
AS

History

7041/2L

Report on the Examination

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General comments

I am pleased to report a revived interest in democracy in Italy before the First World War, as evidenced by the number and quality of essays attempted on Giolitti's reforms this year. Once again students engaged enthusiastically with the content and concepts underlying this depth course. There was evidence of a stronger approach to causation, with more scripts willing to consider the way in which factors inter-relate. There was also more awareness of the need to address the provenance of the sources in Question 1, and to make developed comments; however there are still weaknesses in students' grasp of the 'value' of a source.

It is necessary that students are familiar with handling primary source material for this paper. The question requires them to use their contextual knowledge to examine both what the source says and what they know about its nature, origin and purpose (provenance) and so develop a view of what the source can tell us about the issue.

Students often saw the sources as 'information', and attacked them in a line by line manner. They examined the extent to which their contextual knowledge agreed or disagreed with the source content, often trying to balance this by criticising the source for what it did not say. This can be relevant, for example if information has been deliberately left out or distorted, but a list of 'this source misses out...' is usually unhelpful.

Better answers were able to focus on what the source is telling us in relation to the given issue (in this case the causes of political unrest), showing understanding of source content, provenance and context.

The demands of the essay questions are more understood, although it must be stressed that when a question contains a 'given factor' for analysis, as was the case with question 3 this year, then the answer must make a significant attempt to address this item if the answer is to achieve full balance. Some students overuse facts in their answer at the expense of argument and their answers become overly descriptive or narrative. 'Precision' in an essay is not just a matter of getting the information correct, it is also the selection of the most appropriate facts to support an argument.

Question 1

Most students were able to show some understanding of the content of these two sources and were able to relate it to their knowledge of the 'Red Years' after World War One. Each source presented some difficulties in comprehension. The phrase 'men of order' in Source A referred to the nationalists. This caused some confusion as it came from a socialist, Bonomi. Perhaps the students were not expecting this. Similarly, the viewpoint of Source B, that Mussolini was paid by the industrialists and businessmen to target the socialist threat, showing Mussolini to be an opportunist, was not always grasped. With the given provenance for source B, it was widely assumed that Seldes would be supportive of Mussolini. Perhaps that assumption made it harder to comprehend that Seldes was critical.

Students were able to support Bonomi's comments about the impact of the war on Italian politics, with many recognising the view that the victory was 'mutilated'. There were able to support the account of socialist violence with reference to the strikes and referenced the occupation of the factories to support the content of source B. These answers frequently used the formula 'this source says...' More successful were the students who approached the source in a more holistic fashion and were able to write about what each source tells us about the causes of political unrest.

For example, that source A shows the unrest to be a reaction by the nationalists to the socialist violence, and that source B tells us that the violence was caused by the fear of the elites and the opportunism of Mussolini. This latter view was sometimes supported by knowledge of Mussolini's earlier socialism, which is referred to in Seldes account.

It was then important for the students to suggest why we might believe or disbelieve these sources on this topic. Reference to Bonomi's political experience and moderate socialism was used effectively. Seldes was seen to have a more independent view, based on his nationality, journalistic experience and research, though cynical and stereotypical views of journalists are still evident.

Question 2

There was a greater take up for this question than on the comparable topic last year and some very good answers were seen. Many students showed good knowledge both of Giolitti's reforms and of the situation of Italy in 1903-1914. They were also able to offer some balance, although less able students tended to be excessively descriptive of the issues without explaining how these made Italy more or less stable. It was encouraging to see answers which recognised the interconnectedness of the problems faced by Italy, for example the problems Giolitti had in meeting the socialist, Catholic and nationalist demands, or the effects of the change to the suffrage. These answers could be rewarded for showing a higher conceptual understanding.

Question 3

The factors leading to the consolidation of fascist rule by 1926 are well known. A small number of students persist in using evidence from before the March on Rome, but otherwise there was good knowledge of, for example, the role of the elites and the threat of violence. Question 3 was therefore a popular choice. Weaker answers had two characteristics: Either they gave insufficient attention to the 'personal popularity' of Mussolini; or they were excessively descriptive of events, without explaining how that linked to the question. Both of these approaches weakened the balance of the answer and the overall judgement.

Stronger answers used a variety of approaches to support the role of 'personal popularity'. The Cult of the Duce is widely known, which was developed by comparison with the tarnished image of the traditional politicians. Mussolini's policies were also regarded as popular, especially foreign and economic policy in the early 1920s. It was encouraging to see students exploring how these factors worked together to consolidate the regime. A common mistake was that Mussolini 'banned contraception', which did not happen until the Battle for Births in 1927.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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