



DBQ

China's Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward

Aim: What impact did the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have on China?

Name _____

Historical Context: By the 1970s, China had been in turmoil for decades, engaged in a civil war or a war with Japan. When the Communists took power, they moved rapidly to strengthen China’s government over the population of 550 million people. The Communists also set goals to modernize China as a Socialist state and to discard traditional Chinese culture.

As you read the documents, analyze the source of the document and the sources’ points of view. In addition, follow these steps:

1. Read over the Aim. What do you already know about this topic? How could you answer the Aim without any documents?
2. Read or look over each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the Aim. In addition, use the margin to make notes. Answer the question(s) that follow each document before moving on to the next document.
3. Based on your answer to the first document, and on the information in the documents, draft a thesis that directly answers the Aim.

Question: What impact did the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have on China?

Write your initial answer here:

Document 1 is from Chen Boda, “Under the Banner of Comrade Mao Zedong”, 1956. Chen, a former secretary to Mao, was a specialist in Marxist ideology and a key architect of the Great Leap Forward program. After Mao’s death in 1976, however, he would be stripped of power and sent to jail for 16 years.

...After the nation-wide liberation (in 1949), socialist transformation and socialist construction are interlocked in their progress. In the course of socialist transformation, observing the signs that began in agricultural cooperation, Comrade Mao Zedong pointed to the inexhaustible and immense latent power of the Chinese working people to develop the productive force. Comrade Mao said..., “There will appear various things never conceived before and high yield of crops...scores greater than the present. The development of industry, communications, and exchange will be beyond the imagination of the predecessors. This will also be the case with science, culture, education, and public health.”

According to Chen Boda, write down two ways how Mao’s ideas would create change in China.

Document 2 is two images of the 'Backyard Furnaces,' and of the People's Commune Canteen during the Great Leap Forward. At the beginning of the Great Leap Forward, people were able to eat for free at the canteens. This ended when food production grew to a halt.



Images via Wikipedia

What do these images suggest about Chinese support of the Great Leap Forward?

Document 3 is from the book *Daughter of the River* by Hong Ying. She recounted her mother's experience during the Great Leap Forward.

“By counting back from my birthday, I figured Mother got pregnant with me in the winter of 1961, the last dark winter in the three years of famine. Even in Sichuan – the richest agricultural province in the country, often called ‘Heaven’s Granary’ – at least seven million people died in the famine, one out of every four famine victims in the nation. Most died in the snowy winters of 1959, 1960, and 1961, and the spring of 1962, when ‘the green failed to meet the yellow.’”

What effect did the Great Leap Forward have on Chinese society?

Document 4 is from *The Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, 1966, as directed by Mao Zedong.

A NEW STAGE IN THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

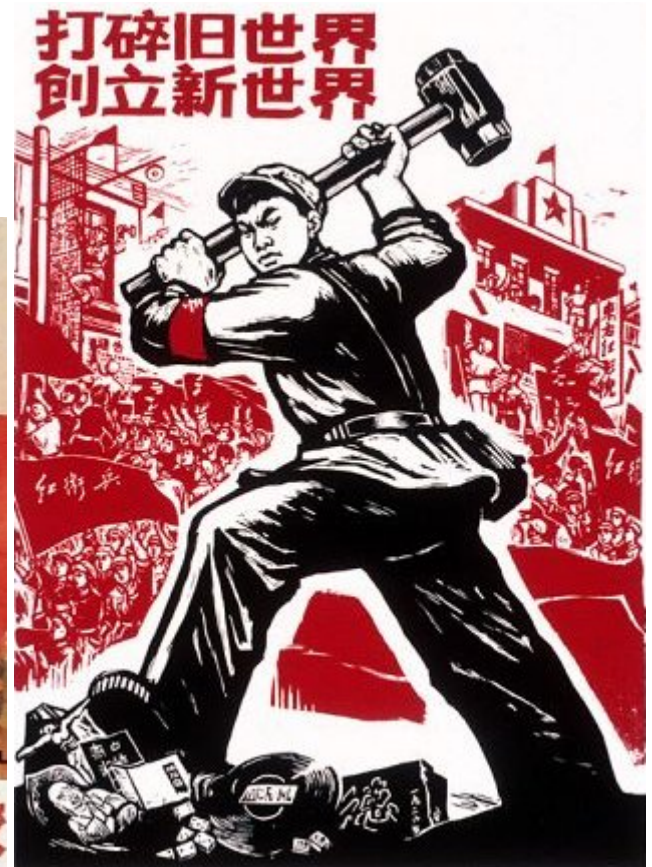
The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution now unfolding is a great revolution that touches people to their very souls and constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in our country, a stage which is both broader and deeper.

At the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: to overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class. This thesis of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's has been proved entirely correct in practice.

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do the exact opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic 'authorities' and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

According to Mao Zedong, how was the Cultural Revolution intended to transform China's society?

Document 5 is two propaganda posters promoting the Cultural Revolution. The left caption stated: “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army is the great school of Mao Zedong thought.” The right caption stated: “Destroy the old world; Forge the New World.” Both posters prominently featured the role of the Red Guards and the Little Red Book.



How was Mao Zedong portrayed in the poster on the left?

According to both documents, what was the role of the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution?

Document 6 is from a 1988 interview with Fang Lizhi, an intellectual in China during the Cultural Revolution. Here, he recounts his experiences at the hands of the Red Guards, as he was imprisoned as a 'reactionary'.

"It was then that I began to feel that perhaps Mao was not so good for the country. But because at the time most of us intellectuals still believed in communism, we were left with a difficult question: If not Mao, whom should we follow? There was, of course, no one else, and he was the embodiment of all idealism.

"After the Cultural Revolution started, everything became much clearer. I realized that the Party had not been telling the truth, that they had in fact been deceiving people, and that I should not believe them anymore. You see, a sense of duty, responsibility, and loyalty to the country had been inculcated within me as a youth, but what I saw around me made me feel that the leaders weren't similarly concerned about the country and weren't shouldering responsibility for its people."

What conclusions did Fang make about the Communists, and about Mao Zedong in particular?

Document 7 is from a 2013 New York Times interview with Chen Xiaolu, a Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution.

"Many people are thinking back fondly to the good old days of the Cultural Revolution, and are saying it was just against corrupt officials...But many things happened in the Cultural Revolution that violated people's rights. The majority in China did not really experience the Cultural Revolution, and those of us who did have to tell people about it...I bear direct responsibility for the denouncing and criticism, and forced-labor re-education of school leaders, and some teachers and students...I actively rebelled and organized the denunciations of school leaders. Later on when I served as the director of the school's Revolution Committee, I wasn't brave enough to stop the inhumane prosecutions...My official apology comes too late, but for the purification of the soul, the progress of society and the future of the nation, one must make this kind of apology."

Based on the interview, how did Chen feel about the Cultural Revolution?

Question: What impact did the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have on China?

Write your developed thesis here:
