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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2L: Italy and Fascism c1900-1945  
Report on the Examination

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7042  
June 2019

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Version: 1.0

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## General Comments

There was an increased entry this year and a rise in the general standard of the answers, particularly in the sources question. It is heartening to see the motivation and commitment demonstrated by students of a range of abilities. The issues of the paper clearly motivate the students and, to a greater or lesser extent, inspire. Many scripts of considerable length and detail were seen, although there are times, particularly in question one, where more thought beforehand might have led to shorter and more focussed answers. A small number of students experienced time difficulties, which are significant if one answer is only partial at best. This is especially so if the sources question has been left until the end and one or more of the sources are missing from the answer. The sources are equally weighted in the assessment of Question 01 and so should be given equal time within the allocated hour of the exam.

The sources were accessible to the students in terms of comprehension and the context generally well known, although the context of social policy around source B was weaker and a range of references was accepted. Students should be reminded that there is little credit in simply writing out the given provenance without making any comment on how it affects the value of the source. It is also necessary to develop those comments in relation to the specific context of the source. For example the observation that the source was 'free from censorship' could be legitimately made about all the sources this year, though the observation that therefore they 'must be true' added little to the discussion, especially as Source A conveyed a very different impression of the relations between Church and State, and of Mussolini, than the other two sources.

The sources are chosen because they offer something of value, through content and provenance, to the issue of the question. Students should be discouraged from dismissing the source too readily as one-sided or subjective as this suggests an approach which is only judging the factual content of the source rather than its value. In a similar vein, students should also be encouraged to see that a source can only be criticised for leaving something out if it is clearly a deliberate result of the bias of the source. For example, source A was too often criticised for not mentioning events which were to happen later in the 1930s, which would have been impossible. The answers which instead referred to Mussolini's opportunism and ambivalence towards religion prior to 1929 were on much stronger ground.

The students were able to respond appropriately to the essay questions, offering answers which addressed the question but varied in their command of detail and ability to focus on the issue given. It should be emphasised that each question had a 'given factor', namely the economic consequences of World War One, Mussolini's ability to control the Fascist Party in his consolidation of power and the role of the Partisans in the final collapse of Fascism. In order to achieve a balanced response this element must be given some consideration. Less effective answers were very willing to challenge the issue and were eager to move the discussion onto other factors with which they felt more secure. Very strong answers were not only able to deal with the given issue of the question but also relate it to other relevant issues by exploiting the links between them. This often led to well substantiated judgements.

## Question 01

The sources were on the topic of Fascist society, in particular the relations between the Fascist regime and the Church. As a basic response most students were able to pick out the positive message of Source A and relate it to the details of the Lateran Treaty. They were also able to see why this might be useful eye-witness, although assertions that the source proved that the Lateran

Treaty was successful were less convincing. More discerning answers were careful to emphasise that the viewpoint was limited and might show only a Catholic perception of the Accord. Thoughtful responses went on to suggest that the hyperbolic tone suggested excessive bias and also that the international perception of the treaty implied in the final paragraph was just the impression that Mussolini wanted to create.

The content of Source B was understood, and sensible comments were made relating to the provenance of the source, but the context of social policy was weak, with a significant minority of answers not seeing the connection to the rivalry with the Fascist Balilla. More general references to Fascist social policy were accepted as context. Effective challenges were made to the source's assertion that Fascist social policy was for the 'exclusive advantage of the party' with reference to the areas of social policy that the Church had supported and continued to support. Many answers were able to comment on the significance of it being the Pope's intervention and the tone of the letter. Stronger answers saw in the tone an expression of urgency and a 'call to action' which, it was felt, meant that the viewpoint was less balanced. As with the other sources, thoughtful students were able to make multiple points from the source, showing a deeper level of source interrogation.

Source C was often the weakest in its assessment, and was certainly given less time than the first two sources. At a basic level there was an understanding that Mussolini's racial policies had caused a rift with the Church and that here was a useful international perspective on this issue. Some students were distracted by the references to the Jews and commented at length on Italy's relations with Germany, which was off the focus of the question. The tone of the piece was regarded as balanced overall, but a critical tone towards Mussolini was picked up. Thoughtful responses included the observation that the international climate in 1938 would have made *The Times* particularly interested in Italy's affairs and possibly wanting to highlight the problems of the relationship with Germany. Stronger answers also showed awareness that the Pope and Mussolini's arguments were now very much in the open.

The answers to Question 01 were stronger this year. The most effective responses are from those students who assess the provenance and content of the source together, with a close focus on the issue of the question and with carefully selected contextual support. Separate assessments of 'provenance' and 'content' can be very time consuming. For those that do adopt this pattern it is usually more effective to consider the provenance first and then relate any conclusions drawn to the content and argument of the source. All students should be encouraged to approach the sources with a degree of scepticism, appropriate to the issue and context.

## Question 02

This was a popular question and students showed good knowledge of a range of consequences of the First World War in the period 1919-1921. In addition to the economic problems caused by the war there was good awareness of the rise of Socialism, the impact of the peace treaties, the weakness of the Liberal government and the rise of Fascism. In terms of the focus of the question, some students neglected to explain why the issue was a consequence of the war, making their answer more descriptive of the problems of Italy than a specific response to the question. The scale of the economic cost of the war was well known. A quite common misconception was that because industries such as Fiat did well during the war then the economic consequences cannot have been too bad.

The most successful answers not only balanced their assessment with a range of other war time consequences, but also considered the ways in which these consequences were inter-connected.

For example the socialist threat and the increasing strike action was seen as, in part, a consequence of the economic turmoil caused by unemployment and high inflation. This inter-relating of factors showed good understanding. There is a quite common misconception that Fiume had been promised to Italy in the Treaty of London.

### **Question 03**

This was the most popular question. The consolidation of power is a well-known topic, although a significant minority still want to use material from the accession to power, including the March on Rome, or more general material about the maintenance of power in the later 1920s and even 1930s. It was important in answering this question to develop the issue of 'control of the party'. The most successful answers recognised that the party was subdued by, for example, the creation of the Fascist Grand Council, but also used for their intimidatory effect, for example in the Chamber in 1923 or in the murder of Matteotti. Some very good conceptual understanding was shown by linking the control of the party to the support Mussolini gained from the elites, with reference to his 'dual policy'. Students should be encouraged to explore the inter-relationship of the factors leading to the consolidation of Mussolini's dictatorship.

Balancing arguments were made for the role played by violence, the political skill of Mussolini and the legal changes. Reference was also made to foreign success and the role of propaganda, although the comments on propaganda often drew conclusions based on later events. There is a tendency, amongst less effective answers, to generalise the issue to one of 'support'. More effective answers concentrated on the accumulation of power by Mussolini in the period up to 1926.

### **Question 04**

This was the least popular question but clearly some centres had prepared their students well on the final collapse of Fascism and good answers were seen. The most effective were tightly focussed on the period 1943-1945 and showed awareness of the role of the Partisans in guerrilla warfare, the scale and nature of their operations. They were also able to balance this with an evaluation of the limitations of their role as well as the significance of the German defeat and the unpopularity of the Salo Republic. It was acceptable to draw on longer term developments, such as the failure of Mussolini to create a 'nation of fascists', as long as the comment was focussed towards the defeat in 1945. More general surveys of Mussolini's successes and failures, and detailed comment on the failures in war before 1943 were not as appropriate.

Once again, substantiated judgements depended upon a comparative analysis of the different factors leading to the fall of Fascism. Students should be encouraged to go beyond the basic response of rejecting one factor in favour of another and instead make comments which acknowledge the weight of both sides of the argument before justifying their final choice.

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

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