**Social Policies of Mao**

**KQ: How did Maoism affect the arts and cultural life?**

**Background**: Mao believed much of China’s old traditional culture actually prevented him from developing a new communist society therefore many of Mao’s cultural policies sought to ‘tear down the old and build the new’, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. Influenced by Soviet attempts to build a new socialist culture, arts and culture became dominated by government propaganda in its attempt to create and new ‘socialist man’. Censorship and repression affected all elements of culture and art was subservient to the demands of government policy. This attempt to create a new ‘proletarian’ culture was led by Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, who led to charge against the ‘four olds’ of Chinese culture during the Cultural Revolution.

**Task**:

1. **What were Mao’s views on culture and the arts?**
2. **How did Mao use the arts and culture for propaganda purposes?**
3. **How did cultural life change during the Cultural Revolution?**
4. **Conclusion: How did Maoism affect the arts and cultural life?**

**KQ: How successful were Mao’s reforms to education and healthcare?**

**Background**: The PRC began with high hopes of improving the education and healthcare of all people in China. In this regard, Mao faced many problems. The majority of peasants were illiterate and society lacked the technical skills necessary for a skilled, industrialised workforce. Despite many early successes in improving healthcare and education, there were also many failures and setbacks, primarily caused by the disruptions of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution.

**Task**:

1. **How did Mao tackle the problem of basic literacy and education?**
2. **Why had educational progress been so disappointing under Mao?**
3. **How successful were Mao’s initial healthcare policies?**
4. **Why did the medical profession come under attack?**
5. **What was the role of ‘barefoot doctors’ in China?**
6. **Conclusion: How successful were Mao’s reforms to education and healthcare?**

**KQ: How successfully did Mao improve the rights and status of women in China?**

**Background**: The Chinese Communist Party had always advocated female equality with Mao famously declaring that ‘Women hold up half of the sky’. The CCP under Mao had huge successes in enforcing gender equality however this often resulted in a double burden for women – having to work hard in communes whilst also being mothers.

**Task**:

1. **What was Mao’s attitude towards women and how did that influence his policies?**
2. **How committed to female emancipation were Mao and the CCP?**
3. **Did women gain or lose from collectivisation?**
4. **Were women particular vulnerable during the Great Famine?**
5. **How were children affected by social disruption after the Famine?**
6. **What was the impact of the Cultural Revolution on women and the family?**
7. **Conclusion: How successfully did Mao improve the rights and status of women in China?**

**KQ: Was Mao successful in stamping out religion in China?**

**Background**: As a form of Marxism, Chinese communism considered religious belief and worship to be superstitions that throughout history had been deliberately cultivated by the classes in power to suppress the exploited people. Mao declared that religion was a poison and regarded religion as a threat to his regime. Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity were all denounced as worthless superstitions that had no place in the new China. All religions were forbidden to be practiced along with ancestor worship. Customs and traditions like festivals and dances were also stopped. Maoism would be the new official religion of Communist China. However, over time, Mao relaxed his attacks on religion and even tolerated some government ‘patriotic churches’ however the attacks on religion were renewed during the Cultural Revolution.

**Task**:

1. **Why was religion viewed as a threat by Mao?**
2. **What measures did the government take to suppress religion?**
3. **How was propaganda used to undermine tradition and customs?**
4. **What were ‘patriotic churches’ and why were they allowed?**
5. **How was religion persecuted against during the Cultural Revolution?**
6. **How did religion and regionalism overlap in China?**
7. **Conclusion: Was Mao successful in stamping out religion in China?**

**KQ: How successfully did Mao deal with opposition and criminals in China?**

**Background**: All the major totalitarian states of the twentieth century relied on terror to enforce their control and prison camps were often used. Conditions were so wretched that they broke the body and spirit of inmates, enforcing conformity and obedience. Mao created a vast network of labour camps in which those who opposed him were imprisoned.

**Task**:

1. **What were *Laogai* and what were their purpose?**
2. **What was the reality of life in the camps?**
3. **How did the camps contribute to Chinese industry?**
4. **How were *laogai* used as a means of political control?**
5. **Was Mao ever opposed by other politicians or groups?**
6. **Conclusion: How successfully did Mao deal with opposition and criminals in China?**