

History EE – Khmer Rouge – Examiner’s comments

Criterion A – Focus and method

4 out of 6 – The candidate has a clear research question, which asks to what extent the Khmer Rouge were influenced by foreign ideas and nations. The candidate draws on a range of sources, including the *Lonely Planet* and Philip Short’s biography on Pol Pot, to make the case that the Khmer Rouge were influenced by Stalin, Kropotkin and others. The candidate’s synthesis of these sources returns to the research question and shows how circumstances ultimately led up to the infamous ‘killing fields’. The candidate’s approach is a chronological one which explores foreign influences before 1975, dealing with each in turn, linking them to the research question.

Criterion B – Knowledge and understanding

4 out of 6 – The knowledge is good, although a clearer focus on the research question would help in each of the sections. At times, the first sections summarise events without making interpretations. The final two sections of the essay, however, show the candidate’s and understanding of the historical events. Knowledge of the sources is applied in a mostly relevant and appropriate way to the research question. The candidate’s use of subject-specific terminology and concepts, especially surrounding the ideas of communism and revolution, is relevant and appropriate.

Criterion C – Critical thinking

8 out of 12 – While the candidate makes a case that foreign influences played a role in the rise of the Khmer Rouge, the essay sometimes feels like a summary or other people’s points. Fortunately for the candidate, these points are rather insightful and clearly relevant to the research question. While the conclusion is strong in stating that Pol Pot never could have achieved power without the US bombings, it ignores some of the groundwork from earlier parts of the essay, which suggests that Pol Pot’s reading of Stalin and Kropotkin had something to do with the ‘Killing fields’. Furthermore the candidate could have explored other factors that implicitly led to the Khmer Rouge’s rise to power, such as social, economical and political issues.

Criterion D - Presentation

3 out of 4 - The candidate has used a clear layout and presentation. The table of contents and the use of footnotes help the reader of the essay. The bibliography, though extensive, contains inaccuracies. Sources, divided as they are in primary and secondary sources, should be given alphabetically.

Criterion E - Engagement

5 out of 6 – The RPPF shows the candidate’s interest in the topic and subject. It’s clear from this form that the Pol Pot biography heavily influenced the student’s thinking about the topic. It’s also clear that the supervisor helped her formulate the research question. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a decision-making process in which the candidate is intellectually and personally engaged. The supervisor’s comments help to explain the student’s engagement.