



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/20: Democracy and Nazism: Germany, 1918–1945
Report on the Examination

7042
June 2022

Version: 1.0

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General

Many students had good knowledge of the topics that were assessed. The best responses paid close attention to the question focus and selected evidence appropriately. Successful essays showed a blend of depth of knowledge with the communication skills required to build an argument. Some students struggled to organise their writing effectively, often at sentence level. Unfortunately, handwriting was sometimes an obstacle to communication and in some cases, answers were very difficult to read.

Question 01

Many students were knowledgeable about the period 1918-1924 and most recognised that the sources showed perspectives from the political right, left and centre. The most effective answers had strong enough chronological knowledge to make perceptive comments that reflected the context within which the sources originated. In their content analysis, many answers used the sources as springboards for rather generalised discussions of wider themes. In stronger responses, students explored a number of key themes from within each source, demonstrating a very good understanding. Provenance commentary was frequently rather simplistic. Students wrote off speeches as untrustworthy because they were propaganda, or criticised memoirs for unreliability because of memory problems. Stronger answers reflected an awareness of the intense political wrangling that was occurring around the abdication. When considering limitations, more effective responses focused on how these contributed to the value of the source to a historian. Weaker responses were quick to dismiss sources as not valuable when awareness of limitations arose.

Overall, Source C was the most effectively evaluated by most students, with most recognising the turmoil during the Spartacist Revolt. For Source A, most students were aware of the Ebert-Groener Pact but many jumped straight into a consideration of the Kapp and Munich Putsches, without considering the circumstances around the abdication and without a clearly reasoned link. Source B was the least successful; many students misunderstood what was meant by the “counter revolution” and launched straight into a discussion of the Spartacist Revolt.

Question 02

This was the most popular answer. Many students had good knowledge about a range of issues relating to international relations. Indicators of lower performance included a lack of balance, with sometimes high quantities of precise knowledge but only in support. Some students had a lack of chronological specificity, which was particularly detrimental where the Treaty of Rappallo was used entirely instead of a consideration of the Treaty of Berlin, or where the Young Plan entirely replaced discussion of the Dawes Plan. At times, students wrote a considerable amount, with precision, about key features but did not explain how these linked to the question. Issues with balancing argument arose where students reflected entirely on domestic criticism, or where they applied a “Golden Age” set of factors and, for example, discussed the boom in the Berlin film industry.

High performing responses had sufficient precision in their discussion to allow for nuanced analysis. For example, they were able to analyse the Dawes Plan in terms of its impact on trade, confidence, Germany’s industrial economy and territorial integrity, using specific evidence throughout.

Question 03

This question had a wider chronological range (1933-1941) than the Additional Information (1933-1939). Examiners were given very clear instructions that the full range of marks was available to responses within the date range of 1933-1939 which showed the characteristics of the appropriate levels. In particular, inaccuracies made for 1940-41 were not considered to be substantive.

This was the least popular question and students who attempted it tended to engage well with the question focus. A key differentiator within the less effective answers was whether there was sufficient knowledge to build an argument with balance, for both Catholic and Protestant churches, and whether organisation could be sustained throughout the essay. More effective answers were notable for the range of specific knowledge deployed, often with a good sense of change over time. The strongest arguments were able to consider conceptual issues of doctrine, infrastructure and the difference between individual and institutional opposition.

Question 04

Responses showed a considerable depth and breadth of knowledge. Many students were able to develop convincing narratives which showed the development of persecution over time. The less effective answers stated that moments of change showed inconsistency without making a reasoned argument. Some students were able to develop arguments that intentions remained consistent but that methodology changed. To achieve the higher levels, students needed to define what they understood by consistency and then sustain that line of argument throughout the essay. The most effective responses had a clear focus on policy and were able to develop analysis of inconsistency/consistency with precision, building analysis around features such as the cynical relaxation of obvious persecution for the Berlin Olympics and the different murder rates of the Einsatzgruppen squads.

A number of students struggled to relate their understanding of historiographical concepts such as functionalism, or gradualism, with the question focus. This sometimes had a significant impact on their ability to maintain clarity of communication.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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