

35 Minutes.**The Reform and Opening Up of China**

Study Sources A and B

SOURCE A

The following extract is adapted from a commentary on the Reform and Opening Up.

Before 1978, our nation was a planned economy that was materially deprived. Daily necessities, including food, oil, meat, sugar, cotton and clothing, were all rationed under a coupon-based system. At that time, it was extremely difficult to buy commodities such as clothing, organic polymer plastic buttons, socks, watches, bicycles and sewing machines. Failing to find these products is one thing. Even if you found them, how would you have money for them? Peasants were not allowed to make their own money since it would be a capitalist act and they would be severely purged for that.

After the state leadership brought order out of chaos, the results of planned economy – grain distribution stations, food stations and supply and marketing cooperatives – finished fulfilling their historical roles and were disbanded one after another. As for the rural reform, the collective production model was abandoned, and the Household Responsibility System was introduced to allow peasants to, after handing over part of their harvests to the government, keep their surplus that they could either eat or sell in the free market. The new policy rapidly and significantly increased work incentives of peasants. Miraculously, there was a sudden increase in agricultural production. In the 1980s, the issue of livelihood was solved and getting things to eat was no longer the only pursuit of the people. Nowadays, people greet each other by saying ‘hello’. However, in the past, the only thing people concerned about was whether they could have enough food and they hoped their relatives and co-workers would also get enough food. When they saw each other, they would immediately ask, ‘Have you eaten?’ The greeting sounds a bit cheesy by today’s standards, but it was the most practical one back then.

SOURCE B

The following extract is adapted from a historian's commentary on the modern development of China.

China during the Maoist era was a totalitarian China, whose society was entirely engulfed by the national authorities and citizens were completely deprived of freedom as well as rights. China during the Reform and Opening Up era is a post-totalitarian China, in which the totalitarian power structure still dominates the country but society, including civil society, has revived and become increasingly independent of state control. In this new era, thanks to the benefits of reform and opening up, marketization and globalization, the majority of the Chinese people manage to escape poverty and get rich, to enjoy some freedom and rights in economic aspect and private life, and to develop the awareness of their rights and patterns of behavior that correspond to such awareness. However, the Reform and Opening Up has already mutated since the power structure of one-party dictatorship has not been changed timely. By virtue of their political monopoly, the privileged steal the fruits of the Reform and Opening Up and bring China on the path to party-state capitalism*.

* Party-state capitalism: the extreme form of state capitalism

- (a) What was the concern of the Chinese people before 1978? Explain your answer with reference to Source A. (3 marks)
- (b) With reference to Source B, identify *two* characteristics of modern China. Explain your answer. (4 marks)
- (c) Did the Reform and Opening Up make China better? Explain your answer with reference to Sources A and B, and using your own knowledge of the development of China up to 1999. (8 marks)