



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2K

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2K

Unit 2K: A New Roman Empire? Mussolini's Italy, 1922–1945

General Comments

The examination paper was a very effective discriminator as responses varied from the lowest to the highest levels. The length of answers was almost always appropriate to the marks allocated, although a significant number of candidates spent too much time on a lengthy paraphrase of the sources in Question 01. Only a minority of candidates failed to produce complete answers to all the four questions attempted. Many scripts continue to reflect an enthusiasm for the subject and an understanding of the main themes regarding Mussolini's Italy. However, as this is a depth study, it is expected that answers should be supported by accurate and precise supporting evidence, many were not. Candidates do need to use dates accurately to demonstrate a secure chronological understanding of events in Mussolini's Italy. This was critically important for responses to Questions 02 and 06. Question 2 was by far the most popular option, with two-thirds of candidates choosing to answer 03 and 04. Centres should note that the end date of this specification is April 1945 and that questions on Mussolini's downfall in July 1943 and again in April 1945 will continue to be set. The responses to Question 3 fell into two distinct categories, the awfully bad and the awfully good.

Question 1

01 The demands of the source comparison question continues to trouble a number of candidates who continue to paraphrase the source content. It is worth reiterating, once again, what the examiner is looking for. Candidates need to explicitly contrast the views of the sources and look for differences and similarities. A judgement about how far the sources differ should be made through reference to own knowledge. It is the views of the sources which should be considered, not the source content. Therefore responses which merely rephrased what Source A said and then what Source B said did not score highly.

However, many candidates did manage to secure Level 3 marks for their responses by highlighting the more negative tone of Source B to the more positive tone of Source A. Level 4 responses clearly understood that the negativity in Source B was due to the wider perspective on Mussolini's foreign policy.

There were a number of responses, once again, which were heavily based upon own knowledge. The purpose of Question 01 is to test a candidate's source interpretation skills, therefore responses which were based primarily on own knowledge did not score highly and were awarded low Level 2.

Once again there were responses which persisted with bland references to the origins of the sources. The most bizarre concluded that Source A was the most unreliable because it was a primary source written by Dino Grandi, Mussolini's Foreign Minister between 1929 and 1932 and as he was Italian and within government he had pro-fascist views. Needless to say these responses were inaccurate as Source A was written by De Grand in 2000; Dino Grandi died in 1988. In future it is worth stressing to candidates that primary sources are likely to reference at the top, whilst secondary sources have their references at the bottom.

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- 02** The responses to this question were generally quite pleasing. If there was a common downfall, it was that some candidates did not balance their responses well and put everything down to Mussolini's overconfidence shaping Italian foreign policy between 1936 and 1940. Weaker response failed to go much beyond the source material and scored Level 2 accordingly. Some responses, whilst being balanced, lacked the secure range of factual detail needed for Level 4 because they failed to link motivation for Mussolini's foreign policy to actual foreign policy events in the period. Others got bogged down in Abyssinia and Spain and did not look much beyond 1936. As always a minority of students underachieved because they failed to have any reference to the source material, consequently they were awarded no more than Level 2, 11 marks.

Question 2

- 03** The majority of candidates were awarded high Level 2 or low Level 3 for their responses. Unfortunately, a minority of students failed to attempt this question and others whose responses bore no relevance to reasons why the Aventine Secession took place. Most response clearly put the Aventine Secession into the context of the Matteotti Affair and the consequences of the 1924 elections. However, confused chronology was an issue which needs to be addressed; some candidates inaccurately believe that the 1924 election happened after the murder of Matteotti. Higher level responses referred to Matteotti being the trigger event and had longer term reasons such as the political undermining of the opposition. Whilst some responses were very detailed on the events of 1924 they descended into a detailed narrative, rather than an explicit explanation of causation. Another common feature was for candidates to lapse into describing why the Aventine Secession failed and the consequences of that failure. Candidates must read the question carefully and not fall into the trap of writing everything they know about an event. For the 12 mark 'why' questions, the examiner is looking for around three clearly developed reasons why an event happened, or law was passed, not a narrative account.
- 04** Responses to this question were often competent and the majority of candidates were awarded Level 3. Candidates were secure in their understanding of the methods and tactics Mussolini used to secure his power, however they often lapsed into description. Many responses lacked developed balance as they agreed that Mussolini's power was secure by 1929. Some candidates did not really address political power and focused on Mussolini's control of the economy and society, whilst these responses were relevant to a degree they were not secure on political control. What is worrying is that many candidates assume that Mussolini's political power was secured by as early as 1923 due to the Acerbo law (spelt in a variety of amusing ways). It is strongly advised that centres teach consolidation of power through an examination of the political obstacles Mussolini had to overcome, and that control of the Chamber of Deputies was not secured by the Acerbo law. Chronological confusion prevailed in responses to this question, the weakest responses failing to go much beyond January 1925. It does continue to surprise the examination team that some candidates can write an essay about consolidation of power with no reference to the regime's relationship with the Catholic Church and the importance of the 1929 Lateran Treaty (not Locarno Treaty, as some candidates insisted). Despite these common errors there were a great many excellent responses, which were well balanced, had considered turning points and were supported by precise and detailed evidence; these were a joy to read.

Question 3

- 05** As stated in the general comments, responses to this question were either clutching at straws with a poor, incomplete narrative or were very well considered and supported. Weak responses could not get beyond the poor performance in the war as a reason for Mussolini's dismissal and the creation of the Salo Republic. The best responses looked the strategic importance of Italy, Germany's need for resources, the relationship between Hitler and Mussolini and the crucial matter of timing in the 45 day period.
- 06** This question proved to be a very effective differentiator. Weak responses made the critical error of not reading (or simply ignoring) the dates in the question. Whilst this question was chronologically very narrow, it is important for candidates to understand that Mussolini fell from power not once, but twice. Weak responses narrated, very poorly, reasons for Mussolini's dismissal in July 1943 and asserted that internal resistance movements were vital because they finally captured and killed Mussolini and his mistress in April 1945. Level 4 and Level 5 responses were a pleasure to read. They had detailed and accurate knowledge about the CLNAI and groups like GAP and were able to evaluate the extent and impact they had on Mussolini's final removal from power. Many balanced their responses through looking at the role of the Allied forces after the invasion of Sicily and the impact of the German army.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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