



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2J

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Unit HIS2J

Unit 2J: Britain and Appeasement, 1919–1940

General Comments

Although a paper had been set for January 2009, there were no candidates entered so this was in effect the first sitting of an examination for Unit HIS2J of the new History Specification. Most candidates found the time allowed of one and a half hours adequate for studying the compulsory 'sources' question and responding to it, and then answering their choice of a second question. Some candidates, however, did spend rather too much time on answering Question 01 and in some cases the other first part of questions to the detriment of their responses to the second part of questions which carried twice as many marks, 24 maximum compared with 12 for the first part of questions. A few candidates did run out of time, usually when finishing the final second part answer, though in the main this was confined to otherwise good scripts where candidates had quite extensive knowledge and wished to impart it, mostly in relation to the questions actually on the paper rather than simply for the sake of it. There were also a few candidates who answered a question, or both, in 'reverse', that is the second part question then the first part of the question. This inevitably led to difficulties in Question 1 where little or no attention was paid to the sources in answering the second part of the question.

Marks awarded to individual candidates ranged from the maximum of 72 to those in single figures. Scripts which achieved high marks, or indeed individual responses with marks awarded in Levels 4 or 5 (according to the Mark Scheme), received them because they addressed the assessment objectives of the History Specification in relation to this Study in Depth of Britain and Appeasement. They analysed, evaluated and used effectively the sources in Question 1 within part questions demanding responses to specific issues and overall in their answers deployed knowledge relevantly, communicated their understanding, analysed and had conceptual awareness. Answers which received the lowest marks almost always displayed very little knowledge, or were confused, or generalised, or in Question 1 misunderstood the content of sources. The level of knowledge for this Study in Depth was limited for some candidates. For example, a few believed that Neville Chamberlain was Prime Minister from 1935 in answering Question 02, or wrote about events in the 1930s rather than those of the 1920s in responding to Question 04. The most common mistake, made by a whole range of candidates, not just the weakest, in answering Question 02 was to write about the Sudeten crisis when the question quite deliberately stopped in March 1938 (to avoid overlap with Question 3). On the whole the relative standard of answers to the first 'explaining' part of questions was higher than that to the second part essay questions.

Overall the paper was accessible to most candidates. All scripts were marked in accordance with the Mark Scheme. There was a fairly even level of performance in responses to all three questions. Question 2 was far more popular than Question 3. This was something of a surprise as Question 3 was about Munich and the following period to the end of the chronological period of the Specification, central topics in considering British appeasement policy (and how it changed). On the other hand it was a question which covered topics towards the chronological end of the Specification. Quality of Written Communication was generally satisfactory, although those whose grammar was poor penalised themselves by producing unclear or ambiguous statements. The worst spelling mistakes of proper nouns were of those which actually appeared on the paper, namely 'Abyssinia' and 'Chamberlain'. Fewer misspelt 'Versailles'. Some gave different spellings of these words as answers proceeded. 'Mussolini' also proved

difficult for a few even though the dictator's name was featured prominently in the sources of Question 1. Some candidates used the word 'where' when they meant 'were', and there was confusion also between 'there' and 'their'. 'Alot' and 'infact' appeared too frequently in the responses of some candidates. In explaining causation the phrase 'this was down to' was used too often and implied in some cases a lack of understanding of the complexity of issues. Whereas strong responses could make arguments confidently, weaker ones implied uncertainty, undue caution, or lack of conviction by using phrases such as 'a reason could have been', or 'it may have been because...'.

Question 1

Question 01

Overall this question was answered quite effectively with about 75 per cent of responses being awarded marks of 7 and above. Candidates were expected to detect differences, similarity and use a context of own knowledge in comparing the two sources about Britain's response to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. It was certainly possible to be awarded marks in Level 3 if two of those aspects were present in an answer. However, a significant number of responses were awarded marks in Level 2 because both similarity of the sources and own knowledge were absent. Finding similarity proved to be the most difficult aspect of the question, but many did understand that both sources recognised the weakness of measures applied against Italy and/or the determination of Britain (and France) to avoid a breach in relations with Italy. The differences between the sources were of course sharper, although some weaker answers, at best in Level 2, argued that the sources agreed in their views. Most responses, however, saw that overall there were significant differences in that Source B gave a totally (biased) Ethiopian/Abyssinian explanation that Britain and France were not concerned to preserve Abyssinia's independence and decided not to take effective action nor to go to war with Italy. The Hoare-Laval Pact was condemned as unjust whereas Source A referred to it as attempting a 'negotiated settlement'. Overall, Source A gave a reasoned view for Britain's dual stance of working through the League of Nations to impose sanctions, but at the same time working bilaterally with France to preserve the Stresa Front and maintain good relations with Mussolini. Some of the best answers also pointed out differences in tone between the two sources as well as of content. There was relevant reference to the provenance of Source B.

Again stronger answers, especially those gaining marks in Level 4, pointed out that Source B made no reference to public opinion in Britain or the importance of it in a democracy whereas Source A saw it as an important factor especially in an election year in Britain. This element was often the springboard for using own knowledge contextually. Sound answers included relevant reference to, for example, the aims of the Stresa Front especially its concerns over German rearmament, the significance of the signing of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, or the broader issues surrounding Britain's developing appeasement policy.

Question 02

This question proved to be a little more difficult than anticipated, certainly in terms of candidates fulfilling all of its demands. A small minority ignored the sources, at least in not making any explicit use of them. Another minority did virtually the opposite and paraphrased each source, in some cases in turn, to the exclusion of any fair degree of own knowledge. Answers which relied just on own knowledge or just on material in the sources could not, according to the Mark Scheme, receive marks higher than in Level 2. Some candidates made use of Sources A and B, but ignored Source C when it should have been obvious that a source not part of Question 01 was clearly going to have relevance for Question 02. Indeed Source C did often act as a springboard, in sound answers, for the use of own knowledge and structure of the ensuing response. Most candidates did, however, utilise both their own knowledge and material from the sources. The best responses, in Levels 4 and 5, integrated relevant material (and usually in their cases from all three sources) rather than simply referring to it as something

which had to be done to fulfil the demands of the question. These responses also considered how the approach by Britain over the Abyssinian crisis and its consequences affected policy until March 1938. They saw the development of an appeasement policy especially in relation to German rearmament, the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss and the Spanish Civil War. Links with material in the sources with Britain's failure to stand up to Mussolini and the effective demise of the effectiveness of the League of Nations and collective security were made clear. There were two main weaknesses, however, in many responses and both appeared in some. One was virtually to ignore the 1935 to March 1938 period, a trait particularly prevalent in those responses which relied too heavily on the sources. The other was to ignore the terminal date and write at length about the Sudetenland Crisis in the summer and early autumn of 1938. A minority of candidates seemed to believe that Chamberlain was Prime Minister well before 1937.

Question 2

Question 03

More than 75 percent of candidates chose this optional question. Many may have been attracted by Question 03, but not all answered Question 04 as well. Overall Question 03 was probably the best answered on the paper. Most candidates were aware of the terms of the Treaty imposed upon Germany and many emphasised the point that it was a 'Diktat'. However, the better responses, gaining marks in Levels 3 and 4, connected the terms, for example the loss of territory and empire, disarmament and, above all, reparations payments directly with the resentment of Germans. Not many considered 'many' Germans to distinguish between different groups, but those who did, for example considering demobilised soldiers, right-wing nationalists, even Hitler, and the new leaders with whom Lloyd George and his Paris Conference allies had to deal in terms of presenting the Treaty, normally gained the highest marks. Other points made by sound responses included the view of Seaman that what the Germans resented most of all was that they were no longer the dominant people or power in continental Europe and that others, like the Slav nations, had been given at least parity compared with them. The minority of weaker responses, essentially those in Level 2 and the very small number in Level 1, tended to give some of the terms of the Treaty, but then made generalised statements about 'Germans', or 'Germany' being resentful and seeing the Treaty as imposed and therefore unfair. Some asserted that Germany had been treated unfairly because she (alone) did not start the War, though evidence or developed argument to support such a proposition was rarely provided by such answers.

Question 04

This part of Question 2 was not answered as successfully. Too many responses dealt in generalisations with little reference to key aspects or events concerning foreign policy during the 1920s. Some, whilst referring to some developments in the decade, made little connection with maintenance of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Again too many made a decision to write about a different decade, the 1930s, and how the terms of Versailles were not maintained but fell victim to Hitler's aggression. It is difficult to know why that choice was made, but possibly was due to misreading the question or having little knowledge of British policy during the 1920s. Those answers which were mostly irrelevant to the question received marks in Level 1. Those which had some relevant material with a little explicit comment on British policy gained marks in Level 2. Nevertheless, a majority of responses did gain marks in Level 3 or above. Only the very best of these analysed fully the changes in British policy, given the influence of the views of Keynes, reaction to Stresemann and the policy of 'fulfilment', and the desire to have agreements with the democratic Weimar Republic based on mutual understanding rather than just the imposition of Versailles. Such answers emphasised the last point by citing the Locarno agreements (though some noted the absence of an 'eastern Locarno'). They considered the work of Austen Chamberlain as well as Macdonald. Apart from Locarno other key developments such as Britain's role in setting up the Dawes and Young

Plans, the influence of France during the crisis of 1923, the admission of Germany to the League, the early withdrawal of some occupation troops, the Kellogg-Briand Pact and plans for the World Disarmament Conference were assessed in relation to British policy. Throughout this use of selective evidence was connected to the development of British foreign policy in terms of maintaining Versailles. Theses and conclusions were different, for example some arguing that by the changes made the original Treaty was not maintained, whilst others saw the changes, for example in reparations payments or agreement about Germany's western borders at Locarno, as ensuring that the Versailles Treaty was maintained. What was convincing was the quality of argument shown with support of relevant, clear and accurate selective evidence.

Question 3

Question 05

It was perhaps surprising that a question which was on topics central to a unit on 'Britain and Appeasement' was not more popular. However, for the minority which attempted this question, overall it proved to be slightly more difficult than Question 03. Nevertheless, there were some very good responses to Question 05 with a significant proportion gaining the maximum mark. They did so not only by looking at the particular issue of the Sudetenland crisis and with selective detail at Chamberlain's attempts to solve it particularly in Berchtesgaden and Bad Godesberg as well as through the final agreement in Munich, but also at the Prime Minister's overall policy of wishing to maintain European peace and his pursuit of active appeasement. Brief reference was made in some cases to his earlier (lack of) reaction to the Anschluss and/or the roles of Germany and Italy in the Spanish Civil War. Such excellent answers, and indeed others gaining marks in Level 4, showed good awareness of the debate over appeasement and Chamberlain's approach. Those responses which gained marks in Level 3 showed some knowledge and understanding of the reasons for Chamberlain agreeing the Munich Agreement, but these were limited either in range or depth. For example, some wrote quite convincingly about Chamberlain's dread of war and public fear that 'the bomber will always get through', though there was limited discussion or material on the Sudeten/Czech crisis. At Level 2 evidence was either very limited or answers were almost entirely descriptive of the crisis with little attempt to explain the reasons actually why Chamberlain was prepared to do his deal with Hitler. At both Levels 2 and 3 it was often argued that Chamberlain wanted to gain time or 'another year' for British rearmament, but evidence was not convincing especially in answers at the lower of those levels.

Question 06

This question was answered fairly successfully overall. Most candidates were able to provide some range of material in order to make an assessment about whether Chamberlain's policy was confused. Answers awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5 covered the whole period to Chamberlain's resignation in May 1940. Most argued the thesis that policy was confused in that Chamberlain continued to want to avoid war and preserve 'peace in our time' whilst preparing for it through stepping up rearmament and other measures such as plans for evacuation. They pointed out that Chamberlain failed to support (the relatively strong and democratic) Czechoslovakia, but gave assurances to Poland (and other states), which could not practically be defended by Britain, and failed to pursue seriously an agreement with the Soviet Union. Some of the very strong answers pointed out that Chamberlain and many Conservatives were still as worried by Stalin and communism as they were by Hitler and Nazi Germany. Most believed and provided supporting evidence that Chamberlain had no other realistic choice but to declare war on 3 September 1939, his appeasement policy clearly in ruins. Some indicated that he still gave Hitler a way out in the ultimatum if he withdrew from the Polish invasion. Again the very best answers argued that even after his Birmingham speech appeasement had really not been abandoned fully. These sound responses also covered the first months of the War while Chamberlain was still Prime Minister. Again the argument was that Chamberlain was confused, his leadership was poor and undermined by his appeasement record, and that he failed to take

the offensive allowing Norway to fall and for the Germans to take the initiative in the west by invading France. A few very sound answers did argue with evidence that Chamberlain's policy was not confused because he did abandon appeasement totally after the fall of Czechoslovakia and that what made him ineffective was his past record of appeasement and weakness in leadership rather than a confused policy. Many of the above features were evident in some answers which were awarded marks in Level 3, but the main flaw in such responses was to end at the outbreak of war in September 1939, hence not covering the full period of the question. This was also a feature of most answers awarded marks in Level 2, although the main deficiencies in these responses was lack of knowledge of events and policy. A few continued to write about Munich and others showed little awareness of events and policy in the period and in some cases knowledge of the order of events.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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