

Paper Reference(s) 1HIB/32
Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)

History

PAPER 3: Modern depth study
Option 32: Mao's China, c1945–76

Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

Sources / Interpretations Booklet

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THE QUESTION PAPER.**

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Source for use with Section A.

SOURCE A: From *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang. Here the author is describing a mass rally she attended in November 1966.

Shortly before noon, excited shouts of ‘Long live Chairman Mao!’ roared out. People sitting in front of me jumped up in excitement, waving their Little Red Books in the air. Everyone wanted to see Mao in person.

I spotted his back and saw his right arm waving steadily. My heart sank. Was that all I would see of Chairman Mao? Only a glimpse of his back? The sun seemed suddenly to have turned grey. Life seemed pointless.

Sources / interpretations for use with Section B.

SOURCE B: From the diary of an official of the Soviet Union (USSR). Here he is recalling a private conversation with a Chinese official.

9 September 1960

During the conversation, I asked about what the hopes were for the harvest in China this year. The Chinese official said that this year there are many difficulties in agriculture caused by great natural disasters in many areas of the country. He said that this year agricultural areas have been affected by flooding and drought.

These natural disasters have caused considerable damage. The Chinese official estimated that the harvest in China would only be 75% of what was planned.

SOURCE C: From a private letter sent by Peng Dehuai to Mao during the Lushan Conference in 1959. Peng was an important official in the CCP who worked closely with Mao. Peng had just visited peasants in his home village.

In trying to build socialism we have achieved much, but we still have many lessons to learn.

Reports of extra-large grain harvests have been exaggerated. These reports have led people to believe that the problem of food had been solved and that there was plenty to eat. As a result, food was wasted and the autumn harvest was neglected. This has damaged us a lot.

In our attempts to produce iron and steel, too many small blast furnaces were built. This has taken workers, who could have been harvesting food, away from the fields.

**INTERPRETATION 1: From China since 1917 by
A Lawrence, published in 2004.**

It is true that Mao and his ideas had a big part to play in the events of the 'three bad years' of 1959–61.

One important reason for starvation was the false reporting of grain production. Official reports suggested the harvest was better than it actually was. This led to more grain being sent to the cities and to the USSR.

The setting up of blast furnaces failed to produce usable steel, and led to peasants being taken away from working on the fields.

INTERPRETATION 2: From a history website.

There is certainly truth in the belief that the 'Three Years of Natural Disasters' (1959–61) was a cause of the great famine. In 1959, many millions of acres of farmland were destroyed by floods.

These floods were followed by further disasters: droughts, severe heat, more floods, storms, disease and swarms of insects. In a number of areas this led to food production falling by more than half.

Then in 1961, the north was hit by more drought and the south suffered more flooding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Source A taken from: Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China By Jung Chang © Simon & Schuster, 1991

Source B taken from: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/index.htm>; Source C taken from:

China since 1949 (Seminar Studies In History)', Benson, Linda, Pearson Education Limited; Interpretation 1 taken from: 'China since 1919', 1st Edition, Routledge; Interpretation 2 taken from: <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/great-chinese-famine/>