances as inequality before tax and the law. Furthermore, it focuses on the Third Estate, and does not include the injustices felt by many clergy and liberal nobles that also contributed to the revolution.

This representation is limited in its use as it portrays only a few of the inequalities that contributed to the revolution. Though the image shows the inequalities of Privilege, it fails to depict the inequalities of taxes and the severe financial crisis that contributed to the need for change. Also, this image fails to depict the inequalities experienced by members of the Third Estate other than the bourgeoisie, such as the sans culottes who were starving because of the inflating prices of bread and basic commodities such as sugar and coffee, because of poor harvests experienced in the 1780's. Though this image captures the gross inequalities of privilege, it fails to depict other key contributing inequalities towards the revolution.

Part 2 – Creating a New Society

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	4	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	7	8	9	8	7	6	5	2	2	11.2

Overall, the short essays were disappointing because students wrote general narratives and gave few quotations as evidence, if evidence was used at all. Some students seemed to end without a proper conclusion while others wrote too much on periods outside the appropriate time frame; that is, on the old regime. Likewise, there should be no discussion of Stalin or Napoleon. Teachers should ensure that they refer closely to the current Study Design when preparing students for the examination.

Students need to pay attention to the structure of their answer by paragraphing and using their material in chronological order (unless they are presenting a thematic response).

A weakness in responses on France was a lack of reference to the popular movement. Students mainly focussed on the National Assembly and Robespierre while the notion of the radicalisation of the revolution and involvement of the *sans culottes* were hardly mentioned. There needs to be a better grasp of the relationship between the Convention, the CPS, Robespierre and the popular movement. The high-scoring responses were detailed, included specific references to evidence for their argument and were relevant.

- Responses to part a. often found it difficult to stay focused on 'political' aspects and instead discussed everything they knew. Perhaps students had difficulty in deciding what qualifies as a political feature.
- Responses to part b. were often too narrow. They focused on government decisions rather than how the living conditions of people were actually affected.
- Responses to part c. generally delivered very good discussions of crises but did not discuss the compromises involved or the impact on the new society.

Strong responses handled discussion of change and continuity very well, contained evidence and were focused on the question. The three pages of writing space that were provided were adequate for the majority of students.