



GCSE HISTORY

8145/1A/B
Report on the Examination

8145
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General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

The entry for this component was very small in comparison with previous years. From their study of the syllabus students appeared to have varying levels of relevant knowledge and understanding to use in their answers. Across all questions in this examination fewer overall reached the highest levels of response identified in the mark scheme than in previous years.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Period Studies

1 AB Germany, 1890 – 1945: Democracy and dictatorship

Question 1

In the third year of the reformed GCSE specification, the general quality of the work produced by the students was satisfactory and it was evident that they had understood the topic well, although exam technique was not as highly developed as it might have been. Most students demonstrated a knowledge of the period and an understanding of the main concepts through the key assessment objectives. There was evidence that students had taken time to consider and plan their responses and there was some careful reading of the interpretations in Questions 1, 2 and 3. Not surprisingly, some were more confident than others in assembling their answers to these questions.

Examiners noted in the less successful answers that students typically neglected to develop their points and merely repeated what the interpretations said. On the one hand there were some students who made simple, abbreviated and descriptive observations; on the other, examiners noticed some unnecessarily long answers. All students should be mindful of the number of marks available for this question. Some answers could not gain any credit because they discussed the provenance of the interpretations.

However, in answering Question 1 the majority of students successfully comprehended and explained differences about the Stresemann era from these interpretations. Many responses reached a high Level 2, being able to draw out and explain an important valid difference. At Level 2 responses made comparisons between the interpretations and in particular recognised that whereas Interpretation A focused on the positive aspects of the era, Interpretation B was critical of the extent of improvement. There was some sensible understanding of specific words and phrases.

Question 2

Many weaker answers did seem to remain focused on 'how' rather than 'why' the interpretations were different. Examiners reported that this question was answered well in comparison to 2019. Students were able to discuss the provenance of the authors, or address the differing dates of the interpretations. As in Question 1, considering the marks available, many answers were too lengthy. The most successful answers were able to relate their contextual knowledge to the authors of the interpretations and use this to explain why they might have differed in their views of the treatment of the Jewish people. The stronger answers on provenance were usually focused on the role or location of the authors. The more successful answers relating to Interpretation A were about the influence the Nazi Party would have had on the author and the significance of this. Students tended to be less successful in developing a motive or purpose for Interpretation B, with many failing to get beyond, 'he was a member of the SA so was biased', although some students recognised the changing role of Muehlebach. Responses containing simple assertions usually did not go on to develop the answer to explain why the authors might then possess different interpretations regarding the treatment of the Jewish people. Overall, this question was answered well by most students who understood what was expected of them and discussed the provenance of the sources in enough detail to be rewarded with a Level 2 mark.

Question 3

This question produced a wide range of responses. Less successful responses gave brief comments about the treatment of the Jewish people. Other answers focussed generally on the provenance which impaired their ability to gain credit usually beyond Level 1. Examiners noted that some responses were more appropriate as an answer to Question 2 or even Question 1. Answers at this level frequently relied upon contextual knowledge but looked to the motives of the authors and stated that the interpretation with less 'bias' was the more convincing.

The clearest differentiator between answers to this question lay in the ability to identify and address the overall argument raised by each interpretation. Many adopted a line-by-line approach. This was unlikely to produce a response showing any overall understanding, and often diverted the focus of the answer away from the demands of the question. There were again many references to the provenance of the interpretations intermingled with the context used to test for accuracy. A notable weakness of answers was a lack of appropriate contextual knowledge to evaluate both interpretations. Most answers which offered contextual knowledge to evaluate the interpretations focused on the violence including Kristallnacht, rather than referencing the changes in the laws.

There were, however, many answers with relevant contextual knowledge which debated and judged which was the more convincing interpretation. Some responses which presented a strong case for just one interpretation and with good contextual knowledge were limited in the credit that could be earned. This was because it was necessary to provide, to some extent, a developed explanation in support of the validity of the arguments provided in each interpretation.

There were a small number of good answers from students who made links between the two interpretations, for example discussing the escalating persecution of the Jewish people in the 1930s. There was some good knowledge demonstrated in response to this question. The higher levels of the mark scheme often were achieved by reference to the specifics of the interpretations to effectively discuss the progressive deterioration of conditions. Some students went on to, or included on the way, substantiated judgements about the more convincing interpretation. Examiners were not looking for a particular interpretation to be favoured in answers so long as a sensible and supported argument was made.

Question 4

This question was accessible at all ability ranges, but it was noticeable that many students appeared to struggle to include two problems. Many answers partly or wholly referred to problems after the war, rather than before as specified in the question. In terms of answers that did adhere to problems before the war, a significant proportion of answers did not demonstrate knowledge of specifics, the answers being generalised.

Most answers that referred to specific events had secure but limited contextual knowledge. There were some Level 2 responses. Most cited problems with the Kaiser and demand for political change as the main problems. Answers of this sort offered a simple, limited understanding of the Kaiser's powers and parties willing for this to change, typically referring to demands for social change from the working classes. Answers often offered a simple understanding of the Kaiser's ambitions. Only rarely did answers show an understanding of the impact of the growth of the population and industries.

Nevertheless, many students who were concise in their answers and related their description to the demands of the question achieved Level 2 marks. The structure of the answers was exemplary in many cases because they were clearly signposted.

Question 5

In responses achieving Levels 1 and 2, a significant number of students tried to consider the lives of people, but the statements were generalised; they could have applied to any war, including references to bombings and casualties. There were a few answers that discussed the changing role of women and children, but often the answers largely focused on life before the war. Most students were able to provide an answer which simply identified and explained the effects of war and achieved a mark at Level 2. Answers that did successfully identify the effects of the war almost always described the bombing raids. Several responses did, however, make some reference to specific effects, such as rationing and the changing impact over the course of the war. Many answers mentioned changes for industrial workers, ie women, but mostly described the employment opportunities rather than the effects.

There were some excellent answers to this question with several developed aspects. Such answers, which secured Levels 3 and 4, made specific reference to identified groups, how the war affected them, and gave specific details. There were some strong answers that defined the various effects, and some were able to differentiate between some positive impacts as well as the clearly negative ones.

Question 6

Less successful answers to this question were descriptive and often overly narrative. Many Level 1 responses and lower Level 2 responses did not show sufficient knowledge of the ways in which there was increased support for the Nazis. Answers at Levels 1 and 2 often made simple or generalised comments about Hitler's speeches or focused largely on the Treaty of Versailles without making it relevant to the question. Less successful answers did not show a clear structure or a clear line of argument. It is important in this Period study that students deploy second order concepts such as causation and consequence as well as the ability to make substantiated judgements.

Generally, less successful answers did not demonstrate an understanding of how actions would lead to growing support for the Nazis. Many of the answers dealt often in a generalised fashion, with hyperinflation and the Ruhr Crisis. Some also wrote about Hitler's actions in the 1920s, which were again not linked to the focus of the question. Many answers offered a description of German history between 1918 to 1933 rather than a focused response to the question set.

Many answers addressed the question and the bullet points with the argument that propaganda was the main factor which gained the Nazis support. Such answers demonstrated an awareness that propaganda came in many forms – in newspapers, radio, marches, and how it was used to secure support. Most answers at Level 2 could explain how the Nazis' message and Hitler himself appealed

to the German people. However, relevant specific knowledge about the use of fear was often absent from answers. Fewer answers mentioned the way in which the Weimar Republic failed to deal with the economic Depression and therefore secured support for the Nazis.

However, at Levels 3 and 4 students were able to show good knowledge in answering this question. They were able to develop a balanced assessment which showed how specifically Hitler appealed to different groups in society. Students' answers explained how different aspects of propaganda enabled support to grow. Although less common, several answers linked economic policy in the 1920s to the events of the 1930s which therefore increased support. More successful answers were able to secure Level 3 with both bullet points discussed in detail. Level 4 responses often maintained relevant reference to both points throughout the answer and made a well-supported judgement often, though not solely, based on how Hitler's appeal was only possible due to the economic problems. It was noticeable that the more successful answers were well structured.

Concluding Remarks

The paper proved broadly comparable to that set in previous years in terms of its demands and level of difficulty. Students had knowledge of the subject content but did not always apply their narratives to precisely meet the demands of the questions set. It is worth bearing in mind that the significant difference between responses achieving Level 2 and those achieving Level 3 is the ability of students to be explicit about the key point of the question; at Level 2 answers tend to be implicit and only partially substantiated whilst at Level 3, explicit links are made to the issue stated in the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.