

The importance of the long march essay sample



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Source B, is the views of three Chinese historians on the long march, from a book called "The concise History of China" by Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua. It was published by the Foreign Language Press, Beijing in 1981. The source uses emotive exaggerated language for example: "beyond human imagination" and "unconquerable" it grossly idolizes the Chinese Communist Party.

Source C on the other hand, is another Chinese view of the long march from a history book printed in Taiwan in 1971. It turns the long march into a GMD success telling how "the Communists fled from Jiangxi". It uses somewhat derogatory language, calling the long-marchers "remnants" and "completely helpless. It offers a completely contrasting view.

In my opinion this is mostly because it gives views from the two opposite political parties involved in the long-march. The first source is published in Beijing, China, where the communist party controlled the country for quite some time. Many people at the time the source was written nearly fifty years later, still held Chairman Mao, who controlled the CCP, with high regard. It is also worth noting that it was published by the Foreign language press, at the time the media was still controlled by CCP forces, who weren't likely to smear their own names.

Source C, gave an extreme GMD view. After the GMD were defeated in the late 1940s many of the former members of the party fled to Taiwan to avoid persecution, once in Taiwan, they took governmental control. This source was printed in Taiwan. Again, they controlled much of the publishing, and I feel that the book was almost an attack, trying to show Chinese people what

a failure the CCP was, and how they would have been better off without them.

In conclusion, I believe that the difference in opinion, was a result of the fact, the writers of the sources were supporters of opposite political parties, and the two sources were published in areas where the government, had a huge influence on the media, and what people were allowed to read.

Source D is from an account by Madame Teng Ying-Chao in 1958, she was a Chinese woman, recalling her journey on the Long March. She emphasises the hardships of the long march telling of the many obstacles they faced, such as : “ The Great Snow Mountains”, “ showers of snow”, “ trackless mountain regions” and also of the implications that these obstacles had on the long-marchers: “ difficult to breathe” , “ men fell... they were dead”. She goes on to say about the fact 3/10ths of the long-marchers survived, though she wondered how they came through at all.

Source E, on the other hand, is from a speech made by Mao Xedong in December 1935, talking about the Long March shortly after it ended. Mao also speaks of “ untold difficulties and great obstacles on the way”, but he focuses more on how the Long March itself served as useful propaganda: “ The Long March has sown many seeds which will yield crop in the future”. He ends the section of the speech summing the Long March up as “ our victory and the enemy’s defeat”.

It is evident that the two sources are very different. Source D focuses very much on the practicalities and realities of the Long March whilst Mao focuses on the political implications. Madame Teng gives the account as an attempt
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to provide information whilst Chairman Mao gives the account as effectively propaganda about propaganda. This means that source D is likely to be more reliable. Propaganda isn't about telling the truth, its about a government sending out the information they want to. Whereas Madame Teng had no reason to speculate, or give false information, although, she wouldn't be likely to say things with negative inferences about CCP, because at the time she made the account Chairman Mao was still in power, and worshipped like a God.

In conclusion, I believe that Source D would be most useful to a historian studying the Long March. Although, it must be accounted for that the source would be unlikely to say anything derogatory about the CCP. Also, Source E is useful evidence that Chairman Mao used propaganda not only to affect the public, but also when speaking to his own party.

Sources can be incredibly useful when trying to assess the importance of something, and when you are given a collection of them, it is necessary to compare the information that each one gives, and whether or not that correlates with the other sources. However, you also need to decide if the information is relevant or reliable. To help me decide whether or not this particular group of sources is useful, I am first going to study each source individually then the group as a whole.

Source A, is a map showing the route taken by the long-marchers. It comes from a book called " A Map History of Modern China" written by B. Catchpole in 1982 for use in British Schools. The Map also has key facts such as the distance of the march, 6000 miles, and the date which it took place, October

1934-October 1935. The map itself is useful, but more as a graphical representation of the hardships that the long-marchers faced as opposed to telling us how important the long-march was.

However, the fact that it was published for use in British Schools almost fifty years after the march itself took place, does help us to gauge its importance. Were it of little or no importance, students in schools thousands of miles away wouldn't be studying it years later. The fact that the map was produced for schools, and that we are studying it today, means it had long-term effects. An indication that an event has high importance. If I were to give it a rating of usefulness out of ten, I would give it an 8OR9/10.

Source B, is the views of three Chinese historians on the long march, from a book called "The concise History of China" by Jian Bozan, Shao Xunzheng and Hu Hua. It was published by the Foreign Language Press, Beijing in 1981. The source contains a few key facts but uses much emotive and exaggerated language, to emphasise the importance of the Long March, calling it a "historic mission" and saying "It inspired the whole country." It gives us seemingly useful information about the Long-March suggesting it was of high importance, and again it was being written nearly fifty years later, meaning it had long-term effects. However, usefulness is also affected by reliability, and this source is by no means reliable. It gives a very biased CCP view, as it was published at a time when the media was still totally controlled by the CCP. So it's usefulness is lessened. Out of ten, I would give it a 3/10.

Source C, is another Chinese view of the long march from a history book printed in Taiwan in 1971. The source contains some key facts and appears

to be telling us that the Long March was of little or no importance. It uses derogatory language, calling the long-marchers “remnants” and “completely helpless. It in fact says the Long March was a flee on behalf of the CCP and a victory for the GMD. Also, yet again, it was being written some time after the event, suggesting long-term effects, and also yet again, the source is not terribly reliable. The fact that the book was printed in Taiwan means it gives a very biased GMD view. Many GMD party members fled to Taiwan after the GMD was defeated to avoid persecution. Since the source isn't reliable, it isn't as useful, however, I think it is important that we study both sides when we look at the importance of the Long March, so I'll give it a 4/10.

Source D, is from an account by Madame Teng Ying-Chao in 1958, she was a Chinese woman, recalling her journey on the Long March. Accounts are usually useful, because only a long-marcher could truly tell us what it was like on the long-march first hand. The source however, doesn't focus on how important the long march was it focuses on the hardships they faced. It is also likely to be biased towards the CCP, because although it was some-time after the Long March, suggesting long-term effects, it was a time when chairman Mao was still in power, on the whole the Chinese people either thought him a God or feared him greatly so either way were unlikely to say anything against the CCP. I'd give it a 2/10.

Source E, is from a speech made by Mao Xedong in December 1935, talking about the Long March shortly after it ended. Mao, was on the long-march so his account was first hand, but again that helps more with finding out about the experience on the Long March than its importance. However, Mao

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doesn't just talk about his experience, he also talks about the impact that the long march has had on the country: "The long march has sown many seeds which will yield a crop in the future." He recognised that the long march was an opportunity to spread propaganda, and seized it. It's clear that in his own opinion the long march was a success, and an important event. However, as the source is propaganda, we cannot really trust it, and if we can't trust what it says, then it is therefore not terribly useful in helping us assess the importance of the Long March. 1/10.

Source F, is a from a propaganda painting produced after 1935, it is a scene from the Long March, showing a meeting of peasants and communists. The image is quite clearly propaganda designed to encourage people about Mao, he is seen leading optimistic looking troops, with light gathering around his head in a god-like manner, which since many considered him a god, isn't really surprising. It should also be noted that the perspective used shows Mao high and triumphant. Whilst the image itself doesn't really tell us much about the importance of the Long March, the fact it was ever produced does. It is unlikely, that a propaganda poster would be created showing an unimportant event. The CCP knew it was in their advantage to make the most of the long march, they made it into their triumphant founding legend, and spread it as far as they could, in a way, the way they dealt with it made it more important. However, yet again, as propaganda, it cannot really be trusted at all, making it much less useful. 2/10.

The final source, source G, is an excerpt from "China in the 20th Century" written by Harriet Ward, for use in British Schools. The source tells us about the new Shaanxi base, centred on the town of the Yanan, which in her

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opinion was “ the Birthplace of Communist China” definitely an important place. The source teaches us about the effect that the Long March had on the communities in the Long Term, and as we know, long term effects are an indication that an event is of historical importance. Another indication of the importance, yet again, is the fact that it was published for use in British schools 90 years later. Clearly this is an indication of its importance.

Therefore, the source is extremely helpful with the task in hand, I'd give it a 9/10.

To conclude, this selection of seven different sources, certainly vary in the amount of usefulness, and the tasks in which they are useful for. There are some sources, which aren't particularly helpful at all, for example source D, primarily because it just isn't useful for gauging importance, it has other uses. I also feel, that the selection might have done better, without the propaganda, since it cannot be trusted, and is therefore almost never helpful. Sources such as the excerpts from various school textbooks, were far more helpful, I feel more sources similar to A & G, would have been beneficial. However, in general I think that the pack is quite useful; certainly several of the sources were extremely helpful. It may have been useful to have a wider selection of sources, more targeted to this specific task. However, I feel the sources provided were adequate.