



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1J

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Unit HIS1J

Unit 1J: The Development of Germany, 1871–1925

General Comments

The paper proved to be an effective discriminator as a very broad range of candidate responses was seen. It is pleasing to note that the overall quality of scripts was better than in January as candidates and centres familiarise themselves with the format of the new AS examination. There were fewer timing issues and the vast majority of candidates completed two questions. However, the second part (b) question (02, 04, 06) often suffered in length and quality due to the unnecessarily lengthy responses to the part (a) questions (01, 03, 05). It is worth noting that part (b) questions are worth twice as many marks as part (a) and should therefore be substantially longer. In order to achieve Level 4 for part (b) responses answers should be balanced with a 'good range of appropriately selected evidence'; this was unachievable for many due to the brevity of their answers. Effective part (a) responses were often less than a side long. They clearly identified reasons why and often had thematic division, e.g. economic factors, political factors, short-term factors, trigger events etc. Candidates still have an aversion to dates and many had a lack of secure understanding of chronology. This often had an adverse impact on their answers (see comments to individual questions below). There was clear evidence that some centres had not read the specification carefully enough. For instance, Bismarck's foreign policy is not part of the specification. There were only two rubric infringements where candidates answered all three questions. Question 1 was the most popular followed by Question 3, with Question 2 being the least popular.

Question 1

- 01** A significant number of responses which secured Level 3 and above. There was often a clear understanding of some of the reasons why Bismarck introduced the anti-socialist laws. However, a common error was to overstate the level of support of the SPD in the Reichstag by 1878, and a great variety of the number of seats secured was conjured up. Weaker responses referred to Bismarck's fear of socialism and the threat socialism posed but failed to explain why. These types of responses were limited to Level 2. Some very confused candidates referred to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the Spartacist uprising in Berlin as reasons for the imposition of the 1878 anti-socialist laws – a clear case of flimsy chronology impacting upon achievement.
- 02** There were a number of pleasing responses which were able to balance Bismarck's successes against his failures between 1878 and 1890. However, a significant number of weaker candidates failed to focus on the key dates of the question and failed to really get beyond 1878. Descriptive narratives of the Kulturkampf were not useful in this instance.

The specification clearly states the following:

- Political struggles after 1878, including the Anti-Socialist Law and State Socialism.
- Bismarck's relations with the Kaiser and Reichstag.

Therefore, questions will continue to be set on Bismarck's attempts to maintain political dominance throughout the 1880s. Many candidates understood that 1888 was a key turning point with the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I, but few could illustrate precisely why Bismarck had such a good working relationship with him.

Question 2

- 03** The issue of economic change within Germany is a key focus of the specification and is covered by two bullet points, one relating to the period 1871 to 1890 and the other relating to 1890 to 1914. Therefore all centres must ensure that their candidates are able to distinguish between these two periods successfully. Many answers were unable to achieve level 3 because they were not specific to the precise period within the question, yet another case of poor chronology hindering candidate performance. These types of responses were often worthy and quite detailed in respect to German industrialisation, but were focused on the period 1871 onwards through references to the Franco-Prussian war, Germany's natural resources and Bismarck's tariffs. These types of responses were treated as understanding the long term causes for rapid industrialisation post-1890, but obviously lacking the range and depth of understanding for the specific question being asked.
- 04** It is very pleasing to note that the higher level responses to this question clearly understood the difference between the real and perceived threat of socialism to the political stability of Germany in the period 1890 to 1914. The socialist threat was often ranged against a secure number of other factors which challenged the political stability of Germany more, such as the actions of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the nature of the conservative reaction to the socialists. Weaker answers tended to describe the actions of the Chancellors with limited links to the issue of political stability. Some candidates had a very confused chronology and referred to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the 1919 Spartacist uprising in Berlin. Others looked only at the impact of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws, often regurgitating material that they had used to answer Question 1. It cannot be stated clearly enough that the key dates of the question must be observed in order to build a relevant case. Weaker candidates in general did not understand the willingness of the SPD to work within the democratic system despite its revolutionary stance taken at Erfurt in 1891.

Question 3

- 05** Candidates in general tended to be more secure on the revolution from above, and the moves of the elite to secure their own future. Most were able to write with some focus about the devastating impact of the war on Germany; less secure were the links to the Kaiser's abdication. Some candidates were determined to explain the Kaiser's abdication through reference to the Daily Telegraph affair of 1908, an event which preceded his abdication by a decade. Answers were less secure about the revolution from below. A key chronological misunderstanding was that the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles and the imposition of reparations led to the Kaiser's abdication.
- 06** Responses to this question were often very disappointing in their quality and understanding. A significant number did not have any reference to the Weimar constitution and misread the term, producing responses which looked loosely at the Weimar government. The general lack of knowledge from a significant number of candidates about the constitution of the Weimar Republic, and the impact it may have had on government, was disconcerting considering that it is a bullet point in the Specification:
- The constitution of the new Republic, its strengths and weaknesses.

Weaker responses tended to describe the incident of political instability which faced the Weimar Republic in the period 1919 to 1923, without analysing causation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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