Unit 8 Quiz: The Chinese Revolution
Guide to Responding

This guide is intended to help you evaluate your performance on the “Unit 8 Quiz.” It lists the most important terms and concepts that should appear in your answers.

Instructions: For each question, check whether the information listed below is included in your answer. If you find that some of your answers do not have the key concepts and terms listed here, go back to the relevant subunits (listed with each question) and review the information by either re-reading the materials or listening to the lectures one more time.

If your answers include terms and ideas that do not appear here and you are not sure whether they correctly answer the questions, use the sub-unit cross-references below to go back to the relevant course materials and check that your additional information is correct.

1. Why was 1911 an important date in Chinese history? What form of government did China have before and after this date?

• 1911 was the year of the Republican Revolution in China; this revolution established a parliamentary democratic government, but the government was unable to maintain control of the country and a period of chaos followed
• Prior to 1911 China was ruled by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912)
• Sun-Yat-sen led the 1911 Revolution and advocated the triple ideal of "nationalism, democracy, and people’s livelihood." He wanted to end foreign (Manchu) rule in China, set up elections and a republican form of government, and to ensure that the common people had access to sufficient amounts of land
• In the fall of 1912, Sun-Yat-sen’s rule was challenged by Yuan Shikai, and by the end of 1912 he became China’s president
• Yuan Shikai sought to concentrate power in his hands, at first he changed the constitution and undermined the powers of the parliament. He later dissolved the parliament and made himself president for life. This caused uprisings against him throughout China and brought a period of instability

Reference: Sub-subunit 8.2.1
2. What groups vied for power in China between 1911 and the outbreak of World War II? What were the most important turning points in their struggle?

- The two most important groups contending for power in China during this period were the Nationalists and the Communists.
- The Nationalists were organized around the Guomindang Party which was founded in 1912, during the republican revolution. It embraced Sun Yat-sen’s three-fold principle of nationalism, republicanism, and land ownership for the peasants. It was suppressed for several years and re-established by Sun Yat-sen in 1919.
- Chiang Kai-shek became the Guomindong leader after Sun Yat-sen.
- In 1926 Chiang Kai-shek led the Guomindong in the Northern Expedition.
- By 1927 China had three centers of power: Beijing, Nanjing, and Wuhan, but by 1928 Chiang Kai-shek established a single government in Nanjing.
- Between 1928 and 1937 the Nationalists consolidated their power, but they continued to be challenged by the Communists.
- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) emerged during the May Fourth Movement of 1919.
- During the early 1920s the CCP cooperated with the Guomindang.
- In 1927, the CCP split from the Guomindong and established its own government in Wuhan; in the late 1920s however, the CCP was relatively weak.
- In the early 1930s the CCP regained strength, and in 1934-6 Mao Ze Dong led the Red Army in the so-called Long March from the Nationalist-controlled south to the north, where the communists established their stronghold.

Reference: Subunit 8.2

3. What were the most important long-term causes of revolutionary upheaval in China?

- The power and legitimacy of the Qing Dynasty was undermined by the increasing influence of Western powers in China in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.
- The Chinese population grew rapidly between 1850 and 1950, and poverty was wide-spread, 50% of peasants lived in poverty and did not have enough land to secure their livelihoods.
- The government was corrupt and became distant from the population and unable to manage agriculture efficiently – the grain storage system broke down and famines and diseases became more frequent.
- Lack of land undermined traditional family structures and traditional piety.
- As the number of landless peasants increased and a large labor force was easily available, landlords became more exploitative.
- The Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Rebellion set precedents for opposing the central government.
4. What are the most important points about the Cultural Revolution made by Dr. Rana Mittner in his interview with Radio86?

- The Cultural Revolution was a movement in Communist China which took place between 1966 and 1976; its most aggressive phase came between 1966 and 1969.
- Mao Ze Dong called on Chinese youth to rebel against the Communist Party structures. He did it partly to cultivate revolutionary fervor among the generation born when China was already Communist, and partly to strengthen his own hold on power.
- Mao Ze Dong believed that violence could transform society and bring progress, he put this idea to practical use during the Cultural Revolution.
- Although the Cultural Revolution brought some improvements (like better health care) to rural China, its overall social and economic effects were detrimental.
- During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards were the enforcers of the new rules; students and intellectuals were subjected to processes that required them to undertake “self-criticism” and undergo “re-education.”
- Chinese politics after 1976 were a reaction against the Cultural Revolution.

5. What was the Sino-Soviet Split? How do scholars explain it?

- The Sino-Soviet Split was a period of worsened relations between Communist China and Soviet Russia between roughly 1960 and the fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1989.
- In his book “The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World,” Lorenz M. Lüthi argues that ideological differences played a key role in the split, and they concerned primarily models of economic development, evaluation of Stalin’s historical role and ideology, and views about imperialism.
- Some previous explanations attributed the split to diverging or even opposed national interests of China and the Soviet Union.
- Other explanations proposed that the Sino-Soviet split should be understood in the context of US-Soviet and US-Chinese relations and the shifting balance of power between the three.
- Yet other explanations placed emphasis on the domestic problems of China and the USSR to explain the split.

Reference: Subunit 8.4.4