



AS LEVEL HISTORY

7041/1L Empire to democracy, 1871-1929
Report on the Examination

7041
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The quest for political stability: Germany, 1871-1991

General observations

The paper generated a full range of marks suggesting that the entry represented not only a very broad range of ability but also that the questions were broadly accessible, allowing students to access the highest levels.

The highest achieving students were well coached in the skills required for the paper and were equally well informed. Clearly, though some students had not prepared thoroughly where not only did they 'did not know enough', but that they were also unable to apply what they knew in a convincing way.

Answers to the extract question have adopted a fairly formulaic style, following the outline set out in the indicative mark scheme, but this is largely appropriate and is effective for most students. The approaches to essay writing were more varied but the 'for' and 'against' format followed by a conclusion has generally increased in quality from year to year. Perhaps greater attention might be focused on opening paragraphs, encouraging students to set out the general context of the question and especially, the direction of their argument.

Question 01

The best responses were able to consider the extracts holistically then explicitly identify the overall interpretations, in relation to the specific focus of the question, which was, in this case, Communist opposition between 1919 to 1929. Ideally this overall argument is presented in the student's own words rather than a specific quote from the extract. In this way the responses clearly showed understanding of what the historian was arguing before then analysing other arguments made within the extracts and using own knowledge to help explain their context. It is good practice to also challenge the main argument. This was mostly done by students, or they challenged other arguments made within the extract which, if convincing, was rewarded.

The main argument in Extract A was that communist opposition to the Weimar Republic was a failure and had little impact whereas Extract B's main argument was that Communist opposition was sustained and significant during this period.

The best responses provided appropriate contextual knowledge both to support the interpretation being considered and to challenge it. What is appropriate contextual knowledge is a key skill to be developed. Component One is the breadth paper and students are expected to be able to deploy own knowledge to help evaluate the interpretation and context, but are not required to write vast swathes of precise detail when developing arguments within the extracts. Weaker answers were generally guilty of this. The Spartacist Uprising was a common example which resulted in long developments on the causes, events and consequences where much was not required, so not rewarded and simply wasted the student's time. This can also result in the answer becoming more an essay in technique and not addressing the main requirement to evaluate how convincing arguments are. Extract B was generally the one that students found a challenge to use own knowledge beyond the content of the extract itself.

The comparative element of the question is very important and was often the weakest aspect of a student's answer. An undeveloped paragraph at the end is really not enough. The summary

needs sufficient development that compares both extracts with a well-substantiated judgement. Some students thought it sufficient to assert that one extract was 'better' than the other and a number justified their choice by the amount of factual content contained within the extract, or that the extract covered a greater period of time. The better responses were more aware of the need to judge the 'interpretations' themselves and drew on their analyses of each extract to provide a meaningful and substantiated summary judgement. In this case both Extract A and B had convincing elements to them based on the time periods that they covered but overall many argued that Extract A provided a stronger argument as there was no socialist revolution in these years and, after 1919, the KPD lacked effective leadership. Weaker students tried to criticise the extracts for what they omitted rather than for the interpretations they offered and this approach made it difficult to draw any meaningful contrast between the two.

Question 02

This was the less popular choice of the two essays but there were some excellent answers to this question from students who understood that it was about the changing nature of society between 1871 to 1890 and were able to deploy knowledge that indicated the varying fortunes of different sections of society, from the elites to farmers, or indicated developments that would impact on society like welfare reforms or industrialisation and urbanisation. Some students concentrated too much on political developments and were keen to link social impacts on Catholics, which is valid, but then develop an exhaustive description of the Kulturkampf. Of course such events have an impact on society but the key focus here, as one of the key questions of the specification, is the extent of social change. The best responses were those able to make the distinctions between significant change in terms of social equality brought about by the industrial revolution in Germany during this time, but also continuity in terms of class division and the division between urban and rural areas. Given this is a breadth paper students needed to be aware of the main social trends that occurred between 1871 and 1890 and relate this to the key idea of continuity and change.

Question 03

This was the more popular essay choice and there were some excellent answers to this question from students. Most responses were able to offer some evidence for and against the Kaiser being in complete control. Stronger responses were able to provide a range of ideas from the Kaiser's approach to rule and the role of the constitution, through to more conceptual ideas like the German's inherently natural inclination towards a respect for authority, militarism etc. Such responses were rewarded highly. Others took a more literal approach of assessing each chancellor and their relationship with the Kaiser. Hohenlohe was the 'straw doll' etc. This had merits but was also more restrictive in terms of reaching the higher levels. As with all essays, having a reasonable range of ideas with the appropriate detail to explain them, and some balance, is vital. Again, having the right amount of detail to explain a point, but not overdo it, is the key. Finally, students who had an appreciation of chronology and who covered the full range of dates indicated in both essay questions performed better at achieving the higher levels.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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