VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

2006 History: Revolutions GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the standard of student performance in 2006 was not high despite the accessibility of the questions. An increased number of students did not respond to several questions or responded very poorly. There were many very weak students who still achieved marks on questions without having to demonstrate very much knowledge or skill in the subject.

Some students still made errors in their selection of options. Teachers need to ensure that students are familiar with sample and past examination papers so that they have a clear understanding of what revolution they will use for Section A and Section B of the paper. Students need to be aware that writing on the same revolution in both sections of the paper results in no marks being awarded for the weaker of the two sections. Some students made the mistake of answering questions within the same section of the paper on different revolutions. This also results in the weaker of these answers not receiving any marks.

Students should be advised not to write in pencil, as this can be difficult for assessors to read.

Section A – Revolution One

Part 1 – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	1	11	37	37	13

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	7	9	10	10	11	11	10	10	7	7	**5.0**

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	8	8	8	9	10	11	11	10	7	8	**5.1**

Questions 1 and 2

On the whole, students showed adequate knowledge of relevant information. The use of language is important in these answers in order to properly explain the sequence of events that contributed to the revolution. Some students skilfully signposted their response by using 'firstly', 'secondly', 'thirdly', etc. to note their points, or language such as 'furthermore' to link points.

The best students developed an argument, which was required by the wording of the question, and delivered their points chronologically. Teachers should explain to students that 'Explain the importance' and 'How did…contribute to' mean that judgements are required, and the question will not be successfully addressed by simply listing events and describing them. Better students demonstrated an understanding that revolution is a cumulative process and seldom the outcome of one or two events. Less successful students often gave only one or two points and expanded on these. They also wasted time 'introducing' their answer through needless repetition of the question and adopted a narrative style of writing. Weaker still were answers which gave a description of the event.

The responses on the American revolution were generally good with students showing knowledge of the Coercive Acts, although too many students were unable to identify details of what the Acts included beyond the closing of the Boston harbour. Some students noted that it was the Administration of Justice Act and the Massachusetts Government Act which reinforced the colonists' perceptions. Students should also have broader knowledge of activities involving the Sons of Liberty, who were recognised as taking the revolution into the public domain and contributing to revolutionary fervour, beyond just the Boston Tea Party.

When responding on France, quite a number of students could not correctly identify Necker's *Compte Rendu* or identify key events resulting from it up to May 1789. This is a concern since it is the first key point in this Area of Study. There was poor understanding of voting by head, and students often went beyond the date specified in the question and described action that went well into the National Assembly. There was sketchy knowledge of political responses by

© VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY 2007

www.theallpapers.com

Louis and some students went beyond the date August 1789, giving information including the flight to Varennes. Students who knew the period were able to clearly identify political actions taken by Louis.

Students who answered on Russia responded well but there was a lot of description of Bloody Sunday and very little mention of the General Strike. Typically students wrote that the violence of the soldiers towards the protesters on Bloody Sunday led to a loss of respect for the Tsar, who became known as Bloody Nicky. Very few students were able to give details of the various Dumas or identify what the Fundamental Laws specified. In Question 2 there was very sketchy knowledge about the Provisional Government, indicating that insufficient attention might have been paid to this section of the course. Few students were able to identify power-sharing with the Soviets and the problems of Dual Authority or the mistake of arming the Bolsheviks.

With the responses on China, many students could not correctly identify the Qing reforms, often becoming confused with the 100 Days Reforms. Attention needs to be given to the whole of the study design and teachers should ensure that all key events are covered. The better answers used education reform and military reform, and said that the Qing government lost support because students and soldiers were exposed to western revolutionary ideas. Students were able to identify aspects of the Long March and at least 'tell the story' associated with it.

Overall, successful responses to Question 1 identified four points about the event or actions of a leader and developed an argument which linked them to the revolution, often using the terms 'which contributed to' or 'this lead to' rather than merely implying a connection.

Sample answer (high range)

Necker's Compte Rendu of 1781 painted the state of France's economy in an extremely optimistic light. The nation was not, as the report suggested in possession of a 50 million livre surplus, rather, it was millions of livres in debt and would be bankrupt by 1786. The Compte Rendu highlighted the willingness of the king's ministers to tell him what he wanted to hear, and thus the inefficiency of absolutism. When, in 1789, the dire state France's finance was in began to be revealed, it seemed sudden and made the king appear 'out of touch' with the reality the people of his country faced, thus increasing resentment towards him as a ruler. The workers and peasants who were faced with great economic problems after the disastrous harvest of 1788, and the resentment they felt was exacerbated by the financial crisis and the king's inability to handle it by imposing reforms on the Notables and parlement. With the need for reform evident to the rising bourgeoisie, coupled with the economic crisis, Necker's Compte Rendu contributed to the politicisation of the Third Estate, and the evolution of economic problems into political discontent.

Sample answer (medium)

Bloody Sunday is most important in an examination of the causes both of the 1905 and the 1917 revolutions as it is almost singular among them. The Bloody Sunday massacre was a brutal representation of Tsar Nicholas II's unsuitability and ineptitude in his role: the violence is an obvious result of his unknowingness and incapability in dealing with his power, which were the root of his downfall. Also, the massacre drew public attention to the extent to which the Tsar was ambivalent towards the people he ruled, and the callousness with which his rule was carried out. The outrage which followed the massacre weakened the Tsar's position and fuelled proponents of revolution. Another key to Bloody Sunday's development of revolution was the Tsar's inability to deal with the demands of his people – which were increasingly dire.

The second response has an unnecessary opening sentence and shows only a very general knowledge. It is focused on one aspect, the violent response by the Tsar, and does not provide knowledge of the range of the Tsar's actions, such as the Dumas and the Fundamental Laws.

Part 2 – Creating a New Society

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	11	37	38	13

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	3	17	80	**1.8**

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	5	10	85	**1.8**

www.theallpapers.com

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	12	18	20	17	14	13	**3.3**

Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	10	10	10	11	10	11	10	8	5	5	**4.4**

Overall this part of the paper was done well. Most students, including very weak students, identified the relevant information directly from the document and were able to answer the two short questions. In response to Question 3c., students needed to use their own knowledge to contextualise and explain the relationship of the document to the events of the period. High-scoring responses showed students' excellent ability to use their own factual knowledge and combine it with ideas presented by the document, thus demonstrating an understanding of what caused the document to be produced. Medium-level and weak students lacked the skill to move beyond information contained in the document and did little more than describe it.

Students responded well to the French document, the Declaration of war on Austria, as did the students responding to the Cultural Revolution in China. The Russian document on the demands of the Kronstadt sailors produced descriptions of the sailors as originally being staunch supporters of the Bolsheviks, but students seemed less able to place this against the conditions created by Civil War and War Communism and make links to the sailors' demands in the document. They overlooked the idea that the sailors were often referred to as the 'barometer of public opinion'. Student performance on the American document was the worst and students often just repeated what was in the document. Very few students made connections to the previous Articles of Confederation and why they did not work. They did not grasp that the Constitution strengthened central government yet feared tyranny.

Question 3d., on historiography, was a discriminator. Students need to practise measuring views expressed in documents against the views of historians or contemporaries at the time the document was produced. It was disappointing to see that many students could not accurately identify the basic information, such as who produced it and how that might affect the view expressed. Students often did not use the prompt 'strengths and limitations' in the question. For example, very few students identified that the document for France was produced by the National Assembly and the King as part of the revolutionary government. Some good responses identified Robespierre's anti-war stance as another 'view' and were able to explain why he was against war in 1792. Many students left out the comparison to 'other views', which formed an essential part of the question. Weak answers tried to link 'strengths and limitations' to what they believed were factual accuracies or inaccuracies of the document and others either seemed to accept the view presented as factual, or were critical about everything it stated. Some students responded to the extract as the voice of one individual, which was clearly inaccurate.

To score highly students need to address the strengths and limitations of using the document to accurately illuminate the period, as well as compare different viewpoints and link them to the question.

Sample answer to Question 3c. on France (high range)

On the one hand, the royal family including King Louis and the Queen Marie Antionette supported the war because they hoped that foreign powers, particularly Marie Antionette's family in Austria, would end the revolution and reinstate the absolute Monarchy. Many Constitutional Monarchists, or royalists in the provinces would have been of similar opinion, that war would crush the revolution and restore the traditional order. People against the revolution such as refactory priests who refused to take the Civil Constitutional Clergy (12 July 1790) and other émigrés like anti-revolutionary nobles or 'rebels' who sided with the foreign powers also supported the war. In the National Assembly many deputies saw the war as a way of consolidating the revolution in France by allowing revolutionaries to defend themselves and to spread revolutionary ideals to other countries.

This response identifies a range of groups who supported or opposed the war, using relevant and precise references both from the extract and from the student's own knowledge to explain the reasons for support or opposition to the war.

Sample answer to Question 3d. on France (high range)

This extracts strengths stem from its explanation of the views of the National Assembly towards war and how, from their view, it was entered into by France to 'maintain its liberty and independence'. It is very much in the language of the bourgeois revolutionaries and gives insight into the values of the Assembly at this point, and its claim to act for the 'free people'. However the extract is limited by the fact that because it is from the 'official' perspective of the National Assembly, it does not include the groups and individuals who opposed the war, such as Robespierre who correctly predicted that the attempts of French armies to spread revolutionary ideals would fail, as 'no one loves armed missionaries'. Also, the timing of the extract at the beginning of the war, means that it does not suggest the crisis of war which was to follow – the military defeats, the economic problems, the king's correspondence with Austria and the splits in revolutionary groups that calls for his execution would bring about, the tensions and fear in Paris that sparked the September Massacres and later, the Terror. Whilst a Marxist view from historians like

www.theallpapers.com

Rude would suggest that war was a crisis that gave the sans-culottes a greater role in protection of the ideals they believed in, Pipes, a Liberal would view the intervention of foreign powers as reasonable.

The response correctly identifies whose voices underlie the document and identifies their interests. It accurately pinpoints limitations in the extract as providing a complete picture of the reasons for France being involved in war, and details by example other voices with different opinions. The response is focused on evaluating the extract as a piece of evidence and refers to historian's views.

Section B – Revolution Two

Part 1 – Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	0	7	32	48	13

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	19	76	**1.7**

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	18	75	**1.7**

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	11	19	21	18	15	12	**3.3**

Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	8	10	10	11	11	11	11	8	5	5	**4.5**

Students seemed quite capable of extracting the required information from the graphics. They identified the features required and accurately answered parts a. and b., worth two marks each. However, some students seemed a little confused by the term 'features' in the question. Students should understand that it simply means 'what can they see in the graphic and what does that symbolise?' This task suited weaker students who generally scored well on this part of the paper, although some students had difficulty identifying 'groups' in the painting on China. Students experienced some difficulty recognising the symbols in the Paul Revere graphic, yet the stance of the British soldiers should have been linked to the colonists' disdain for standing armies and the colonists' lack of arms related to loss of liberty.

Some students missed parts of the question. Students must turn the pages of exam papers carefully to make sure that they do not miss anything. This may have been the case with the French graphic, as sometimes Question 4d. was not answered.

Question 4c. was generally well answered, with students applying their own knowledge accurately to place the representation in context. The Boston Massacre responses produced some repetition of 'propaganda' in Questions 4c. and 4d., which should be avoided.

In the responses to the French representation some students did not address both parts of the question 'long live the king, long live the Nation' and 'the cockade'. Russia produced some repetition and students seemed less able to contextualise the graphic within the February Revolution. Perhaps more attention needs to be given to that area. The China 1950 painting was handled satisfactorily but there was a lack of preciseness in students' responses.

Question 4d. distinguished strong students from the middle and weak groups. Responses in which the student was sure of historians' views and how to apply these correctly to the graphic were refreshing to read. They used expressions such as ' this view is supported by…' and then discussed the merit of that view. This is in contrast to students who provided random quotes or learned phrases in the answer, to give an appearance of knowledge of other views, but did not use them appropriately. More work needs to be done on the intended function of the graphic (the source and how it affects the view in the representation and comparisons of the view in the representation with the views of others, including contemporaries) so that students can use a range of views in their answers.

www.theallpapers.com

Sample answer to Question 4c. on Russia (high range)

The title 'At Last' suggests that the February revolution, which put in place the Dual Government of the Provisional Government and the workers and soldiers Soviet, had been expected and building up for a long time. Despite the failure of the 1905 Revolution, which was quashed through a contribution of political concessions to the workers and liberals (through the establishment of the Duma), the repression of revolutionary groups and the Tsar's reassertion of power through the Fundamental Laws (23rd April 1906), revolutionary tension had been building up. The military defeats of World War One, which the Tsar was directly associated with after he became commander in August 1915, the development of a general strike and formation of a strike committee which evolved into the Petrograd Soviets, were all factors which culminated in the February Revolution. The title 'At Last' suggests the Revolution was long-awaited, expected and popularly supported.

The question directed students to use their own knowledge in their analysis of the representation. This response demonstrates the student's very good knowledge and skilfully places the graphic in the context of the wider period.

Sample answer to Question 4d. on Russia (high range)

The extract represents a reliable view as it conveys the tension that lead to the Tsar being forced to abdicate on the 2nd March 1917, and the establishment of the Provisional Government. It seems to come from a Marxist perspective, as it accented the role of 'the people' in forcing the Tsar out of power, and as the throne is positioned on the edge of the cliff, conveys the view that revolution was inevitable in accordance with Marxist ideology and the idea of 'revolution from below'. However Marxist historians, like Trudell, would go further to state that the February Revolution whilst achieving the necessity of getting rid of the Tsar, created a temporary government that did not express the wishes of the proletariat the way the Bolsheviks would when they legitimately and popularly gained power on 25th–26th October 1917. However a Liberal historian like Pipes would contend that this graphic was incorrect and that revolution was not a necessary or inevitable event, performed by 'the people' but rather an exploitation of the circumstance of war 'from above'. Liberals would see the government put in place in February as democratic and popularly supported, making the 'classic coup d'etat' of October illegitimate.

This response demonstrates the student's skill in selecting and interpreting relevant aspects of the representation. It is firmly focused on evaluating the perspective and drawing comparisons with other possible ways the events may be viewed.

Compare the response above with the following lower, mid-range response, which fails to evaluate the evidence in detail.

The representation is highly successful on presenting a reliable view of the success of the Revolution of February 1917. It suggests the reason the revolution was so successful, was because the people had the upper hand and represents revolution as being 'a storm' that sweeps upon the country and is ultimately enevitable. It can be used as a representation for many of the different views of the 1917 February Revolution, abdication of the Tsar was caused by the strength of the Russian people, the Revolution was inevitable, the Tsar was forced to abdicate etc. The representation titled 'At Last' is a highly reliable source which presents many of the views for the success of the 1917 February Revolution.

Part 2 – Creating a new society

Revolution chosen	None	America	France	Russia	China
%	3	6	31	47	13

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	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	5	6	5	6	8	8	7	7	6	5	3	3	**10.8**

The essay questions were accessible for both average and stronger students. The best students referred to all parts or terms in the question and used a range of evidence to support their interpretation. They may have referred to historians' views as a form of evidence but this was not a requirement. Evidence was synthesised, question focus was maintained and the student had a clear sense of the different groups of people and specifically classified them using accurate terminology. Weak responses often showed little understanding of the period, discussed only one point very generally or were pre-learned essays. Teachers should discourage the practice of using prepared essays.

There were many students who wrote narratively before using any historical events and applying any evidence. Some students still referred to 'the old regime' – this is not applicable in these essay questions, which should focus only on the new society. There was some confusion about time frames for the new society; more so in response to France. Responses on China were improved and used material post-1949 in different ways.

Students should increase their use of dates and statistics in essays as the application of these seems to be infrequent and too many students responded generally with very descriptive responses. Students generally wrote two to three pages in response to this question.

www.theallpapers.com