



AS

HISTORY

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Report on the Examination

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General

Much of the work seen in this summer's examination session reflected sound learning and preparation. Most students knew exactly what was required and were able to show appropriate skills in their evaluation of the extracts in Section A and an ability to write an analytical essay with range and balance, in Section B.

Since this is a breadth paper demanding an appreciation of chronology and an awareness of change and continuity, the better the students responded to historical developments over time. The more they did so, particularly in 01, the more successful their answers tended to be. Whilst some students displayed an impressive grasp of content, often over and above that expected in a breadth study, a key requirement was, as always, that students selected appropriate and relevant historical evidence in support of an analysis that was closely focused on the questions posed. It was crucial that they showed and supported an understanding of the full 20 years or more which these various questions covered.

Students who had an appreciation of chronology and who covered the full date range indicated in the questions, as well as making convincing arguments, backed by appropriate evidence, were those who achieved the higher levels.

Section A

Question 01

The majority of students were clear about the assessment focus of the extract question. Almost all the students examined the extracts in turn before offering a comparison as to which was the most convincing. Some students, wrongly, approached this as a 'fact-checking' exercise in which the extract was examined sentence by sentence with comment on how far the historian had got the facts right. Many of these students failed to consider the focus of the question, in this case the economy of the Weimar Republic in the years 1919 to 1928.

Examiners were looking for three key elements in the answers:

(i) An understanding of the interpretations in Extract A and Extract B.

The best students were able to look at the extracts holistically and explicitly identify the overall interpretation of each extract, in relation to the focus of the question. So, Extract A's overriding interpretation was that the economy of the Weimar Republic encountered serious difficulties in this period whereas Extract B's was that the Weimar economy was increasingly stable and successful in these years, the latter of which could be considered 'golden years'. Good students used their own words rather than just quoting extract content. In this way they clearly showed understanding of what the historian was arguing as a whole, before analysing any sub-arguments made within the extracts and using own knowledge to help support their comments and explain the context. The more 'literal' students found the concept of an overall interpretation difficult, and simply developed whatever particular line or comment took their fancy. For example Extract A's reference to the Paris Peace Settlement resulted in long descriptions of specific terms, whether economic or not.

(ii) An understanding of the historical context

The more successful students provided appropriate contextual knowledge both to support the interpretation being considered and to challenge it. Understanding what constitutes appropriate contextual knowledge is a key skill. Component One is a breadth paper and students are expected to be able to deploy own knowledge to help explain the interpretation and context,. However, they are not required to write vast swathes of precise detail when evaluating arguments within the extracts. Weaker students were generally guilty of this. For example, both extracts made reference to the 1923 inflation crisis, Extract B being more explicit than A. This unfortunately resulted in long explanations of the causes, events and consequences of that event, much of which was irrelevant, so not rewarded. This was a waste of the student's time.

(iii) Comparison between the two Extracts

The comparative element of the question is crucial and was often the weakest aspect of a student's answer. A sentence at the end was really not enough. Ideally the comparison needs sufficient development to provide 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 well-supported judgement. It was fair to argue that both Extract A and B had convincing elements to them based on the time periods that they covered, provided appropriate evidence was given. Too many 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.

Section B

Question 02

Bismarck proved a popular choice for students and most were able to use their knowledge of political developments in Germany to respond well to the question posed. Most focused their responses on key developments concerning the National Liberals, the Kulturkampf, the ZP, tariffs and socialism. All this material was relevant, but the key here was how it tied in with the question focus of Bismarck's political authority. Some students were keen to display everything they knew about key developments but ended up writing too much about events which failed to move the answer forwards. Extended analysis on the Kulturkampf was a particular problem. Students need to remember that this is a breadth study and that when responding to a question they only need to provide enough evidence to support the point being made; writing all they know turns the essay into description for which little reward is given.

Many essays had focus, reasonable range and some support and balance. In order to move higher in the levels, students needed to show greater depth of analysis in terms of how the material linked to the focus of the question, and more sustained argument throughout the answer. The highest rewarded answers had a conceptual element, which meant the analysis showed a developed understanding of continuity or change over time;, including understanding trends or more sophisticated appreciation of the nature of Germany, its politics and people. For example the Bismarckian constitution was both a strength and a weakness for Bismarck.

Question 03

This was slightly less popular than 02 but there were some excellent answers to this question from students who understood that this was a social question about the changing nature of society between 1890 and 1914. Better students 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 affect society, be they welfare reforms or cultural changes. Some students concentrated too heavily on political and economic developments and were keen to write about the actions of the Kaiser and Weltpolitik. Of course such events have an impact on society but the key focus here, (reflecting one of the key questions of the specification), was the extent of social and cultural change. The most successful students were those able to make distinctions between the significant change, in terms of social equality brought about by the industrial revolution in Germany during this time, and the continuity, in terms of class division and the divide between urban and rural areas. Given this is a breadth paper, students needed to be aware of the main social trends that occurred between 1890 and 1914 and be able to relate these to the key idea of continuity and change.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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