

Grade 9 Answer

Interpretation Differences

4/4
Marks

Question:

Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the successes of the Great Leap Forward. What is the main difference between these two views? Explain your answer, using details from both interpretations. (4 marks)

Answer:

Interpretation 1 gives the view that the Great Leap Forward helped lead to 'major increases in production'. This suggests that the Great Leap Forward was successful, and that the aim of increasing China's production and improving the economy was met. In contrast, Interpretation 2 gives the view that the Great Leap Forward was not successful, and famine caused people to 'make grim moral compromises.' This suggests that the consequences of the Great Leap Forward were detrimental, and forced Chinese people to commit crimes such as theft in order to feed themselves.

Feedback:

This answer would get 4/4 marks because the pupil has identified a difference in the interpretations, giving evidence for this difference, and making an inference based on the evidence.

Source B

Source B: A propaganda poster on the Great Leap Forward from 1958. The description reads "Brave the wind and the waves, everything has remarkable abilities".



[<https://chinese posters.net/posters/pc-1958-024>]

Source C

Source C: In early 1959, a year into the Great Leap Forward, the Chinese Communist Party provincial committee in Shandong was flooded with letters regarding food shortages in the villages and People's Communes.

Between February 1st and February 15th we received 266 letters of complaint, passed down by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party or sent directly to the Provincial Party Committee. All the letters are concerned with food crises in the countryside... In regard to the content, most of them complained that a number of collective canteens have run out of food completely and that there is widespread fear in the countryside. Many villagers have fled or have become ill. Agricultural production has almost come to a halt...

On the first day of the New Year, many villagers from Zhou Yingli went to the fields to look for rotten sweet potatoes and carrots to fill their stomachs In some villages around Yucheng and Guting... a huge number of people have fled to other areas to beg for food. In Daming, owing to a lack of money, six people died of illness within eight days, without any treatment. In Xulou, six people died of starvation within ten days...

[<https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/complaints-hunger-great-leap-forward-1959/>]

Interpretation 1

Interpretation 1: C N Trueman "The Great Leap Forward" from historylearningsite.co.uk, 2015.

The figures for steel, coal, chemicals, timber, cement etc all showed huge rises though the figures started at in 1958 were low. Grain and cotton production also showed major increases in production.

Mao had introduced the Great Leap Forward with the phrase "it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever." By the end of 1958, it seemed as if his claim was true.

[https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/china-1900-to-1976/the-great-leap-forward/#google_vignette]

Interpretation 2

Interpretation 2: Frank Dikötter, 'Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe', 2010.

As famine spread, the very survival of an ordinary person came increasingly to depend on the ability to lie, charm, hide, steal, cheat, pilfer, forage, smuggle, trick, manipulate or otherwise outwit the state. But collectivisation also forced everybody, at some point or another, to make grim moral compromises. People turned on each other, some parents stealing from their own children or selling them to strangers for a handful of grain. Routine degradations thus went hand in hand with mass destruction. Survivors were rarely heroes, as those determined to make it in a world dominated by the law of survival had to silence their moral sentiments.