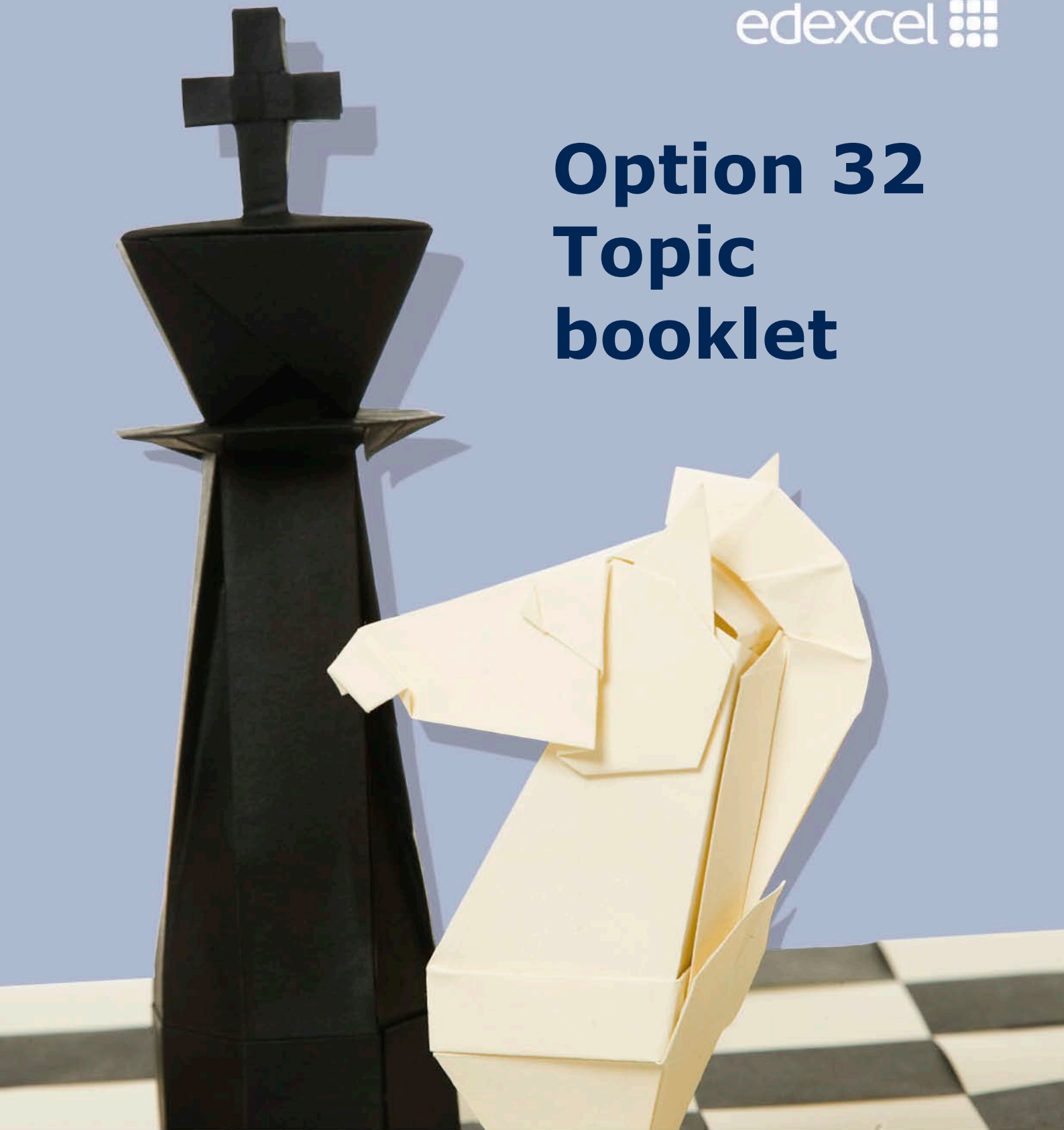


Option 32

Topic booklet



Mao's China, 1945–76

GCSE (9–1) History

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in History (1HI0)

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Version 4 (March 2025)

This topic booklet has been updated to include changes made to new issues of the specification and sample assessment materials.

- Issue 5: language and assessment changes, for first assessment June 2025.
- Issue 6: content changes, for first teaching September 2024 and first assessment June 2026.

Information on new resources has also been added.

Summary guidance on the changes can be found [here](#).

1. Overview

This option focuses on a period of almost continual upheaval in China's modern history. Beginning with the victory of Communist forces in the last phases of the Chinese Civil War, it considers Mao's consolidation of power, the transformation of agriculture and industry, and Mao's fortunes as leader of the new revolutionary regime. The course also considers the reasons for, and the dramatic failure of, Mao's utopian Great Leap Forward, and its aftermath, including the origins and development of the Cultural Revolution. Throughout, there is a focus on Mao's distinctive style of government which relied on a combination of revolutionary optimism, mass enthusiasm, terror and authoritarianism. Beyond politics, the course examines the impact of Mao's brand of communism on Chinese society and culture. Specifically, students will consider how the Communists reformed the family, the extent to which Mao's regime liberated Chinese women, the impact of communism on health and education, as well as attacks on religion and attempts to create a new revolutionary culture.

The course deals with some extremely interesting ideas, dramatic events and fascinating personalities. Maoism, for example, was one of the most influential currents of thought in the 1960s and 1970s. Its emphasis on guerrilla warfare, the liberation of women, and keeping the spirit of the revolution alive were all much more attractive to a new generation of radicals than the bureaucratic Soviet path to communism. This ideology underpinned a series of utopian policies, including the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution which both, albeit in different ways, reflected faith in the revolutionary potential of the Chinese people. The Great Leap Forward was a tremendous, if ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to find a model of development that was different from both western capitalism and the Soviet command economy. Equally, the Cultural Revolution was, in part, an attempt to keep the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese people at the centre of the communist government rather than allow the new government to be dominated by experts and administrators. In addition to these moments of utopianism, Mao was also a great and, often ruthless, political tactician. The Cultural Revolution demonstrates his willingness to use mass terror in order to reassert his dominance over the government. The Hundred Flowers campaign also shows his willingness to set traps for his opponents, or at the very least to act opportunistically to secure his position.

Finally, Mao's China is extremely helpful for students seeking to understand the dynamics of the modern world. In many ways, Mao laid the foundations for China's emergence as a major power. Indeed, Mao built or shaped many of the institutions that are central to China's rise to its current status.

The option is structured into four Key topics and requires students to understand the complexity of a society or historical situation and the interrelation between different aspects of Chinese politics, society and culture during this period. Significantly, the four Key topics contain some chronological overlap, and this structure is designed to highlight the complexity and interplay of different aspects of the history that it covers.

1. Overview

1.1 Assessment (from June 2025)

Students answer three questions for the modern depth study: Question 1, either Question 2(a) or Question 2(b), and Question 3 parts (a)–(d). Students are assessed on all four Assessment Objectives. The questions may be related to any content specified in the four Key topic areas.

- Question 1: targets AO3, and requires students to make inferences from one source.
- Question 2(a) or (b): students have a choice of two questions. These target AO1/AO2, and focus on explanation of causation.
- Question 3(a): targets AO3 and uses two contemporary sources. One of them may be visual, but at least one will be written. Students assess the usefulness of both sources for a specified enquiry, making use of their knowledge of the historical context.
- Question 3(b): targets AO4 and uses two later written interpretations taken from secondary material. Students explain how the two interpretations differ.
- Question 3(c): targets AO4 and uses the same interpretations as part (b). Students suggest why the two interpretations differ. They may use the contemporary sources provided for Question 3(a) to help them answer this question.
- Question 3(d): targets AO4 and re-uses the interpretations. It requires students to evaluate one interpretation, making use of the other interpretation and their knowledge of the historical context.

Students should be aware that interpretations are based on evidence from their period of study and they should be aware of a range of evidence that can be used to reach conclusions. They should study examples of such evidence and consider ways in which it could give rise to and support different interpretations. Students should understand a range of reasons why interpretations may differ and should be aware that differences in view, based on conclusions drawn from evidence, are legitimate and can be explained. Students should be able to evaluate given interpretations using their own knowledge of China in the years 1945–76.

Detailed information and guidance on assessment can be found in the separate [Getting Started Guide](#).

For more information on sources and interpretations, please refer to the [Guidance on sources and interpretations](#) and [Paper 3 guide](#), which look at question types, common problems, and teaching approaches and ideas.

2. Content guidance

2.1 Summary of content

Establishing communist rule, 1945–59

The first key topic focuses on how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) won the Civil War and consolidated power in the period 1945–59. Students should understand the relative strengths of the nationalist GMD and the CCP, and the reasons for the victory of the CCP by October 1949. Students should consider the essential features of Mao's regime, including Mao's role in the new government, the role of the CCP, its relationship with the people of China and the nature of communist ideology. They should understand, too, the early campaigns designed to consolidate CCP power, including, for example, the initial attack on landlords – which was part of Mao's early policy of land reform – the 'anti' campaigns of the early 1950s and the Hundred Flowers campaign and ensuing 'Anti-Rightist' purge.

Economic policy, 1949–65

The second key topic focuses on communist economic policy 1949–65. Here, students should consider the different phases of communist policy, the reason behind the changing approach to economics and the success and failure of the key policies. Students should understand communist land reform, and the subsequent move towards more collective forms of production, including, for example, Mutual Aid Teams and Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives. Turning to industry, students should study the Soviet-inspired first Five-Year Plan, and its successes and failures. Students should then study the Great Leap Forward, the communes, and the causes and impact of the Great Famine. Finally in this key topic they should understand the more pragmatic economic policies introduced by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

The Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, 1966–76

Key topic 3 deals with the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, 1966–76. Students should understand the context of the power struggle at the top of the CCP and the government in the early 1960s, particularly in relation to debates about education and culture. They should understand the events of the revolutionary period 1966–68, the roles of the Red Guards, Jiang Qing and Mao and the iconoclastic 'four olds' campaign which helped Mao reassert his power over China. They should also consider the political, social and economic impact of the Cultural Revolution. They should be aware that while Mao achieved his goal of purging his enemies from the CCP and re-establishing his power, the Cultural Revolution created social turmoil. Equally, Mao's final revolution led to economic chaos due to the closure of industry and the purge of experts and technicians in agriculture and industry. Students should understand the final phase of the Cultural Revolution, including Mao's use of the PLA and the 'Up to the mountains and down to the villages' campaign to restore order across China. The faction fighting of Mao's last years between Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai, on the one hand, and the 'Gang of Four' on the other should also be covered.

Life in Mao's China, 1949–76

Finally, Key topic 4 examines a series of related aspects of life in Mao's China across the whole chronology of this option. First, students should consider some of the means by which the CCP sought to influence the people, including propaganda, censorship, the 'cult of Mao', and the 'Reform Through Labour' system. Students should understand the impact of communism on women and the family. Specifically, students should consider the laws that reformed the traditional status

2. Content guidance

of women and the way in which communist policies, particularly relating to agriculture, affected women and the family. The third aspect of this topic relates to education and health, and students should be aware of Mao's changing approach to education and the successes and failures of communist health care policies such as the barefoot doctor initiatives. Cultural change should also be covered. This includes cultural change in urban and rural areas, CCP attacks on Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam and ancestor worship and the role of Jiang Qing and the impetus behind the Cultural Revolution.

The four key topics which comprise this depth study are inter-related. Students should be encouraged to see the links between the different aspects of life in Mao's China. Indeed, questions may be set that cross the different topics.

Key terms

It may be useful at the start of the course to provide students with a list of key terms and concepts that they will need to be familiar with for this option. Students should be familiar with the terminology found in the specification content.

Please note here that the SPaG mark scheme which is applied to Question 3(d) refers to the use of specialist terminology.

The list of terms below is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, rather simply a useful starting point for teachers to produce their own list of terms that their students may not fully understand or have difficulty spelling.

Students should also be familiar with broad terms such as economic, political, religious, social and cultural.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • ancestor worship | • Islam |
| • 'anti-rightist' | • landlordism |
| • Barefoot Doctors | • land reform |
| • Buddhism | • literacy |
| • bureaucracy | • Lysenkoism |
| • cadres | • Maoism |
| • capitalist | • Marxism |
| • 'capitalist roader' | • People's Liberation Army |
| • censorship | • permanent revolution |
| • centralised | • political campaign |
| • Christianity | • political party |
| • civil war | • policy reform |
| • class | • propaganda |
| • collectivisation, | • Red Guards |
| • communes | • re-education |
| • communism | • revolutionary culture |
| • Confucianism | • rightist |
| • counter-revolutionaries | • rural |
| • cult of Mao | • social status |
| • factions | • terror |
| • famine | • thought control |
| • ideology | • traditional culture |
| • industrial development | • urban |

2.2 Content exemplification

This section provides additional guidance on the specification content. It should be remembered that the official specification is the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance. Any examples provided here do not constitute additional specification content and other relevant material illustrating aspects of the specification can be used.

Key topic 1: Establishing communist rule, 1945–59		Exemplification
1 The Civil War, 1945–49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relative strengths and weaknesses of the CCP and the Guomindang at the start of the Civil War. Reasons for the success of Mao and the CCP, including leadership, military factors, and unrest in the towns and cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China in 1945. The relative strength of the CCP and GMD, including the extent of popular support, their relationship with foreign powers (for example the GMD's support from the US and the CCP's support from the USSR), their strategic positions in China, and the effectiveness of their leadership, the tactics of the PLA and GMD, and perceptions that the GMD were corrupt. Reasons for success, including leadership, military tactics, peasant support, for example in the strategic importance of Manchuria and its loss to the CCP in 1948, and the CCP's success in the Huai-Hai Campaign of 1948–49.
2 Communist rule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ideology and role of Mao. Reasons for Mao's dominant position. The role of the CCP in the government of China, including new mass party membership and democratic centralism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reasons for Mao's authority within the CCP and his leadership in the 1940s. Mao's ideology, his focus on the power of the peasants, his nationalism and his initial appeal to national unity. The nature of government, for example the role of Mao and leading figures such as Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, and the CCP. The relationship between the CCP leadership and CCP members. The use of cadres. The role of the Politburo, Central Committee, and National and Regional Congresses. CCP domination of the major institutions in the new government following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The constitution of 1954, including the State Council, National People's Congress, and Provincial Congresses.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 1: Establishing communist rule, 1945–59		Exemplification
3 Consolidating the CCP's hold on power, 1951–52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of terror against opponents of communist rule. The 'three antis' and 'five antis' movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the use of terror, such as the significance of the Korean War, CCP use of political classification in its campaign against 'counter revolutionaries', urban and rural terror campaigns. The 1951 'three-anti' campaign (<i>Sanfan</i>) attack on corruption, waste and bureaucracy. Impact of the campaign. The 1952 'five-anti' campaign (<i>Wufan</i>) attack on bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property and theft of government secrets. Impact of the campaign.
4 The Hundred Flowers campaign, 1956–57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mao's reasons for the Hundred Flowers campaign. Key features of the Hundred Flowers campaign; criticism of communist rule and the reaction of Mao. Results of the campaign, including the 'Anti-Rightist' purge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reasons for the Hundred Flowers campaign, such as Mao's suspicion of experts and bureaucrats, Mao's desire to listen to the grievances of the people, the need for economic development, Mao's desire to assert his dominance by allowing criticism of the CCP, the possibility that the campaign was a trap and the international context of problems in Eastern Europe and the USSR after the death of Stalin. Key features of the campaign, for example, Mao's speech 'On the correct handling of contradictions among the people'; the period of 'blooming and contending' when criticisms of the regime were temporarily allowed; Mao's rejection of 'poisonous weeds' – the ending of the campaign in June 1957. The 'Anti-Rightist' purge 1957–59, the attack on critics of Mao's policy and officials in the government. The use of labour camps (<i>laogai</i>) as a form of 're-education'.

Key topic 2: Economic policy, 1949–65		Exemplification
1 Early changes in agriculture, 1949–57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for, and features of, the attacks on landlordism and the redistribution of land. Moves towards agricultural cooperation. Reasons for the change from voluntary to enforced collectivisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mao's land reform, its impact on former supporters of the GMD, its popularity with the peasants, the goal of eliminating landlords as a class, its relationship to communist ideology. Features of cooperation, for example establishment of agricultural cooperatives, the need for greater agricultural efficiency in order to promote industrial development. An awareness of pattern of and scale of change from voluntary cooperatives to Mutual Aid Teams and Agricultural Producer's Cooperatives to people's communes. Reasons for change, such as initial political pragmatism being overridden by Mao's views on the peasantry, revolutionary ideology, need to improve agricultural production to feed China's population.
2 Industry and the Five-Year Plan, 1953–57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for, and targets of, the first Five-Year Plan. The significance of USSR financial and technical support. Success and failures of the first Five-Year Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The origins of the first Five-Year Plan, for example Mao's vision of industrial development, the 'success' of Soviet Five Year Plans, increased Soviet economic aid and technical support. The nature of the planned economy, the scale of development and the focus on heavy industry. Successes, for example transport and railways, urbanisation, new industries, mining and mineral extraction, Wuhan Yangtze River bridge, the impact on Mao's leadership. Failures, for example limited expansion of light industry, limited growth of oil production, inefficiencies of a planned economy.
3 The Great Leap Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mao's reasons for the second Five-Year Plan (the Great Leap Forward), 1958–62. The successes and failures of the Great Leap Forward. Reasons for failures. The importance of the Lushan Conference (1959). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the Great Leap Forward, including, for example, Mao's ideological objections to the Soviet style of planning, the limited availability of Soviet aid 1958–62, Mao's faith in the power of the peasants, Mao's goal of emerging as a global power, Mao's desire to improve both industry and agriculture. The nature of the Great Leap

2. Content guidance

Key topic 2: Economic policy, 1949–65		Exemplification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation of the commune: communal living and the abolition of private farming. The significance of Lysenkoism. The causes and impact of the Great Famine, 1958–62. 	<p>Forward, for example backyard furnaces, mass mobilisation of peasants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial successes of the Great Leap Forward, for example the increase in steel production and irrigation. Ultimate failure of the Great Leap Forward, the forgery of statistics, growing hardship and famine in the country. The Lushan Conference and its importance, for example Peng Dehuai criticisms of Mao's policy. Mao's response The end of private farming. Organisation of, and living in, the communes, for example, positive and negative aspects. The nature of Lysenkoism, its impact on Chinese agriculture. The causes of the Great Famine, for example, the Four Pests Campaign, the disruption caused by backyard furnaces, the impact of bad weather 1959–61, and the consequences of Lysenkoism. The social and economic impact of the great famine; political consequences for Mao, such as the rise of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.
4 Economic reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the restoration of private farming under Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Reasons for, and features of, economic reform (1962–65) under Liu and Deng. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for Liu and Deng's restoration of private farming, such as need for economic pragmatism. Reform under Liu and Deng as a response to the economic crisis. Reforms July to November 1960. The restoration of private farming. Economic recovery to 1965.

Key topic 3: The Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, 1966–76		Exemplification
1 Reasons for the Cultural Revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The power struggle, Mao, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. • Purification of communism, including the Socialist Education Movement, and the reform of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao's position in government 1960-65; criticisms of the policies of Liu and Deng. Mao's ambition to re-establish his dominance over the party and government. • Key features of the 'purification of communism', such as Mao's ideological commitment to permanent revolution and distrust of bureaucrats; the Socialist Education Movement and reform of education encompassing the ideological disagreement and debate leading to the Cultural Revolution.
2 The Red Guards and the Red Terror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao's hold on young people, including the mass rallies of 1966. Jiang Qing and the attack on the CCP. • Red Guard attacks on the 'four olds' and the CCP. The growth of anarchy and the use of terror. Cultural destruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao's appeals to students and young people to reject 'capitalist roaders' in the party leadership. The publication the 'Little Red Book'. Mao's mass rallies in Tiananmen Square from August 1966. Mao's call for young people to 'bombard the headquarters' – encouraging them to attack the CCP. The role of Jian Qing. • The emergence of the Red Guards. Launch by Lin Biao of the campaign against the 'four olds': Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. Red Guards' attacks on universities and symbols of old culture.
3 The effects of the Cultural Revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political effects: the purging of the CCP, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the rise and fall of Lin Biao. • Social effects, including the impact on education. • Economic effects: changes in industry, the removal of technicians, the move to the countryside and the impact on farming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao's attack on Liu Shaoqi. The purging of the CCP, for example senior party members required to undertake self-criticism and many sent to labour camps for re-education, Shanghai Commune and Revolutionary Committees. The dismissal of Deng Xiaoping. Rise and fall of Lin Biao. • Social disruption, such as the closure of factories, schools and universities. Positive and negative impact on education, for example, the 'lost generation'. • Economic disruption and declining production.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 3: The Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, 1966–76		Exemplification
4 The end of the Cultural Revolution, 1968–76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the end of the Red Guards and the significance of the restoration of order by the PLA, including the 'Up to the mountains and down to the villages' campaign. The return to power of Deng Xiaoping and the increased influence of Zhou Enlai. The rise and fall of the 'Gang of Four' and the death of Mao. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLA instructed to restore order. Sending of Red Guards 'Up to the mountains and down to the villages' in order to prevent further chaos in the cities. Return of Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai to the leadership of the CCP in order to restore a properly functioning government. Faction fighting in the government between Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai and the Gang of Four. The arrest of the Gang of Four. The response in China to Mao's death.

Key topic 4: Life in Mao's China, 1949–76		Exemplification
1 Communist control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propaganda and censorship and the significance of the 'cult of Mao'. Thought control and the development of the 'Reform Through Labour' system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of propagandists and agit-prop. Campaigns such as Resist America, Aid Korea, campaign against Hu Feng, the cult of Lei Feng. The importance of Mao's writings, the 'Little Red Book', the growing cult of Mao 1965–1968. Thought control, for example the establishment of <i>Laogai</i> camps from 1957 and Mao's view of labour as a means of achieving 're-education'.
2 Family life and the role of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in family life in towns and countryside. The impact of collectivisation and communes. Reasons for changes in the status of women under Mao. The significance of foot binding and the Marriage Law (1950). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in family life and the roles of women, including, for example the rise in the number of divorces, popular attitudes towards women; differences between urban and rural experience; impact of collectivisation and communes both positive and negative. Reasons, such as Mao's personal beliefs that women 'hold up half the sky', communist ideology, economic imperative for changes to status of women in relation to pre-1949 situation. Specific understanding of symbolism of, and campaign to eradicate, foot binding and the significance of very early introduction of the Marriage Law.

Key topic 4: Life in Mao's China, 1949–76	Exemplification
<p>3 Education and health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for changes in education. Growth in literacy and the significance of Pinyin. The collapse of education after 1966. • Reasons for changes in health provision. The significance of the barefoot doctors. Successes and failures of healthcare reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for changes in education, for example the need for an educated workforce, Mao's attitude to basic education and intellectuals, the impact of the Cultural Revolution on education. Literacy drives and the significance of the adoption of Pinyin, enabling faster growth in literacy. • Reasons for changes in health provision, for example the unequal nature of the provision in 1949 and the need for a healthy workforce, the aim of improving sanitation and hygiene through patriotic health movements. The significance of barefoot doctors, for example providing free basic medical care in villages. Successes, for example improvements in life expectancy and infant mortality. Failures, such as limited hospital facilities.
<p>4 Cultural change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for attacks on traditional culture in towns and countryside. • The imposition of revolutionary art and culture; the role of Jiang Qing. • Reasons for attacks on Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam and ancestor worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maoism and traditional culture. • The role of Jiang Qing, for example 'cultural purifier of the nation', and campaigns such as the 'four olds', artists as servants of the people, banning of western forms of culture, Jiang Qing's censorship regime and promotion of 'model operas'; re-education of artists during the Cultural Revolution. • Reasons, such as Maoist ideology, political and social control, nationalism, 'national security' for attacks on organised religions and religious beliefs in general.

3. Student timeline

The timeline below could be given to students, and could be further edited and added to by them. Inclusion of dates and events in this timeline should not be taken as an indication that these are prescribed: the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

1945	Civil War between CCP and GMD resumes
1946	Mao's People's Liberation Army (PLA) grows to 1.2 million due to the popularity of the CCP's land reform policies US troops provide support to the GMD Soviet troops provide limited support to the CCP
1947	USA stopped supplying the GMD
1948	The PLA gains the upper hand in the war by capturing territory in northern and eastern China
1949	The CCP defeat the GMD in the Chinese Civil War Mao announces the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC)
1950	Reunification Campaigns: PRC invade Tibet Agrarian Reform Law introduced China enters the Korean War Mao visits Moscow; Sino-Soviet Treaty signed Marriage Law Beginning of the campaign against religion 'People's Courts' put former 'landlords' on trial
1951	'Three antis' movement launched Mutual Aid Teams launched
1952	'Five antis' movement launched Political parties other than the CCP banned First Five-Year Plan launched
1953	Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives (APCs) launched End of the Korean War
1955	Advanced APCs launched Pinyin Chinese adopted
1957	End of the first Five-Year Plan Hundred Flowers Campaign Four Pests Campaign begins
1958	Great Leap Forward launched Communes introduced Lysenkoism introduced Mao gives up the presidency of the PRC CCP criticise the family

3. Student timeline

1958–62	Great Famine
1959	Lushan Conference: fall of Peng Dehuai Lin Biao becomes Minister of Defence
1960	USSR stops providing assistance to China Height of the famine
1961	Guangzhou Conference, Deng Xiaoping announces a more pragmatic economic policy Russian economic advisors removed from China
1962	Liu and Deng appointed to solve the problems of the famine
1963	Socialist Education Movement founded Diary of Lei Feng published
1964	'Little Red Book' published Learn from the PLA campaign launched
1965	Barefoot doctors introduced Mao's swim in the Yangtze demonstrated his continuing fitness
1966	Central Cultural Revolution Group created Cultural Revolution begins Group of Five disbanded by the Central Committee Red Guards created by a group of students Mass rallies in Tiananmen Square Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi dismissed from positions
1967	'Up to the mountains, down to the villages' campaign launched PLA take over work of Red Guards
1969	Ninth Party Congress: new Central Committee elected – 45% are members of the PLA Lin Biao named as Mao's preferred successor Liu Shaoqi dies in prison
1971	Lin Biao killed in a plane crash after plotting against Mao
1972	'Criticise Lin Biao' campaign launched
1973	Deng Xiaoping brought back into government
1975	Tiananmen Square protests
1976	January: death of Zhou Enlai September: death of Mao October: Gang of Four arrested

4. Resources

The sections below list a range of resources that could be used by students and teachers for this topic.

The first section lists information on free support materials available on the Edexcel website. On the [GCSE History \(9–1\) from 2016](#) page:

- select the [Teaching support](#) tab, where resources are separated out by Plan, Teach, and Track and Assess;
- or select the [Course materials](#) tab, and then select the appropriate tab for [Specification and sample assessments](#), [Exam materials](#), or [Teaching and learning materials](#).

The table below provides a selection of the free support materials available on the Edexcel website. Details and links for all the free support available can be found in [this document](#). It is updated regularly, so worth bookmarking.

The second section lists publishers who have been endorsed for GCSE (9–1) History. Endorsement means that a resource has been through our quality assurance process to confirm that it meets the teaching and learning requirements a specification is aimed at. Endorsement of a resource doesn't mean it's the only suitable material available, or that it is required to achieve the qualification.

The remaining sections list both endorsed resources and those that have not been endorsed. While these resources – and others – may be used to support teaching and learning, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

There has been a rapid growth in podcasts in recent years, and we have added below links to a few well-known ones. Some may not be suitable for younger listeners, so please check carefully before sharing with students. Similarly, there are plenty of useful videos for History students on online sharing platforms, and any links below have been checked, but please exercise care before sharing social media links with students.

4.1 Free support materials

Resource	Details
Specification and sample assessment materials	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History.
Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports	An Edexcel Online login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
Getting Started Guide	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements of the specification. Updated for Issues 5 and 6.
Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026	Summary guidance with links on the changes being made for Issue 5 (first assessment 2025) and Issue 6 (2026).
Content changes for 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic guidance • FAQs 	Guidance for each option on the changes being made to the content for Issue 6 of the specification (first assessment June 2026), and FAQs.

Assessment changes for 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide FAQs 	Guidance on the changes being made to the assessment model for Issue 5 of the specification (first assessment June 2025), and FAQs.
Specification language changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track changes on Rationale FAQs 	Guidance on the language changes made for Issue 4 of the specification (first teaching September 2023, first assessment June 2025).
Guidance on sources and interpretations	Guidance on AO3 sources and AO4 interpretations, looking at question types, common problems, and teaching approaches and ideas.
Paper 3 Guide	Teaching approaches and ideas for the modern depth study, with case studies from practising teachers.
Schemes of work	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files. A digital interactive scheme of work is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.
Mapping documents	Mapping documents to help support teachers in moving to Edexcel GCSE History.
Exemplar student answers	Exemplar student answers, including from the summer 2018, 2019 and 2022 series, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
Student walkthroughs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper 3 playlist 	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Revision tips	Some useful revision tips for students. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Command words	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. <i>Updated for 2025.</i>

4.2 Endorsed resources*

[Pearson](#) – Designed to help develop confident, articulate and successful historians.

[Hodder Education](#) – The Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel students' book helps students achieve their full potential while ensuring pace, enjoyment and motivation.

[Oxford University Press](#) – Oxford's Edexcel GCSE History student books help to develop young historians who have the confidence to succeed, with the most up-to-date exam practice and a tried-and-trusted, accessible approach.

[Zigzag Education](#) – Photocopiable resources for learning, revision and exam practice.

[Anglia Tours](#) – A range of fully-guided History tours which enhance both teaching and learning for the related Pearson qualification.

[NST Tours](#) – Guided History tours to support teachers and students with GCSE History.

* You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.

4.3 Resources for students

Resource	Details
<i>GCSE History (9–1) Mao's China, 1945–76</i> (Pearson, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Mao's China Revision Guide and Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2017)	A combined revision guide and workbook written for this option in the specification.
GCSE Modern World History, <i>Mao's China 1930–76</i> (Hodder, 2008)	This e-book covers much of the political and economic aspects of the course. It is written specifically for GCSE students and can be downloaded from: www.hodderplus.co.uk/modernworldhistory/pdf/maos-china-1930-76.pdf
Josh Brooman, <i>China since 1900</i> (Longman, 1988)	Brooman's book presents good coverage of the topics central to this paper and the background to the Civil War. The book is written clearly and accessibly and should be suitable for all students.
Geoff Stewart, <i>Heinemann Advanced History: China 1900–76</i> (Heinemann, 2006)	Stewart's book covers the time period and the issues central to the course clearly. It is written for AS and A Level students. Nonetheless, it could be used with higher-ability students or as a resource for extending the most able.
Michael Lynch, <i>Access to History: The People's Republic of China 1949–76, 2nd Edition</i> (Hodder, 2008)	An excellent book in terms of the coverage and detail. It is, however, clearly aimed at A level students and therefore would be most useful for higher ability students.
Linda Benson, <i>China Since 1949</i> (Seminar Studies in History, 2011)	Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 focus on some of the key content of the course. Again, it is written for a slightly older audience and therefore would have to be used alongside a structured activity or as part of extension reading for the most able.

4.4 Resources for teachers

Resource	Details
Maurice Meisner, <i>Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic, Third Edition</i> , (Simon and Schuster, 1999)	Meisner's excellent book contains a comprehensive account of the twists and turns of policy in Mao's China. Moreover, Meisner takes Mao's ideology seriously and situates it in the context of the resources available to China and the international context. The level of detail and style means that it is a great resource for teachers, but it is likely to be too advanced for the vast majority of students.

Delia Davin, <i>Mao: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2013) Richard Curt Kraus, <i>The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2012)	Oxford University Press, A Very Short Introduction Series Davin's book is a really useful overview of Mao's thought, his impact on China and his legacy.
Frank Dikötter, <i>The People's Trilogy</i> (Bloomsbury, 2017)	The three books in this excellent series give an in-depth examination of China from 1945–76.
Lee Feigon, <i>Mao: A Reinterpretation</i> (Chicago, 2003)	Feigon's book makes the case that Mao's regime was, in many ways, beneficial to China. Therefore, it is useful from the point of view of an alternative interpretation.
Jon Halliday and Jung Chang, <i>Mao: the Unknown Story</i> (Vintage, 2007)	This detailed work gives a critical view of Mao and his policies.
Michael Lynch, <i>Mao</i> (Routledge, 2004)	A very engaging biography of Mao, with an overview of the events and campaigns central to the course.
Rana Mitter, <i>Modern China: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2008)	Oxford University Press, A Very Short Introduction Series An interesting and well-written series covering a wide variety of topics that serve as an excellent overview.
Alan Lawrance, <i>China Since 1919 – Revolution and Reform: A Sourcebook</i> (Routledge, 2003)	This is a very useful book in terms of finding contemporary sources. It contains more than 150 extracts: telegrams, speeches, memoirs, letters, poems and a variety of political documents.
Stefan R. Landsberger, Anchee Min, and Duo Duo, <i>Chinese Propaganda Posters</i> (Taschen, 2011)	An excellent resource full of great contemporary posters.
Lincoln Cushing and Ann Tompkins, <i>Chinese Revolutionary Posters</i> (Chronicle Books, 2007)	More excellent propaganda posters, predominantly from the period of the Cultural Revolution.
Philip Short, <i>Mao, a Life</i> (Hodder & Staughton, 1999)	A detailed account, sections could be accessible for students
<p>Six model operas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legend of the Red Lantern • Shajiabang • Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy • Raid on the White Tiger Regiment • Ode of the Dragon River • On the Dock 	<p>These operas and ballets, and others such as 'The East is Red' are interesting because of the values that they embody, particularly the central role of women and the PLA to the revolutionary struggle. Additionally, as they were filmed in Beijing in the late 1960s and early 1970s they often start with scenes of street life in China in Mao's last years.</p> <p>Some of these are available on DVD from specialist suppliers. Indeed, some sell through well-known internet auction sites. Clips can also often be found on YouTube.</p>
<p>Two model ballets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Detachment of Women • The White-Haired Girl 	

<i>Havoc in Heaven</i> (1965)	<i>Havoc in Heaven</i> , commercially available in the West since 2004, is a feature length cartoon made by China's premier animation studio. The film was made in two parts from 1960 to 1964. Although it was made in the period in which Mao played a more limited role in government it still embodies revolutionary themes. Indeed, the whole film is about the battle between the Monkey King and the Jade Emperor. The film also embodies the nationalism of the period as it is heavily influenced by Peking Opera and is based on the first section of the classic Ming Dynasty novel 'Journey to the West'. <i>Havoc in Heaven</i> was one of the last films made in China before the whole film industry was closed down by the events of the Cultural Revolution.
<i>Chairman Mao</i> , also known as <i>Declassified: Chairman Mao</i> (2006)	A History Channel documentary available on DVD which focuses on Mao's life and his impact on China.
<i>China: A Century of Revolution</i> (1997)	A three-disc documentary setting out a detailed account of China's history in the twentieth century. It contains some useful sections on Mao's key campaigns.
<i>People's Century</i> (1999)	Episode 12 features a section on the Chinese Revolution and establishment of the PRC in 1949. Episode 18 focuses on Mao's China from the last days of the Civil War through to the end of the Cultural Revolution.
Schoolhistory website http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk	A very comprehensive website with resources for teaching history. GCSE resources are arranged by exam board and cover most modules. Some resources are free but to get the full range available there is a subscription payment.
Teachithistory website https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/depth-studies/china/tags/2578	A small collection of resources for teaching Mao's China
https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks3-gcse-the-story-of-china-the-rise-of-mao-zedong/zfnnd6f	BBC Teach – 10-minute documentary presented by Michael Wood on the Rise of Mao ZeDong
Podcast series Historical Association , free to members The Rest Is History Dan Snow's History Hit History Extra You're Dead to Me	There are lots of History podcast series available these days through various platforms. We have listed here a few well-known ones, and you can search for relevant episodes. There are also revision podcasts available. Please check they are suitable before sharing with students.

Educational Recording Agency

Transform History Teaching with Multimedia Resources from the Educational Recording Agency (ERA)

[The ERA Licence](#) provides seamless access to television and radio recordings, offering a single point of clearance for the rights needed to create and use authentic media resources in your classroom. With [ERA's free video streaming platform](#), licensed institutions can explore a rich library of curriculum-mapped TV and radio clips tailored to GCSE, AS, and A-level teaching.

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To access this free resource [registration is required](#) - but is quick and simple. State schools in England are licensed under a central agreement with the DfE and the vast majority of independent schools also hold a current ERA Licence.