
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/20
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
June 2016

Version: 1.0

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Component 7041/20

Democracy and Nazism: Germany, 1918–1945 Component 20: The Weimar Republic, 1918–1933

General Comments

It was encouraging to find that most students adapted well to the new AS format and used their time to the full to write substantial answers to both the compulsory source question (Q01) and their choice of essay question (Q02 or Q03). Of the latter, Q02 on Stresemann proved the more popular, but there was, nevertheless, a range of very good and weaker answers to both and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this paper. Question 01 has been addressed in some detail so as to provide teachers with further guidance as to what helped produce a good answer in this new style of question.

Section A

Question 1

Generally, students who addressed content through a sentence-by-sentence (or even phrase-by-phrase) approach produced far less satisfactory answers than those who summarised and commented on the overall arguments. There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

As far as the second element is concerned, most students had little difficulty in understanding the content of the two sources and commenting on the opposing views which they represented. There were valid comments suggesting that Source A was useful as it discussed the impact of hyperinflation on different groups and that there were both winners and losers but many students could not follow this up with clear supporting evidence and own knowledge on how/why the groups mentioned either won or lost, beyond general comments based on the source; this was particularly the case with the peasants and landowners. Better answers used clear examples to illustrate this key part of Source A's interpretation in terms of businessmen such as Hugo Stinnes prospering from the collapse of the currency whereas the middle classes on fixed incomes with pensions and savings suffered catastrophically. There were also some generalised assertions about the reference to the Jews, linking this point to Nazi propaganda whereas more reasoned comment on Jews already being targeted as scapegoats by the nationalist right and their links to banking suggesting their involvement received merit. Students had lots of points to comment and expand upon in Source B, with many being able to add own knowledge to show the scale and impact of hyperinflation on the economy and on the German people with lots of anecdotal references to wheelbarrows as well as the chaos of ever increasing prices. Better answers saw the political emphasis of this source (as well as economic) with the points about 'ineffective government' and 'outbursts of political violence' being developed with good own knowledge. Less effective answers

again failed to really go beyond what was already in the source in terms of their analysis of its value.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was quite common, although less so on tone but often less effective than consideration of content, with too many students believing they could trust the daughter of a fish merchant, either because she was there at the time or because she would understand as her family suffered. Also for Source B, although most students understandably did not know the Strasser link with Otto being Gregor's brother who was killed in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934 and Otto himself was banished in 1930 from the Party, they did make the reference to his anti-big business beliefs and his extremely hostile attitude towards the Weimar Republic and democracy in general. Answers where the comments on provenance were developed and supported (that Pestau would be aware of the lower middle class frustrations at the events of 1923 and that Strasser would still be speaking from a most anti-democratic perspective as well as a radically anti-big business one for example) were much stronger. Many students also picked up on the fact that both writers were commenting at a much later date and this was seen by most as a negative issue in terms of recollecting of precise details and as part of an agenda in hindsight to maximise the impact of hyperinflation for political or personal reasons. Tone was less well and widely commented upon: where it was used well, for example the frustration and bitterness which can be seen in Source A due to Pustau's irritation at many around her benefiting from the collapse of the currency whilst her family suffered, it was extremely effective in gauging the source's overall value. Students need to be reminded that comments on provenance and tone, as much as those on content, need support. Simple statements of 'unreliability' or 'bias' were insufficient.

In terms of the comparison, better students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the impact of the 1923 hyperinflation crisis. Many concluded that Source A was the more reasoned by looking at the impact of hyperinflation on different groups and showing awareness of winners as well as losers, while Source B was seen as, in one sense, more overtly politically charged, which may have cast some doubt on it as a piece of propaganda but also more useful in showing the failure of the government response as well as the anger and violent rebellion which the crisis provoked. Many emphasised that both sources would be valuable in explaining the debate from two contrasting angles, and, if well-reasoned, such a judgement was equally acceptable. However, students who merely asserted the superiority of one source over another, talked of the 'validity' – usually meaning accuracy of content – of the sources, or, in a few cases, simply ignored the requirement to address comparison, showed little understanding of what this question asked for.

Section B

Question 02

Many students had a solid and well supported understanding and knowledge of Stresemann and his role in Germany between the crises of hyperinflation and the Wall Street Crash. Better students focused clearly on the issue of 'international position' and were able to draw on a wide range of evidence to assess the extent to which Stresemann was able to improve this for Germany. There was some good understanding of the policy of 'fulfilment' and its intentions and references to the Dawes and Young Plans (although not always accurately differentiated or focused to the precise question), Locarno, the Treaty of Berlin with the USSR and Germany's entry to the League of Nations set the foundations to good responses. Some students did find it difficult to give meaningful balance with evidence agreeing with the question, although those who fully analysed the real extent of progress Stresemann had made in improving Germany's international position, in terms of changes to the Versailles Treaty, produced highly developed answers. Weaker answers

struggled to get to grips with the precise focus of ‘international position’ and veered into Stresemann’s impact on Germany domestically and a lack of clear understanding of the Locarno Treaty was also evident. Overall, as always, the more precise the information and the tighter the links to the question, the more likely the answer was to reach the higher mark levels.

Question 03

This question was less popular compared to Q02 because, perhaps, of the focus of the role of von Schleicher. Many students who did answer this question clearly did not fully recall who Schleicher was and what his role was in the final years of the Weimar Republic leading up to the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933. Many students either confused him with Franz von Papen or just placed him as part of the wider factor of backstairs intrigue, or, in some cases, ignored him completely and answered a more general Hitler’s rise to power question. Better answers did understand his role more fully in terms of his engineering the rise and fall of both Brüning and Von Papen as well as his attempts to split the Nazis and his failed role as Chancellor prior to Hitler. Stronger answers then put this into the context of the wider political intrigue from 1930 and then broadened the response to include factors which explained Hitler’s electoral popularity and the collapse of Weimar democracy. It was disappointing that not many students were able to address these three aspects of this question effectively; those that did produced very strong answers.

There were a number of more descriptive responses which, despite some good knowledge, especially on backstairs intrigue and the role of Papen, received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical stance. Whilst it was hard to agree entirely with the quotation, some awareness of the precise role of Schleicher would have enabled students to produce a better balanced and therefore more highly-rewarded answer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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