



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2K International Relations and Global Conflict, c1890 – 1941
Report on the Examination

7042/2K
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General Comments

Students applied themselves diligently to the sources and the essays this year. It was heartening to read examples well-organised, cogently argued work, with precise support. This was particularly the case in essays on the causes of the First World War. It remains the case that the key to success in the exam is to identify and meet the requirements of the question asked. In the essays this meant that the students pay heed to the time period specified, and focus on the issue in the question. In the sources there is still some uncertainty of approach, which can lead to an overly pedestrian approach. The source question requires knowledge of the historical context. This context is to be used in the assessment of the provenance as well as the content of the source, as part of the overall investigation of value.

Question 1

The sources were on the topic of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939. The most common response was to deal with the provenance and content of the sources separately, often beginning with the provenance. This can be a weakness if the comments on the provenance are speculative about what the source might or might not be, and do not contain reference to the source, or indeed to the historical context. It is important, therefore, to read the whole source before beginning to assess it.

The majority of students were able to show some contextual knowledge, and usually this was offered in support of the source content. Students found it harder to challenge the content, even for the extremely controversial source B, although this was the most successfully challenged. Stronger contextual knowledge was a feature of the best answers. For source A this included knowledge about the role of the Polish Foreign Minister in previously blocking agreements with Soviet Russia by not wanting any Soviet occupation of Polish territory. This put the phrase 'we are not to blame' in a different light. Other examples of good provenance included the realisation that the secret clause was not known at this point and so Beck was perhaps showing foresight. Most students were able to link this source to the subsequent formal agreement between Britain and Poland on 25 August.

It was not necessary for the students to identify that Source B was official Nazi propaganda directed at Britain, but there did have to be an awareness that this was a partial view. Most students got this and expressed some sort of reservation about the provenance and content. Many did not use their contextual knowledge of international relations in the 1930s, for example Nazi foreign policy and appeasement, to expose the propaganda for what it was. The date of the source was often overlooked. Such answers lacked the appreciation that it was clear that Germany had signed the pact in bad faith.

Source C was evidence that the Russians knew what was going on all the time and had taken a gamble in signing the pact. Good assessments of the source including an examination of the meaning of 'inevitable' and the role of Russia in making the pact 'inevitable'. Those with good contextual knowledge were able to point out that Khrushchev's account makes no mention of the secret clause, and they were less convinced by Khrushchev's claim to have been the victim. This is an example of when the assessment of value can be enhanced by pointing out something which is omitted from the source, as the omission is linked to the bias and purpose of the account. In general, however, assessment by 'omission' can lead to irrelevance.

All students respond to the source question at length. The best answers recognise that this question is also about their historical knowledge. Historical context should be used to assess the provenance as well as the content of the source, for example by identifying the purpose of the source. The stronger answers link the assessment of provenance to the content, for example by

locating bias in the actual text. Stronger answers use contextual knowledge to both support and challenge the sources, where appropriate.

Question 2

This question, on the growth of the rival alliance systems in the years 1902 to 1911, was the least popular on the paper but the most successful in achieving the highest levels. A feature of the good answers was a secure knowledge of the Moroccan Crises, Wilhelm's foreign policy, and the reaction of Britain and France. There was an impressive awareness of global developments, with reference to Asia and Africa, as balancing factors. Weaker answers were able to show an awareness of the issues, but lacked the precision of detail to explain the impact. A key to unlocking this explanation was the recognition of the phrase 'provoked by', which led to an examination of cause and consequence.

Question 3

The topic 'war in Europe' was the most popular essay option. There were different ways to successfully address this question, with the common element being 'the actions of Austria-Hungary'. The vast majority of students were aware of, and could support with some detail, the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. This was balanced with knowledge of Germany's 'blank cheque'. There was less knowledge about the bombardment of Belgrade, or Austria's actions in the Treaty of London (1913), although these were features of very strong answers which convincingly explained Austria's role as a catalyst in turning a Balkan issue into a European wide war. An alternative approach was to focus also on the causes of the Balkan wars of 1912-13, which balanced the argument with reference to Slav nationalism, Russia and Italy.

Question 4

The focus of this question on the achievements in disarmament and conciliation in the years 1923 to 1928 presented a number of challenges. The weaker responses were characterised by a lack of specific context within the date period specified, or by the failure to balance the answer by assessing what was, and was not, achieved. Answers often began with the peace treaties or strayed at length into the 1930s. There were a number of good answers. The most analytical separated the two concepts of disarmament and conciliation, although this was not necessary for a top level mark. What was required was a balanced assessment of the achievements of the period, across a range of examples, with specific support. The students were secure on the Dawes Plan, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the League of Nations. There was quite good knowledge of Locarno and some awareness of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Geneva Protocol. Reference to events outside the given years could only be credited only as far as they were used to enhance the argument offered about 1923-1928.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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