
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/1L
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/1L

The quest for political stability: Germany, 1871–1991 **Component 1L: Empire to democracy, 1871–1929**

General Comments

It was encouraging to note that most students had clearly engaged with the course and acquired some meaningful knowledge that they were able to deploy in response to the questions set. Some showed that they had thought quite deeply about the issues they had studied and, in response to all three questions, there were students who were ready to provide individualistic and thoughtful comments, be it on Bismarck and the role of the individual, to social and economic changes over a period of time.

At best, students wrote with confidence and interest in the debates thrown up by the extracts and essay questions. Of course, there were some who muddled events and issues, or whose knowledge let them down. Nevertheless, there were very few who failed to complete the paper or proved unable to write anything of relevance.

Overall students generally coped well with the new format of the examination. There was evidence that students had taken time to plan and structure their answers and there was some careful reading of the extracts in Question 01. Not surprisingly, some were more confident than others in assembling their answers to the compulsory extract evaluation question. Most students, however, adopted a focused and balanced approach when writing their Section B essay and the very best showed judgement and upheld an argument, linking well to the question throughout.

Section A

Question 01

The majority of students considered the two extracts in turn, making some comparative comment in the body of their answer and developing the comparison further in their conclusion. Those who adopted a more comparative approach throughout sometimes found it harder to address all the elements of the question, although they were equally rewarded when they did so.

Examiners were looking for three key elements in the answers:

i) An understanding of the interpretations in the two extracts

The best students here explicitly identified the overall interpretation of each extract in their own words rather than just using the extract content. In this way they clearly showed understanding of what the historian was arguing before then using specific extract context to explain the interpretation. They then addressed other subsidiary views and arguments and evaluated these in a similar way. Clearly, this showed a high-level skill of reading with understanding. Some students produced reasonable answers by taking a line-by-line approach, although interrogating almost every sentence of the extract ran the risk of spending time on less relevant material that was not always 'an interpretation'. Furthermore, this style of answer made comparison between the two extracts more difficult, since students

found themselves trying to compare, not between two broadly contrasting interpretations, but between a multiplicity of differing statements. The weakest students usually only addressed, one or two statements in each extract – or, in some cases, failed to understand an interpretation. Such students showed limited appreciation of what is meant by 'interpretation'. There were also cases of unnecessary analysis of provenance by some students. This is not a requirement of this component. Students should note that the question uses 'extracts' as the focus of analysis here and not 'sources', as some students would refer to them as.

(ii) An understanding of the historical context

The best students provided material both to support the interpretation being considered and to challenge it. There were some very good examples of the application of appropriate own knowledge (particularly in support) and many students provided precise examples, giving dates as well as details to show the relevance of the interpretation and to explain context. Weaker answers were more generalised and thin with support. Some students overly developed context with very long detail to explain an event, whilst others used limited detail and getting the balance right between too much own knowledge, or too little, to explain context is a skill that needs to be developed.

(iii) Comparison between the two extracts

The comparative element of the question was often the weakest. 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. 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 substantiated judgement. In this case both extracts had 'convincing' and 'not convincing' elements to them, so the strongest responses were the ones aware of this and were able to make more subtle judgements as to the most convincing.

Section B

Question 02

Most students were able to use their knowledge of social developments in Germany to respond to the question posed. Most focused their responses on the different classes within Germany, women and the impact of industrial development. Some students concentrated too much on political developments, and although there was some validity within their analysis, particularly those focused on the rise of the SPD, such narrow responses kept their marks down. Generally balance was well developed for this answer and most students were aware that there were arguments for and against change in the social structure. The best responses were those able to make the distinctions between social changes in Germany due to industrialisation, but limited impact on the social structure of the country, which was seen to remain resolutely hierarchical with little social mobility between classes. Given this is a breadth paper students needed to be aware of the main social trends that occurred between 1871–1914 and relate this to the key idea of continuity and change. Having an appropriate range of ideas with the appropriate detail to explain them is vital. Finally, there was a need for greater precision in the work of some students. Appreciation of chronology and the use of dates and specific supporting detail helped to make arguments more convincing and enabled students to make convincing judgements, as required for answer to achieve the higher mark levels

Question 03

Many students were able to show off impressive knowledge in answering this question. Most were able to describe key arguments based around the ideas of financing the War, the Treaty of Versailles, the Ruhr crisis and hyperinflation. However there was a tendency towards a very 'mechanical' response which became more a narrative of all these events rather than how they may, or may not have been linked to World War One and how they may or may not have weakened the German economy between 1914 and 1929. Equally getting the right balance for this essay proved to be difficult for some students where arguments would state that the First World War was responsible for weaknesses in the economy, but then balance that with the Treaty of Versailles as a main cause even though the Versailles Treaty came about as a result of the First World War. The best answers explicitly set out a view in their opening paragraph and developed this throughout their answer. Equally, good responses combined breadth and range with a keen historical awareness and balance. As with Question 02, appreciation of chronology and the ability to select and deploy accurate and precise supporting detail in support of arguments were key factors that differentiated between the weak, average and very good essays.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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