



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **AS History 1041**

## **Unit 2: HIS2J**

### **Britain and Appeasement, 1919–1940**

# **Mark Scheme**

*2009 examination – January series*

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the candidates' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of candidates' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of candidates' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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## Generic Introduction for AS

The AS History specification is based on the assessment objectives laid down in QCA's GCE History subject criteria and published in the AQA specification booklet. These cover the skills, knowledge and understanding which are expected of A Level candidates. Most questions address more than one objective since historical skills, which include knowledge and understanding, are usually deployed together. Consequently, the marking scheme which follows is a 'levels of response' scheme and assesses candidates' historical skills in the context of their knowledge and understanding of History.

The levels of response are a graduated recognition of how candidates have demonstrated their abilities in the Assessment Objectives. Candidates who predominantly address AO1(a) by writing narrative or description will perform at Level 1 or Level 2 depending on its relevance. Candidates who provide more explanation – (AO1(b), supported by the relevant selection of material, AO1(a)) – will perform at high Level 2 or low-mid Level 3 depending on how explicit they are in their response to the question. Candidates who provide explanation with evaluation, judgement and an awareness of historical interpretations will be addressing all 3 AOs (AO1(a); AO1(b); AO2(a) and (b) and will have access to the higher mark ranges. AO2(a) which requires the evaluation of source material is assessed in Unit 2.

Differentiation between Levels 3, 4 and 5 is judged according to the extent to which candidates meet this range of assessment objectives. At Level 3 the answers will show more characteristics of the AO1 objectives, although there should be elements of AO2. At Level 4, AO2 criteria, particularly an understanding of how the past has been interpreted, will be more in evidence and this will be even more dominant at Level 5. The demands on written communication, particularly the organisation of ideas and the use of specialist vocabulary also increase through the various levels so that a candidate performing at the highest AS level is already well prepared for the demands of A2.

## **CRITERIA FOR MARKING GCE HISTORY:**

### ***AS EXAMINATION PAPERS***

#### **General Guidance for Examiners (to accompany Level Descriptors)**

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##### **Deciding on a level and the award of marks within a level**

It is of vital importance that examiners familiarise themselves with the generic mark scheme and apply it consistently, as directed by the Principal Examiner, in order to facilitate comparability across options.

The indicative mark scheme for each paper is designed to illustrate some of the material that candidates might refer to (knowledge) and some of the approaches and ideas they might develop (skills). It is not, however, prescriptive and should only be used to exemplify the generic mark scheme.

When applying the generic mark scheme, examiners will constantly need to exercise judgement to decide which level fits an answer best. Few essays will display all the characteristics of a level, so deciding the most appropriate will always be the first task.

Each level has a range of marks and for an essay which has a strong correlation with the level descriptors the middle mark should be given. However, when an answer has some of the characteristics of the level above or below, or seems stronger or weaker on comparison with many other candidates' responses to the same question, the mark will need to be adjusted up or down.

When deciding on the mark within a level, the following criteria should be considered *in relation to the level descriptors*. Candidates should never be doubly penalised. If a candidate with poor communication skills has been placed in Level 2, he or she should not be moved to the bottom of the level on the basis of the poor quality of written communication. On the other hand, a candidate with similarly poor skills, whose work otherwise matched the criteria for Level 4 should be adjusted downwards within the level.

Criteria for deciding marks within a level:

- The accuracy of factual information
- The level of detail
- The depth and precision displayed
- The quality of links and arguments
- The quality of written communication (grammar, spelling, punctuation and legibility; an appropriate form and style of writing; clear and coherent organisation of ideas, including the use of specialist vocabulary)
- Appropriate references to historical interpretation and debate
- The conclusion

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January 2009

**GCE AS History Unit 2: Historical Issues: Periods of Change**

**HIS2J: Britain and Appeasement, 1919–1940**

**Question 1**

- (a) Use **Sources A** and **B** and your own knowledge.

Explain how far the views in **Source B** differ from those in **Source A** in relation to the Munich Agreement of September 1938. (12 marks)

*Target: AO2(a)*

- L1:** Answers will **either** briefly paraphrase/describe the content of the two sources **or** identify simple comparison(s) between the sources. Skills of written communication will be weak. **0-2**
- L2:** Responses will compare the views expressed in the two sources and identify some differences and/or similarities. There may be some limited own knowledge. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed. **3-6**
- L3:** Responses will compare the views expressed in the two sources, identifying differences **and** similarities and using own knowledge to explain and evaluate these. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed. **7-9**
- L4** Responses will make a developed comparison between the views expressed in the two sources and will apply own knowledge to evaluate and to demonstrate a good contextual understanding. Answers will, for the most part, show good skills of written communication. **10-12**

**Indicative content**

**Source A:**

- firstly it gives reasons why Chamberlain regarded the Agreement as a ‘victory’: war was avoided; Germany was satisfied about ‘legitimate grievances’; Czechoslovakia was preserved
- secondly it describes Chamberlain’s (and Daladier’s) popularity owing to this ‘triumph’
- thirdly it points out that only a minority shared Churchill’s view.

The view given in **Source B** is that of Churchill using his own words. It differs from the view in **Source A:**

- he spoke of ‘total and unmitigated defeat’
- he referred by analogy to Chamberlain giving Hitler what he wanted by increasingly making concessions in the three meetings between the two in September 1938
- he acknowledged the need for diplomatic relations with Germany, but stated that there could never be ‘friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi power’.

The sources therefore differ sharply overall in that **Source A** gives the view of both Chamberlain and British public opinion at the time of the Munich Agreement, whereas **Source B** contains Churchill's condemnation. The differences should be indicated in detail, for example citing the two views of what was the outcome for Czechoslovakia, as well as giving a judgement on the overall disagreement of the sources.

**Source A**, however, does mention Churchill's strong condemnation, thus providing a similarity with the whole content of **Source B**, though the latter does not indicate of course that Churchill's view was that of a minority as pointed out in **Source A**.

**Source B** is a primary source giving Churchill's views directly whereas **Source A** is secondary but nevertheless provides a clear and justified analysis of views at the time. Answers should utilise some own knowledge to place the comparison of the two sources in context.

- (b) Use **Sources A, B and C** and your own knowledge.

How far did events between March and September 1939 demonstrate that the Munich Agreement had been a ‘total and unmitigated disaster’?

(24 marks)

*Target: AO1(b), AO2(a), AO2(b)*

- L1:** Answers may be based on sources or on own knowledge alone, or they may comprise an undeveloped mixture of the two. They may contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question or they may address only a part of the question. Alternatively, there may be some explicit comment with little, if any, appropriate support. Answers are likely to be generalised and assertive. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers may be based on sources or on own knowledge alone, or they may contain a mixture of the two. They may be almost entirely descriptive with few explicit links to the focus of the question. Alternatively, they may contain some explicit comment with relevant but limited support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-11**
- L3:** Answers will show a developed understanding of the demands of the question using evidence from **both** the sources **and** own knowledge. They will provide some assessment backed by relevant and appropriately selected evidence, but they will lack depth and/or balance. There will be some understanding of varying historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material. **12-16**
- L4:** Answers will show explicit understanding of the demands of the question. They will develop a balanced argument backed by a good range of appropriately selected evidence from the sources and own knowledge, and a good understanding of historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, show organisation and good skills of written communication. **17-21**
- L5:** Answers will be well-focused and closely argued. The arguments will be supported by precisely selected evidence from the sources and own knowledge, incorporating well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate. Answers will, for the most part, be carefully organised and fluently written, using appropriate vocabulary. **22-24**

### Indicative content

Responses should make an assessment of the events from March to September 1939 (less than one year after Munich) and in light of the agreement. There should be balance in views, for example between that of Munich avoiding war and at least giving Britain some time for war preparation with the view that appeasement encouraged Hitler’s aggressive policies.

Relevant information is given in the sources:

- **Source A** records the view that Chamberlain and most in Britain regarded Munich as a genuine ‘triumph’ bringing ‘peace in our time’

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- Churchill's view given by him in **Source B** contains his opposition to the Munich Agreement, but does not indicate explicitly that he believed there would be further aggression, or war to be inevitable
  - the interpretation given in **Source C** does take the view that Chamberlain was mistaken in trusting Hitler, that war was inevitable and that neither appeasement, nor by implication a stronger policy of resistance to Hitler, could have prevented his expansionist policy. There is specific reference to the conquest of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. **Source C** begins by raising the issue of Chamberlain's justification of Munich by giving Britain (and France) 'ample time to rearm' and answers this question at the end of the passage by asserting that neither country rearmed adequately.

Own knowledge should be used to assess how far the apogee of appeasement policy over the Sudetenland Crisis preserved peace, obviously not 'in our time', but provided a year in which Britain could prepare further for war. It should also be used to assess how far Munich encouraged, or gave further opportunities to Hitler in his aggressive policies. Relevant points include the following:

- despite 'peace in our time' Chamberlain did step up the rate of rearmament after Munich
- This was increased even more rapidly after the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and then of Memel
- the conquest of Czechoslovakia did change public opinion in Britain and to an extent the view of Chamberlain about appeasement and Munich. No longer could Hitler claim he was only interested in uniting Germans into the Reich
- Hitler's propaganda campaign over Danzig, for the return of the 'Corridor' to Germany and finally the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 seemed to indicate with hindsight that whatever the short term advantages, Munich had been a disaster and had encouraged Hitler to view Britain (and France) as weak and to commit further 'acts of aggression' even though the extent of the disaster being 'total and unmitigated' can be debated
- noticeably Chamberlain was still offering Hitler a way out of war with Britain through the wording of the ultimatum over the invasion of Poland.

Answers should provide balanced arguments whatever the conclusion.



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**Question 2**

- (a) Explain why Britain was a strong supporter of the Locarno Treaties (1925). (12 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b)*

- L1:** Answers will contain either some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question or some explicit comment with little, if any, appropriate support. Answers are likely to be generalised and assertive. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-2**
- L2:** Answers will demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be almost entirely descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they will provide some explanations backed by evidence that is limited in range and/or depth. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **3-6**
- L3:** Answers will demonstrate good understanding of the demands of the question providing relevant explanations backed by appropriately selected information, although this may not be full or comprehensive. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material. **7-9**
- L4:** Answers will be well-focused, identifying a range of specific explanations, backed by precise evidence and demonstrating good understanding of the connections and links between events/issues. Answers will, for the most part, be well-written and organised. **10-12**

**Indicative content**

There may be background material, especially in stronger responses on British policy, on relations with Germany and the maintenance of European peace after 1918. This may include reference to some of the following:

- context of the overall development from the harsh treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles to the objective of maintenance of permanent European Peace, to which the rehabilitation of and accommodation with Germany were central
- the Versailles Treaty (the Diktat) imposed upon the new German Republic
- from 1919–23 bedevilment of Anglo-French relations by disagreement on how to treat Germany. France was determined to punish and make Germany pay for the cost of war despite a compromise being achieved by the allies in 1921 over the amount of reparations payable
- British governments under Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Baldwin and especially MacDonald took a more conciliatory line and understood Keynes's view that a permanently crippled Germany, especially economically, would hinder, if not prevent, the recovery of the whole post-war European economies
- the Labour governments important role in getting the French and Belgians to agree to withdraw from the Ruhr and in particular getting them, as well as the Germans, to agree to the revised scheme of reparations' payments under the Dawes Plan. That Plan acted as a springboard for further reconciliation and determination to establish a permanent peace
- variation in British support for working through the League between its establishment in 1920 and 1924 with the Labour government, and MacDonald in particular as Foreign Secretary, as well as Prime Minister, being more supportive

- though the Conservative government from late 1924 abandoned MacDonald's 'Geneva Protocol', Baldwin and especially Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain appreciated that Weimar Germany was democratic, wished to participate as a 'European partner' and that Gustav Stresemann was genuinely seeking reconciliation and permanent European peace.

However, the main focus of responses should be on the Locarno Treaties themselves and particularly on the most significant one. The discussions at Locarno in the autumn of 1925 marked the most important landmark in reconciliation since the end of the First World War. Reasons for Britain's strong support included the following:

- Chamberlain was an enthusiastic supporter and Britain acted (together with Italy) as the guarantor of the main Locarno Treaty signed between Germany, France and Belgium
- in 1919 the territorial settlement of the loss of the land, principally Alsace-Lorraine and the permanent demilitarisation of the Rhineland, had been enforced upon Germany. At Locarno the British government believed that Germany now accepted voluntarily that these arrangements were permanent. Britain guaranteed the frontiers
- Chamberlain, together with Briand and Stresemann, wanted genuine reconciliation and as a further gesture of goodwill agreed the early admission of Germany to the League of Nations
- Locarno agreements and the 'spirit of Locarno' were at the centre of European reconciliation and objective of maintaining a genuine peace. These led to other positive moves for peace after 1925.

There were shortcomings which stronger responses may comment on:

- critics included Winston Churchill, though as Chancellor at the time his views were muted
- there was no 'eastern Locarno treaty' over Germany's borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia as even Stresemann could not commit himself to permanent acceptance of German loss of territories in the east in 1918–1919.

At the time this (and other shortcomings) was overlooked to celebrate what to some including the British government, believed to be a justification for British policy of securing peace and perhaps the real end of the tensions continuing from the war.

- (b) 'In the years 1926 to 1931 Britain's foreign policy was based on unrealistic hopes for international disarmament.'  
Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b), AO2(b)*

- L1:** Answers may **either** contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question **or** they may address only a limited part of the period of the question. Alternatively, there may be some explicit comment with little, if any, appropriate support. Answers are likely to be generalised and assertive. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers will show some understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be almost entirely descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they may contain some explicit comment with relevant but limited support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-11**
- L3:** Answers will show a developed understanding of the demands of the question. They will provide some assessment, backed by relevant and appropriately selected evidence, but they will lack depth and/or balance. There will be some understanding of varying historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material. **12-16**
- L4:** Answers will show explicit understanding of the demands of the question. They will develop a balanced argument backed by a good range of appropriately selected evidence and a good understanding of historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, show organisation and good skills of written communication. **17-21**
- L5:** Answers will be well-focused and closely argued. The arguments will be supported by precisely selected evidence leading to a relevant conclusion/judgement, incorporating well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate. Answers will, for the most part, be carefully organised and fluently written, using appropriate vocabulary. **22-24**

### Indicative content

These were the years of the operation of the 'spirit of Locarno' when hopes were high for implementation of disarmament in accordance with the aims of the League of Nations. The defeated powers and in particular Germany had been disarmed under the Peace Treaties following the First World War. The years 1926–1929 saw further close co-operation between Britain and Germany in terms of reconciliation and effective British disarmament based on the view that Germany was no longer a threat to European peace. Points which may be made to disagree with the view in the quotation include the following:

- Britain worked through the League of Nations and the triumvirate of foreign ministers, Chamberlain, Stresemann and Briand to promote real disarmament
- in 1926 in a further gesture of goodwill, Britain withdrew her forces from Cologne (though allied forces remained in occupation of the rest of Rhineland). In the same year Germany was admitted, with British support, into the League
- the continued disarmament and 'Ten Year Rule' in Britain

- the main advance in international relations during this period of 'Locarno spirit' was the Kellogg- Briand (Paris) Pact in 1928. Though initiated by the USA and France, it was enthusiastically supported by Chamberlain (and most members of the League) in the strongest development to date to 'outlaw war' and ensure a war like the Great War never happened again
- as a further result all British troops left the Rhineland in 1929 (and French troops in 1930), well ahead of the Versailles Treaty date of 1935. Britain trusted the disarmed Germany to abide by the Versailles–and Locarno–Treaties to keep the Rhineland demilitarised
- both Conservative and Labour governments in Britain played their part in the 'beginning of a better age'. The positive attitudes stemming from Locarno and 'Kellogg-Briand' continued with the planning by a (League initiated) preparatory commission from 1925 for a World Disarmament Conference. Germany had been particularly keen to promote this given her enforced disarmament under the Versailles Treaty. Henderson was more enthusiastic than Chamberlain though throughout Britain played a leading role and indeed Henderson was chairman of the Conference when it finally got underway in 1931.

Ten years after the end of the First World War it appeared that the powers including Britain and Germany had managed to create a Europe (and world) free from the scourge of War.

Points which may be made to agree with the view in the quotation that British policy was based on unrealistic hopes include the following:

- the Kellogg-Briand Pact actually contained no specific proposals for disarmament
- historiography has cast some doubt on Stresemann's longer term 'peaceful' and 'European' intentions, and the extent to which Germany complied in spirit and practice with the disarmament clauses of Versailles
- Stresemann's death and the onset of world depression following the Wall Street Crash in 1929 produced new problems of relations between Britain and Germany
- the World Disarmament Conference was undermined by the biting of depression with individual national economic (and political) crises developing
- disarmament was a key factor in preserving permanent peace and in some ways acted as a smokescreen for events during the 1930s, beginning with the failure to take action against Japanese aggression in the Far East.

Responses should achieve a balanced view, but overall international disarmament did take place in the context of clear progress in improving European relations generally during the years 1926–1931. Britain no longer regarded Germany as a threat to European peace, and even with the beginnings of economic and political turmoil in the Weimar Republic from 1929 there was continued progress made by Arthur Henderson as foreign Secretary in the Labour government of 1929–1931 and his German counterparts in setting up the World Disarmament Conference. During the period, British policy with regard to the hopes for international disarmament can be said to have been realistic. The aggression (with massive armaments) by Japan had only just begun. Italy was still a reasonably co-operative member of the League and the aggression of Nazi Germany was quite unforeseen.

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**Question 3**

- (a) Explain why Britain took no effective action in the years 1931 to 1933 over the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. (12 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b)*

- L1:** Answers will contain either some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question or some explicit comment with little, if any, appropriate support. Answers are likely to be generalised and assertive. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-2**
- L2:** Answers will demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be almost entirely descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they will provide some explanations backed by evidence that is limited in range and/or depth. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **3-6**
- L3:** Answers will demonstrate good understanding of the demands of the question providing relevant explanations backed by appropriately selected information, although this may not be full or comprehensive. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material. **7-9**
- L4:** Answers will be well-focused, identifying a range of specific explanations, backed by precise evidence and demonstrating good understanding of the connections and links between events/issues. Answers will, for the most part, be well-written and organised. **10-12**

**Indicative content**

The 'peaceful world' of the previous decade ended suddenly in September 1931 when Japan invaded Chinese held Manchuria. Reasons why Britain took no effective action included the following:

- it happened at a time when Britain was heavily involved in preparations for the Geneva Disarmament Conference and in a context of hope from the Locarno Treaties and Kellogg-Briand Pact, and when the general mood was opposed to, and even had hatred, for war
- the financial and political crises leading to the fall of the second Labour Government had just taken place. MacDonald, who remained as Prime Minister, was still a pacifist as indeed was the new leader of the opposition Labour Party, George Lansbury
- the governments of the early 1930s were preoccupied with Britain's economic and financial problems. Disarmament helped the policy of the National Government in cutting public expenditure. War, or even limited military action in the Far East, would have been expensive
- the unrest in India was of more significance for Britain's imperial interests, despite her economic interests in the Far East generally, China in particular and in her colony in Hong Kong
- Manchuria was a long way away from Britain, home waters and Europe
- Britain under her foreign Secretaries, the frail Rufus Isaacs and then Sir John Simon, were not prepared to take positive action against this sudden act of aggression by Japan and, like the other powers, put their faith in collective security through the League of Nations

- the League's response to the Japanese aggression was to send a commission of enquiry under the leadership of the British Lord Lytton. He did not produce his report until the end of 1932. It acknowledged that before the invasion the Chinese had mistreated some Japanese property in Manchuria, but this was no excuse for the invasion which was unreservedly condemned. However Lytton made no proposals for action to be taken against Japan, not even economic sanctions under the League's Covenant, let alone military action. Britain took the leading role in urging full acceptance of the report by the League and the powers.

Japan was thereby left in possession of Manchuria, which she later used as her base for the invasion of China itself. The Invasion of Manchuria had been successful for Japan with the League seemingly ineffective in combating aggression (through a policy of collective security) and Britain (like the other powers with interests in the Far East) unwilling to take action.

- (b) 'Britain's attempt to appease Mussolini over his invasion of Abyssinia was a grave mistake.'  
Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

*Target: AO1(a), AO1(b), AO2(b)*

- L1:** Answers may **either** contain some descriptive material which is only loosely linked to the focus of the question **or** they may address only a limited part of the period of the question. Alternatively, there may be some explicit comment with little, if any, appropriate support. Answers are likely to be generalised and assertive. There will be little, if any, awareness of differing historical interpretations. The response will be limited in development and skills of written communication will be weak. **0-6**
- L2:** Answers will show some understanding of the demands of the question. They will **either** be almost entirely descriptive with few explicit links to the question **or** they may contain some explicit comment with relevant but limited support. They will display limited understanding of differing historical interpretations. Answers will be coherent but weakly expressed and/or poorly structured. **7-11**
- L3:** Answers will show a developed understanding of the demands of the question. They will provide some assessment, backed by relevant and appropriately selected evidence, but they will lack depth and/or balance. There will be some understanding of varying historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material. **12-16**
- L4:** Answers will show explicit understanding of the demands of the question. They will develop a balanced argument backed by a good range of appropriately selected evidence and a good understanding of historical interpretations. Answers will, for the most part, show organisation and good skills of written communication. **17-21**
- L5:** Answers will be well-focused and closely argued. The arguments will be supported by precisely selected evidence leading to a relevant conclusion/judgement, incorporating well-developed understanding of historical interpretations and debate. Answers will, for the most part, be carefully organised and fluently written, using appropriate vocabulary. **22-24**

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## Indicative content

There should be some contextual material on relations between Britain and Mussolini's Italy before 1935. This should be related to demonstrating why the attempt to appease Mussolini over the invasion of Abyssinia was not a grave mistake in intention but made in the context of maintaining good relations between the two countries and a united front against Hitler's Germany. Some of the following may be briefly and relevantly referred to:

- despite Italy's dissatisfaction, and that of Mussolini in particular, with the post-war peace treaties, relations between Britain (and also France) and Fascist Italy were generally amicable before the invasion of Abyssinia. The countries had been allies in the First World War
- throughout the 1920s Britain regarded Italy as a generally supportive member of the League of Nations and both countries supported collective security. Many in Britain, including Conservative politicians, saw Mussolini as having ended the anarchy in Italy and as a strong opponent of communism
- there was sympathy for Italy's imperial position and a piece of British Somaliland was actually transferred to Italy in 1925 to add to its African Empire (of Italian Somaliland, Eritrea and Tripoli)
- even at the beginning of the 1930s with Mussolini's clearer intentions about the Mediterranean being 'Mare Nostrum' and designs on the independent Abyssinia, relations remained generally good
- with the threat of a revived and rearmed Germany under Hitler, it was Italy that took the lead in developing the relationship to bring Britain (and France) closer together to oppose Hitler's breaking of the Versailles Treaty. Indeed it was Italy which prevented the Nazi takeover of Austria in Austria 1934, an Italian move supported diplomatically by Britain. It was Mussolini who initiated the Stresa Front of Italy, Britain and France in April 1935 to oppose the common German threat and in particular prevent further German rearmament.

Relations between Britain and Italy were therefore positive and co-operative before the invasion of Abyssinia. Mussolini himself was to proclaim later that he made his intentions about Abyssinia quite clear at the time of the Stresa conference, but that Britain and France made no objections, a signal to him that he could go ahead.

Relevant points and material that the attempt to appease Mussolini over the invasion of Abyssinia was a grave mistake in terms of preserving good and close relations between the two states include the following:

- though committing itself to the Stresa Front, Britain had already undermined the relationship with Italy by direct negotiations with Germany over the Anglo-German Naval Treaty finalised in June 1935, an act which significantly strained the relationship and trust established at Stresa
- the new Foreign Secretary (from June 1935), Sir Samuel Hoare, did then work hard diplomatically to keep Mussolini and Italy on the side of Britain (and France) as a very useful ally in relation to Germany's rearming and the increasingly threatening speeches and policies of Hitler. The countries worked together both in the League and bilaterally. However, despite the efforts of Hoare, the relationship eventually collapsed over the Italian invasion and conquest of Abyssinia
- it had been clear for a considerable time that Mussolini had been looking to extend the Italian Empire in east Africa by incorporating Abyssinia, one of the only two independent states in the African continent, and to avenge Italy's defeat at Adowa in 1896. He believed that even if he had not been encouraged to invade by the close co-operation at

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- Stresa, at the very least Britain (and France) were not going to object to his colonial adventure to give Italy a gain of the kind denied to her in Paris in 1919
- Abyssinia, however, was a member of the League of Nations, which responded to the Italian invasion in October 1935 more quickly than it had to Japan's aggression in the Far East
  - economic sanctions were imposed, but Britain in its attempt to appease Italy strongly supported the exclusion of oil and kept open the Suez Canal to Italian shipping, which meant that the Italian war effort was not seriously hampered
  - Hoare was anxious to keep Italy as an 'ally' against Hitler (in the 'spirit of Stresa') and at the very least friendly maintain relations despite the Abyssinian problem. Hitler's foreign policy was beginning to develop in a dangerous way. Hoare therefore worked together with Laval, the French Foreign Minister, to make concessions to Mussolini over Abyssinia in order to keep Italy on side against Germany
  - in December 1935 the 'Hoare-Laval Plan' proposed giving extensive territorial and economic rights in Abyssinia and, in practice, about two-thirds of Abyssinia to Italy. When details were leaked in Britain, there was very strong protest (out of line with the usual political and public support of appeasement). Cinema newsreels had shown the devastation heaped upon defenceless African villages by Italian aircraft and flame-throwers. Largely as a result of public and press opinion the government abandoned the plan to appease Mussolini and Hoare resigned. The government's efforts to maintain good relations with Italy had brought fierce criticism which continued with the completion of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia by May 1936
  - meanwhile Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland in March. The British public seemed to be demanding stronger action against the act of aggression by Italy than that of Hitler
  - following Hoare's resignation Britain supported the League's position in condemning the Italian invasion and refusing to recognise the conquest, a position which infuriated Mussolini and ended any possibility of Italy remaining as an ally against Germany's foreign policy. The attempt at appeasement had failed.

The handling of the whole Abyssinian Crisis by Britain can be construed as well-intentioned in the aim of retaining a united front against Hitler, but was unsuccessful and achieved the reverse of its intentions by driving Mussolini towards Germany despite the Italian dictator's concerns over Hitler's plans for Austria. Britain was helpless to stop the signing of the Rome-Berlin Axis in November 1936. Quite clearly the British government's attempt to appease Mussolini over Abyssinia backfired. Arguably it was a crucial step on the road to eventual European war. Military action by Britain (and France) in 1935 might have deterred Italy, strengthened the League and discouraged Hitler from his later acts of aggression. On the other hand Italy was militarily relatively strong in 1935 (as the British Admiralty perceived). War at the time could have equally forced Mussolini into the arms of Hitler just as actual events did. The whole Abyssinian affair did at least lead to a clear alignment of the two aggressive European powers as opposed to the leading democracies of Britain and France.