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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

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

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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 both depth of knowledge and the communication skills required to build an argument. In some cases, students narrated rather than analysed, showing excellent knowledge but not reaching the higher levels as the responses failed to be fully relevant.

Some students struggled to organise their writing effectively. In particular, some answers were characterised by very extended passages of writing which needed to be structured into paragraphs. Use of scaffolding phraseology is clearly helpful to students who need considerable support but there is a common tendency for students to use many such phrases rather than getting on with the argument, particularly in 01 where they may have written 4-5 lines before engaging with the source in a way that demonstrated their factual knowledge.

Unfortunately, handwriting was sometimes an obstacle to communication and in some cases, answers were extremely difficult to read, to everyone's detriment. Centres need to be more conscious of how writing deteriorates when their students are under pressure because it is disappointing to see considerable exertion of effort by a student which is not legible.

On the whole, it did not appear that time management was a significant problem this year, but it typically presented itself where students overwrote on Q1, with copious quantities of similar quality writing, and then ran out of time on the essays. Students sometimes avoided this by starting with the essays before moving onto Q1. Some students made very comprehensive essay plans and then ran out of time to write their responses.

## Question 01

This was an accessible question for most students, with most students recognising that Source A provided a perpetrator perspective and Source C, that of a victim. Students were typically less secure on Source B, with weaker responses speculating about limitations rather than positively engaging with the source.

Good answers were clearly structured, with close reference to the content of the source that was of direct relevance to the question focus. Some knowledgeable students wrote mini-essays on the question topic which did not directly analyse the sources. The strongest answers used precise knowledge to demonstrate their depth of awareness, and analysed content in a way that also showed their breadth of understanding. Some students repeated their knowledge applied to Source A's content in their approach to the other two, or spent too much time on A and could not think how to comment on B and C with the time left.

In terms of provenance, a lower level answer works through different facets and makes a series of equally low-value comments, for example, noting that Goebbel's diary may have contained his private thoughts, or that, as a high-ranking official, he may have known what was happening. Stronger answers tended to focus on one or two aspects of provenance but really developed them, using their historical imagination and contextual awareness to make focused comments. For example, some good responses to Source B reflected on how the USA might have viewed the refugee crisis precipitated by Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Weaker responses tend to feel an obligation to criticise a source for its limitations, with an unreasonable expectation of how a source could be useful for a historian. Limitations are only valuable if they are historically authentic, for example, commenting on surprisingly omitted

information, and it is not worth finding a limitation simply as a tick box exercise. Overall, the distinctive feature of high performing responses is that the student critically engages with the source, showing high quality thinking.

### **Question 02**

Most students attempted this essay, and many had very strong knowledge of the political and economic challenges faced by the young Weimar Republic. The ability to engage with the question was the indicator of a strong answer, with consideration made of how to assess and then compare the nature of the challenges the Republic faced in this period. Some students digressed into essays on the Treaty of Versailles which some then tried to wrestle back into relevance, and others wrote about social, international, political and economic challenges, in a way that was hard to fully reward.

Students often asserted that a key feature was a challenge but did not explore further so the essay was effectively a list, with the longest list “winning”. Good answers considered the consequences of a key feature, and the best were able to confidently interconnect challenges to build an authentic historical picture. Very few students used chronology to help develop their answers and many provided a detailed narrative of the hyperinflation crisis at the start of their essays, which left them with real organisational difficulties; some simply then wrote with reversed chronology but many were muddled or at least, did not use chronology to help deepen their response. The highest quality of responses managed to exert control over deep and wide knowledge in order to analyse effectively. Overall, this was a successful question for many students.

### **Q3**

This was the second most popular essay attempted by students. A higher proportion struggled to address the question focus, and some wrote a “Golden Age” essay that encompassed political, international and economic factors with one paragraph on social change, which was disappointing as they clearly had good knowledge, but it was mainly not relevant. Another common approach considered the extent of social change per se, but did not know how to engage with the focus of “liberal and tolerant”.

Essays were marked positively, so that a student was able to achieve a good mark because they had good knowledge of the extent of social changes in the Weimar era and were able to create an argument. The highest marks were reserved for those who really grappled with “liberal and tolerant”, even if their range of key features and issues was less because they were engaging at more depth. Some students showed excellent understanding of political and social liberalism. Strong essays were highly argumentative, with detailed knowledge and excellent control over arguments and counter-arguments, which enabled them to demonstrate nuanced understanding.

The chronological range of this question was fairly narrow. In this instance, if students considered developments that began in the period before the question focus, but which were still relevant within the window, their knowledge was credited. Knowledge that drifted down from the Nazi era was not likely to be relevant enough to credit.

**Q4**

Students' knowledge of opposition and resistance movements was tested by this question. Some students really struggled to produce rewardable content and instead wrote a generalised essay on the Nazi terror state, 1933-1945. Others wrote about why Germany lost the Second World War, and some wrote about why people opposed the Nazis. In these instances, examiners rewarded relevant commentary where they found it.

Typically, more successful students chose one of two approaches and either was credited. Some students talked specifically about the failure of opposition movements as one factor, and then considered broader reasons such as the workings of the terror state and the successful maintenance of morale through propaganda that prevented rebellion from becoming widespread. If they were able to consider the role of unity strongly within their consideration of resistance and opposition movements, and their knowledge was precise throughout, this could be a very effective response.

The most successful answers showed very strong knowledge of resistance and opposition movements in the stated period and were able to engage closely with the issue of unity. Within this approach, the weaker responses did not have sufficient depth of knowledge to be able to build more than a perfunctory assertion of unity, as in, "the bomb plotters had bad luck and that was because they were not united". There was, however, a range of effective responses. Some considered the different aims of the youth opposition movements and argued that unity could not even have been expected but argued that they were, in their own ways, somewhat effective. They may then have argued that the unity was much more of a factor in the weak opposition of the churches, as they could unite and force policy changes but tended not to, leaving determined opposition to a few key individuals. Any relevant opposition that was effectively argued was credited, including some sensitive consideration of what it meant for Jewish Germans to resist and how a historian could assess their actions. There was no prescribed range of key features and issues but instead, examiners rewarded high quality responses however they were presented.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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