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Write your **student number** in the boxes above.

Letter

History: Revolutions

Question and Answer Book

VCE Examination – Friday 7 November 2025

- Reading time is **15 minutes**: 11.45 am to 12 noon
- Writing time is **2 hours**: 12 noon to 2.00 pm

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book of 28 pages
- Sources Book

Instructions

- Use the additional space at the end of this book if you need extra space to complete an answer.

Students are **not** permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents	pages
Section A (2 of 4 questions, 50 marks) _____	3–19
Section B (1 of 4 questions, 20 marks) _____	20–24
Assessment criteria for Section B _____	27

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Section A

Instructions

- Answer **two** of the following questions in the spaces provided.
 - Write your responses in English.
-

Revolution	pages
Question 1 – The American Revolution _____	4–7
Question 2 – The French Revolution _____	8–11
Question 3 – The Russian Revolution _____	12–15
Question 4 – The Chinese Revolution _____	16–19

Section B

Instructions

- Write an essay on **one** of the following questions in the space provided.
 - Write your response in English.
 - Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out on page 27.
 - Shade the **box** next to your selected question, and write the question number and the name of the revolution in the boxes provided on page 21.
-

Question 1 (20 marks)

The American Revolution

'The wide-reaching political changes made between 1776 and 1789 meant revolutionary ideals were significantly compromised.'

To what extent do you agree? Use evidence to support your response.

OR

Question 2 (20 marks)

The French Revolution

'The new regime consolidated power by enacting change that mostly reflected the original ideals of 1789.'

To what extent do you agree? Use evidence to support your response.

OR

Question 3 (20 marks)

The Russian Revolution

'When faced with challenges to their authority after October 1917, the Bolsheviks always responded with ruthless violence.'

To what extent do you agree? Use evidence to support your response.

OR

Question 4 (20 marks)

The Chinese Revolution

'From 1949 until his death in 1976, the policies and actions of Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) were simply a means of keeping himself in power.'

To what extent do you agree? Use evidence to support your response.

Assessment criteria for Section B

The essay in Section B will be assessed against the following criteria:

- construction of a coherent and relevant historical argument that addresses the specific demands of the essay question
 - demonstration of historical knowledge that is accurate and appropriate for the essay question
 - application of historical thinking concepts such as cause and consequence, continuity and change, and/or historical significance
 - use of sources as evidence to support a historical argument, including a range of primary sources, perspectives and historical interpretations
-

History: Revolutions

Sources Book

VCE Examination – Friday 7 November 2025

Contents	pages
The American Revolution _____	2–4
The French Revolution _____	5–7
The Russian Revolution _____	8–10
The Chinese Revolution _____	11–13

Refer to the sources in this book for each question in Section A, as indicated in the Question and Answer Book.

You may keep this Sources Book.

The American Revolution

Sources 1–4 relate to Question 1.

Source 1

An extract from a letter written to a British merchant in December 1765, signed by Thomas Cushing, James Otis, Samuel Adams and Thomas Gray, who were members of the Massachusetts Assembly

The Colonists have as great a Regard¹ for Right, Liberty and Justice as any People under Heaven—and they generally have Knowledge enough to discover when their Rights are infringed ... They hold themselves intitled² to all the inherent³, unalienable⁴ Rights of Nature, as Men—and to all the essential Rights of Britons, as subjects ... The primary, absolute, natural Rights of Englishmen as frequently declared in Acts of Parliament from Magna Charta⁵ to this Day, are *Personal Security, Personal Liberty and Private Property* ... It is a fundamental Principle of the British Constitution that the supreme Power⁶ cannot take from any Man any Part of his Property without his Consent in Person or by Representation.

Source: HA Cushing (ed.), *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, vol. 1, GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1904, pp. 64 and 65

¹**Regard** – feeling or understanding

²**intitled** – entitled

³**inherent** – something that belongs

⁴**unalienable** – something that cannot be taken away

⁵**Magna Charta** – Magna Carta, a document written in the 13th century outlining the rights of the people

⁶**supreme Power** – government

Source 2

A historical interpretation, published in 2020, of the colonial reaction to the Coercive Acts passed by the British parliament following the Boston Tea Party

[C]olonists had to await Britain's reaction to the fate of the ships. News of that reaction first arrived in mid-May [1774], with further details trickling in over the next few months. Americans learned that Parliament had closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for, then followed up with a series of punitive¹ laws known as the Coercive Acts.

During the summer of 1774, Americans everywhere discussed the appropriate response to such parliamentary measures, leading to the convening² of the (First) Continental Congress in September. Before adjourning³ in late October, the congressmen adopted resolutions on the controversy and, more important, called for the creation of a series of local committees to enforce a trade boycott of Great Britain. Throughout the rest of the year, the committees worked to establish their legitimacy and, in conjunction with newly elected provincial congresses, began to challenge the authority of the existing colonial governments.

Source: MB Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*, Vintage Books, New York, 2020, pp. xvii and xviii

¹**punitive** – punishing

²**convening** – calling, gathering

³**adjourning** – taking a break, suspending proceedings

Source 3

A historical interpretation, published in 2013, outlining the treatment of Loyalists during and after the War of Independence

[The Treaty of Paris 1783] made no mention of loyal white Americans outside of a meaningless clause in Article V that required the rebel Congress to “earnestly recommend” that each state legislature “provide for the restitution¹ of all estates, rights, and properties which have been confiscated belonging to real British subjects” ...

Throughout the war, colonial governments had enacted laws confiscating the property of prominent loyalists. Because the states and not the Congress had seized the property, Congress had no power to deal with the question of loyalist reparations². It could not enforce the restoration of seized loyalist property or compel liberal treatment³ of returning loyalists. This meant, as both loyalists and the victorious rebels understood, that the loyalists would receive no mercy ...

...

Anti-loyalist activity went unpunished in local neighborhoods. Angry residents used every means in their power—intimidation, assault, tarring and feathering—to prevent the exiles from returning home.

Source: R Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Plymouth, 2013, pp. 44 and 45

¹**restitution** – compensation

²**reparations** – repayments

³**compel liberal treatment** – force fair and kind behaviour

Source 4

A painting dated c. 1810, titled *Washington & Liberty*, by an anonymous artist



Photographic reproduction: Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Source: Unknown artist, *Washington & Liberty*, painting, c. 1810

The French Revolution

Sources 5–8 relate to Question 2.

Source 5

An extract from the pamphlet titled *What is the Third Estate?*, written by Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès and published at the beginning of 1789

This document is set out quite simply. We have three questions to ask ourselves.

1. What is the Third Estate?—everything.
2. What has it been until now in the political order?—nothing.
3. What is it asking?—to be something.

...

Who would thus dare to say that the Third Estate does not contain everything that is needed to make up a complete nation? ... If the privileged orders were removed, the nation would not be worse off for it, but better. So, what is the Third [Estate]? Everything, but a fettered¹ and oppressed everything. What would it be without the privileged order? ... Nothing can happen without it; everything would be infinitely better without the others.

Source: EJ Sieyès, 'What is the Third Estate?' (pamphlet), in PG Dwyer and P McPhee (eds), *The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 4

¹**fettered** – restrained, restricted

Source 6

A historical interpretation, published in 2003, outlining some of the events occurring at the Estates-General, including the Tennis Court Oath in 1789

On the 17th [June] ... the Third [Estate] took the title National Assembly by a vote of 491 to 90 ... there had been rumours that the Estates would be dismissed and the financial crisis resolved by new loans ... The lawyers in the Third Estate had become revolutionaries.

...

... Necker finally persuaded Louis XVI to try to take the matter in hand¹ by holding a royal session of all three orders ...

The bungling² of the preparations for the royal session only reinforced the National Assembly's resolution to stand firm ... When the deputies arrived on the morning of the 20th to find placards³ closing the assembly hall ... many immediately concluded that a formal dissolution was imminent⁴. Angered at the contempt⁵ for their rights ... they went to a nearby enclosed tennis court and there took an oath not to separate from the National Assembly ... until they had established a constitution for the kingdom. The Tennis Court Oath was one of the great days of the Revolution ... The oath was a symbol of national unity ... and it reaffirmed the assumption of sovereignty the National Assembly took on ... the 17th.

Equally important, the oath undermined the King's solution even before it was offered.

Source: DMG Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2003, pp. 38 and 39

¹**take the matter in hand** – take control

⁴**imminent** – about to happen

²**bungling** – carrying out a task incompetently

⁵**contempt** – disrespect

³**placards** – signs, posters

Source 7

A historical interpretation, published in 1975, outlining the new regime's economic challenges in 1793

Revolutionary France had scarcely¹ declared war on the monarchies of Europe when ... she was faced with a foreign coalition and military defeat, with aristocratic counter-revolution and civil war, with an economic crisis and a popular upsurge² ...

...

The financial crisis was made worse by the continual issuing of new *assignats*³ which led to a rapid rise in the cost of living ...

... The decline in the value of the currency continued unchecked, made worse by the impact of the King's execution and by the effects of a European war ...

As a result of this the food crisis could only grow worse. Wage-earners were paid on average 20 *sous*⁴ per day in the country areas and 40 in Paris. In certain areas bread cost as much as 8 *sous* per pound⁵, and all other goods ... were undergoing similar price increases. Not only was bread expensive; it was also scarce.

Source: A Soboul, *The French Revolution 1787–1799: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon*, Vintage Books, New York, 1975, pp. 291–293

¹**scarcely** – only just

²**upsurge** – uprising

³**assignats** – paper bills issued in France as currency

⁴**sous** – French coins that were of low value

⁵**pound** – a unit of weight

Source 8

This engraving, which includes the title *Massacre of the prisoners of the Abbey of St Germain*, depicts the massacre of prisoners in September 1792. Some of those who committed this massacre were members of the sans culottes.



Source: Unknown artist, *Massacre of the prisoners of the Abbey of St Germain*, engraving, *Révolutions de Paris*, no. 165, 1792, p. 422

The Russian Revolution

Sources 9–12 relate to Question 3.

Source 9

Selected Articles from the Fundamental Laws issued by Tsar Nicholas II in April 1906

1. The Russian state is unified and indivisible.

...

3. The Russian language is the official state language and its use is obligatory¹ in the Army, the Fleet, and in all state and public institutions ...

4. The All-Russian Emperor² possesses the supreme autocratic power³. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority.

...

7. The Sovereign Emperor exercises the legislative authority jointly with the State Council and the State Duma.

8. The Sovereign Emperor enjoys the legislative initiative in all legislative matters. The State Council and the State Duma may examine the Fundamental State Laws only on his initiative.

9. The Sovereign Emperor approves laws; and without his approval no legislative measure can become law.

Source: B Dmytryshyn (ed.), *Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700–1917*, 2nd edition, The Dryden Press, Hinsdale, Illinois, 1974, p. 387

¹**obligatory** – compulsory

²**Emperor** – Tsar

³**supreme autocratic power** – absolute authority to make laws and control territory

Source 10

A historical interpretation, published in 2022, outlining some decisions made by Alexander Kerensky in the months leading up to October 1917

Kerensky was well aware of the Bolsheviks' preparations, but even they could not shake his complacency¹. He told the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, 'I only wish that they would come out, and I will then put them down.' On 20 October, he boasted ... that he welcomed a Bolshevik revolt, because they would be utterly defeated. The same day the minister for war, General Aleksandr Verkhovsky, warned Kerensky that the army was incapable of fighting, so the best policy would be to open negotiations with the Germans and steal the Bolsheviks' thunder². Kerensky angrily rejected the idea and sacked³ him ...

On the basis of faulty information ... the government prepared for an uprising, first on 17 October, then on 20 October, and once more two days later. 'Rumours are more and more persistently being spread,' wrote Gorky⁴ on 18 October, 'that some "action by the Bolsheviks" will take place on 20 October; in other words, the disgusting scenes of 3–5 July may be repeated.' ... Kerensky preferred to think that the Bolsheviks' nerve would again fail as it had in July.

Source: A Beevor, *Russia: Revolution and Civil War, 1917–1921*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2022, p. 97

¹**shake his complacency** – motivate him to act

²**steal the Bolsheviks' thunder** – undermine the Bolsheviks by acting first

³**sacked** – dismissed

⁴**Gorky** – Maxim Gorky, a famous Russian writer and active member of the Bolshevik Party during the early days of the Russian Revolution

Source 11

A historical interpretation, published in 1986, about the purpose of the policy of War Communism after June 1918

In speech after speech Lenin first urged, then announced, the sending of detachments of 'thousands and thousands' of 'politically advanced' workers from the two capitals to the countryside, to head the food requisitioning detachments ...

...

This attitude to the products of the peasantry is often spoken of as 'War Communism', the implication being that it was an emergency policy dictated by the exigencies¹ of the Civil War. This is quite untrue. Not only had the Civil War not really started at the time of the original decrees, but Lenin in June 1918 already defined the grain monopoly² from a quite different point of view ...

That is to say, far from being a 'war' measure the 'War Communism' policy was a conscious attempt to create a new social order, to effect the immediate transformation of the country into full socialism.

Source: R Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 47 and 48

¹**exigencies** – needs, demands

²**grain monopoly** – complete control of grain production

Source 12

A poster issued by the Bolshevik Government in January 1925, which includes the title *Light and knowledge to the people*



Photographic reproduction: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Source: Unknown artist, *Light and knowledge to the people*, poster, Otdel Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia, 1925

The small text on the building at the top right translates to 'RSFSR', which stands for Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

The large text on the same building translates to 'university'.

The Chinese Revolution

Sources 13–16 relate to Question 4.

Source 13

A historical interpretation, published in 2009, of the difficulties implementing the New Life Movement that was launched in 1934

It soon became clear that individual moral regeneration¹ was not going to be embraced by the inhabitants of a country that desperately needed large-scale political reform. In spite of May-ling's² statement that the New Life Movement was "welcomed by our people as water is craved by the famishing³," the Chinese were either too poor to pay attention or too rich to want to change ...

It was not until the Second World War, when the New Life Movement developed offshoots such as the Wounded Soldiers League, that it began to make any significant contribution to the country. Meanwhile, as the American minister, Nelson T. Johnson, noted, "It is doubtful whether the personalities interested in the movement are sufficiently pure themselves to give the movement much prestige."

Source: H Pakula, *The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-shek and the Birth of Modern China*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2009, pp. 234 and 235

¹**moral regeneration** – improvement in beliefs, values and behaviour

²**May-ling** – Meiling, the wife of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek)

³**famishing** – hungry, thirsty

Source 14

This extract is from a political report by Chairman Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) to the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on 24 April 1945. In his report, he makes a comparison between the strategies of the Guomindang (Kuomintang) forces and the Red Army during the Sino-Japanese War.

[T]here exist in China two different guiding lines: one of which helps to defeat the Japanese aggressors, but the other ... in some respects actually helps them to undermine the anti-Japanese war.

The passive policy adopted by the KMT¹ government towards the war with Japan and its reactionary² policy of oppression towards the people have resulted in military defeats, the loss of large parts of territory, a financial and economic crisis, the oppression of the people, hardships in the people's livelihood, and the undermining of national unity ...

...

In the liberated areas [areas taken by the Communists], all anti-Japanese people in labour, peasant, youth, women's cultural, and other organizations, under the leadership of a democratic government, are engaging themselves heartily³ in various work to help the army, such as mobilizing people to join the army, transporting supplies for the troops, giving preferential treatment to the families of soldiers, and solving material difficulties for the troops.

Source: Mao Tse-tung, 'On Coalition Government', report to the Seventh National Congress of the CCP on 24 April 1945, in C Brandt, B Schwartz and JK Fairbank, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1959, pp. 297 and 298

¹**KMT** – Guomindang (Kuomintang)

²**reactionary** – opposing change

³**heartily** – with enthusiasm

Source 15

A historical interpretation, published in 2003, by two economists outlining the directions taken in the Second Five-Year Plan, also known as the Great Leap Forward

Starting from the summer of 1958, China was to experience in the next few years one of the most radical revolutionary changes in the history of mankind—the Great Leap Forward ... the Leap was an unorthodox¹ development strategy conceived to hasten the pace of transforming the Chinese economy from its predominantly agrarian² nature into a powerful industrial state ... a specific objective of the Leap was to increase both agricultural and industrial output by manifolds³, the former by expanding the acreage⁴ covered by irrigation and the latter via increasing the capacity of steel and iron production. As China was severely constrained with capital⁵ and backward in technology, achieving rapid growth via technical change was an unlikely option. An obvious alternative, given China's abundant surplus rural workers, was to make greater use of these resources by mobilizing them to engage in a variety of industrial and public projects through the restructuring of work and other aspects of social organization ...

Source: JK Kung and JY Lin, 'The Causes of China's Great Leap Famine, 1959–1961', in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2003, p. 53

¹**unorthodox** – different, irregular

²**agrarian** – agricultural

³**manifolds** – many times

⁴**acreage** – land area

⁵**capital** – money, investment

Source 16

A 1967 poster featuring Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch'ing), which includes the title *Let the new socialist performing arts occupy every stage*



Photographic reproduction: GRANGER – Historical Picture Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Source: Unknown artist, *Let the new socialist performing arts occupy every stage*, poster, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Revolution Alliance, Red Brigade, 1967

The text on the book translates to 'Quotations of Chairman Mao'.

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