S2 Chinese History Practice Paper 1 | Qin and Han unification to Ming and Qing rule (with answers and marking scheme)

Junior Secondary Chinese History

S2 Chinese History paper on Qin-Han unification, the Silk Road, Sui-Tang rule, the An Lushan rebellion, Song-Yuan trade and Ming-Qing policy, with answers and marks.

1. Qin and Han unification (18 marks)

In 221 BC the First Emperor of Qin destroyed the six states and founded the first unified, centralised empire in China. Qin fell in 206 BC and Liu Bang then founded the Han dynasty.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
1	(a) State the year Qin unified the six states and give two political meanings of that unification.	Answer: 221 BC. Meaning: (1) it ended centuries of division during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and created one unified state; (2) it established a centralised system with power concentrated in the emperor and local areas run directly by the centre.
2	(b) List four measures the First Emperor used to consolidate unification, with one short phrase on each.	Answer: (1) commanderies and counties with centrally appointed officials, preventing local separatism; (2) standardised script (seal script), easing administration and communication; (3) standardised coinage, weights and measures, helping trade and tax collection; (4) built the Great Wall and garrisoned troops against the Xiongnu in the north.
3	(c) How many years passed from Qin's unification to the fall of Qin? Show your working.	Answer: from 221 BC to 206 BC is 221 - 206 = 15 years (for BC dates, subtract the smaller number from the larger).
4	(d) Give two reasons for the rapid collapse of Qin, each supported by one historical fact.	Answer: (1) harsh law and heavy taxes and labour - the Great Wall, Epang Palace and the mausoleum drained manpower and caused deep resentment; (2) loss of popular support - the book burning and the persecution of scholars, followed by revolts of former nobles and peasants such as Chen Sheng and Wu Guang.
5	(e) Compare the governing approach of Qin with that of the early Han, giving one measure for each.	Answer: Qin relied on severe law and tight central control, while the early Han followed Huang-Lao 'let the people rest': land tax was cut to one-thirtieth, harsh laws were repealed and royal kinsmen were enfeoffed to stabilise politics, so early Han society was more settled.

2. The Silk Road (16 marks)

Emperor Wu of Han sent Zhang Qian to the Western Regions to ally with the Yuezhi against the Xiongnu. The military aim failed, but the mission opened communications between the Central Plains and the Western Regions.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
6	(a) State the year Zhang Qian first set out for the Western Regions and the purpose of the mission.	Answer: 138 BC; the aim was to contact the Yuezhi and attack the Xiongnu jointly, removing the northern threat.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
7	(b) How many years did Zhang Qian spend from departure to his return to Han? Show your working.	Answer: he left in 138 BC and returned in 126 BC, so 138 - 126 = 12 years, part of it detained by the Xiongnu.
8	(c) Describe the main overland Silk Road route and name one starting point and one end region.	Answer: from Chang'an through the Hexi Corridor to Dunhuang, then along the northern and southern routes around the Tarim Basin, over the Pamirs to Central and West Asia and as far as the eastern Mediterranean; the start was Chang'an and the end region was Central and West Asia.
9	(d) Explain one economic and one cultural effect of the opening of the Silk Road.	Answer: economically, Chinese silk and lacquer went west while grapes, alfalfa and fine horses came east, boosting trade along the route; culturally, Buddhism entered the Central Plains from the Western Regions and music, dance and art styles were exchanged, enriching Chinese culture.

3. The Sui and Tang golden age (18 marks)

The Sui ended the division between north and south and reunified China; building on that, the Tang expanded and became one of the strongest states in East Asia, using the examination system to build a stable bureaucracy.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
10	(a) How long did the Sui dynasty last from founding to fall? Show your working.	Answer: founded in 581 and fell in 618, so 618 - 581 = 37 years.
11	(b) How long did the Tang last, and what situation followed its fall?	Answer: 618 to 907, that is 907 - 618 = 289 years; after the fall of Tang China entered the division of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.
12	(c) Explain one selection principle of the examination system and two of its effects.	Answer: selection was by examination result rather than noble birth, and candidates could sit freely; effects: (1) it widened the ruling base, letting commoner families enter office and weakening the aristocratic clans; (2) exams were based on Confucian classics, promoting education and social mobility.
13	(d) The Zhenguan era of good government ran from AD 627 to 649. How many years was that?	Answer: 649 - 627 = 22 years.
14	(e) Give one historical fact showing the international standing of the Tang.	Answer: Chang'an was a cosmopolitan capital; envoys and students came from Japan, Silla and India, the Tang set up an office to supervise foreign trade, and Tang institutions and culture such as law codes and city layout were transmitted to Japan.

4. The An Lushan rebellion and the late Tang (16 marks)

In the Tianbao era of Emperor Xuanzong, the military governors An Lushan and Shi Siming rose against the Tang; the fighting lasted eight years and the dynasty turned from strength to decline.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
15	(a) State the start and end years of the An Lushan rebellion and how long it lasted.	Answer: from AD 755 to 763, that is 763 - 755 = 8 years.
16	(b) Give three causes of the An Lushan rebellion.	Answer: (1) military governors held military, civil and financial power, concentrating troops on the frontier beyond central control; (2) in his later years Xuanzong neglected government and trusted Li Linfu and Yang Guozhong, so the court decayed; (3) with the militia system collapsed the state hired soldiers, and frontier armies under non-Han generals became personal power bases.
17	(c) Explain two political effects of the rebellion on the Tang.	Answer: (1) warlord separatism - provincial governors passed their posts to heirs and ignored the court, cutting central revenue and military power; (2) eunuchs commanded the palace army and interfered in deposing and installing emperors, factional strife weakened the throne.
18	(d) How many years passed between the end of the rebellion and the fall of the Tang?	Answer: 763 to 907, that is 907 - 763 = 144 years.

5. Song and Yuan transformation (16 marks)

Song China saw booming industry, commerce and urban economy with paper money and overseas trade; the Yuan governed its vast territory through the province system and applied a graded policy towards ethnic groups.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
19	(a) How long did the Northern Song last from founding to its fall to the Jin? Show your working.	Answer: 960 to 1127, that is 1127 - 960 = 167 years.
20	(b) How long did the Southern Song last from its founding to its fall to the Yuan?	Answer: 1127 to 1279, that is 1279 - 1127 = 152 years.
21	(c) List three features of commercial growth in the Song.	Answer: (1) paper money (jiaozi) appeared, easing large transactions; (2) cities broke the ward-and-market boundary, with night markets and rural markets growing; (3) offices for maritime trade supervised overseas commerce, ports such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou flourished, and commercial tax became a major revenue.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
22	(d) Give two functions of the Yuan province system and its influence on later dynasties.	Answer: (1) the vast territory was divided into provinces run by centrally appointed officials, strengthening central control; (2) provincial heads handled military, civil and financial affairs, raising efficiency in remote areas. Influence: Ming and Qing kept provincial divisions, forming the basis of today's provinces.

6. Ming and Qing policy and foreign relations (16 marks)

In the early Ming, Zheng He made seven voyages to the western oceans, but after the mid-Ming the state turned to maritime bans. The early Qing opened four ports, from the Qianlong reign trade was confined to Guangzhou, and the Opium War forced the ports open.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
23	(a) How long did the Ming last from founding to fall? Show your working.	Answer: 1368 to 1644, that is 1644 - 1368 = 276 years.
24	(b) State the years and number of Zheng He's voyages and calculate the total span.	Answer: AD 1405 to 1433, seven voyages; 1433 - 1405 = 28 years, roughly one voyage every four years.
25	(c) Explain one feature and two effects of the Qing closed-door policy.	Answer: feature: from the Qianlong reign only Guangzhou was open, the cohong monopoly handled trade and foreign merchants' residence was restricted. Effects: (1) trade and technology exchange were limited and China was ill informed about the world; (2) silver flows and opium smuggling worsened, finally provoking conflict.
26	(d) In which year did the Opium War break out? Name the treaty signed and one main term.	Answer: it broke out in 1840. The Treaty of Nanjing (1842) ceded Hong Kong Island, opened five ports (Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai) and imposed an indemnity of 21 million silver dollars.