Mao is Retrospect: Analyzing the Man and his Impact on China

IB History

**Instructions:**

As we conclude our examination of Mao Zedong, we are going to take a minute to assess his place in History. Samuel Huntington, an American Historian, once said *“Surely, one of the most outstanding achievements of the mid-twentieth century was the establishment in China in 1949 for the first time in a hundred years of a government really able to govern China.”* Mao and his PRC government took and maintains control of China as a single party state, without major opposition or a process of democratic elections. While we may have our own opinions of the government and the man who played such a major role in founding it, the purpose of our exercise today will be for you to take on the role of one of the below historical perspectives and represent its views in a class discussion.

You will be given 30 minutes to prepare a 1-2 page set of talking points representing your view. You may draw upon the work of other historians, your notes and other sources to support your views but you need to have a clear voice. Each historian will be assigned research assistants to help you prepare your notes for the discussion and may be consulted during the discussion.

Historians

1. Li Hu Xiang-Official Historian of the Chinese Communist Party and curator of the Glory to Mao Zedong exhibit at the Beijing History Museum. His most famous work, Mao Zedong the Great Father of our Republic was used to inform a number of films, art exhibits, and exhibits on the Chairman.
2. Dawei Gong- History Professor at Taipei University. Gong’s family fled China in 1948 and his father was killed during the civil war. His most well known treatise on Mao, The Blundering Butcher of Beijing, has been a focal point of many debates in Taiwan and around the world.
3. Caroline L. Mendelson- Assistant Professor of Asian Studies at Harvard University. Mendelson spent 10 years living and working in China and Taiwan. She has wrote a number of books on Mao Zedong as well as China in the 21st Century. Her most recent book, Mao Reexamined attempts to balance the emerging accounts of atrocities with the economic prosperity China is experiencing in the past two decades.
4. June Chang- Chang is a native of China, having been a Red Guard briefly at the age of 14, and then she was a peasant, a "barefoot doctor," a steelworker and an electrician before becoming a university lecturer. Her previous book, a more personal one about life under Mao, is called "Wild Swans."
5. Immanuel C.Y. Hsu- Professor at University of California-Santa Barbra and author of The Rise of Modern China.
6. Jack Gray, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Studies in Democratisation at the University of Warwick

**Planning for Discussion-**Use the below themes from the IB History Paper 2 Guide to organize your thoughts around Mao and his impact on China and the Cold War World. As adept historians, you are strongly encouraged to draw parallels between Mao and other authoritarians.

**World history topic 10: Authoritarian states (20th century)**

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| **Topic** | **Prescribed content** |
| Emergence of authoritarian states | * Conditions in which authoritarian states emerged: economic factors; social division; impact of war; weakness of political system * Methods used to establish authoritarian states: persuasion and coercion; the role of leaders; ideology; the use of force; propaganda |
| Consolidation and maintenance of power | * Use of legal methods; use of force; charismatic leadership; dissemination of propaganda * Nature, extent and treatment of opposition * The impact of the success and/or failure of foreign policy on the maintenance of power |
| Aims and results of policies | * Aims and impact of domestic economic, political, cultural and social policies * The impact of policies on women and minorities * Authoritarian control and the extent to which it was achieved |

#### World history topic 12: The Cold War: Superpower tensions and rivalries (20th century)

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| Rivalry, mistrust and accord | * The US, USSR and China—superpower relations (1947–1979): containment; peaceful co-existence; Sino-Soviet and Sino-US relations; détente. |
| Leaders and nations | * The impact of two leaders, each chosen from a different region, on the course and development of the Cold War * The economic, social and cultural impact of the Cold War on two countries, each chosen from a different region |
| Cold War crises | * Cold War crises case studies: detailed study of any two Cold War crises from different regions: examination and comparison of the causes, impact and significance of the two crises |