



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

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

It is pleasing to note that the entry for this unit has increased and there are now over a thousand students studying Mussolini's Italy. The candidature this year was particularly strong and the mean mark for the unit increased, reflecting the good examination technique of most students and secure understanding of the main themes and issues.

The examination paper was a very effective discriminator as there was an array of responses which varied from the lowest to the highest levels. A number of scripts were awarded full marks. Responses to 01, the source comparison question, have improved significantly. The concept of economic modernisation, Question 02, was better understood than in January, but did pose a problem for some students. Precise use of evidence is still a concern for examiners who mark this paper. Students must support their answers with factual evidence; it is not unreasonable to ask that a secure understanding of chronology is required for Levels 4 and 5. Indeed chronology proved an issue for some students in their responses to Question 2. Question 2 was by far the most popular question as it attracted over 800 responses. As ever with responses to Mussolini's downfall, Question 3, answers were either very good or terrible.

On a general note, some centres have clearly taught their students to refer to "some historians" and "other historians" to engage in debate and balance. Whilst it is true that knowledge of historiography is not a requirement of answers at AS, this technique is a frustratingly superficial and artificial means of producing a "balanced" response. Despite this observation, it must be noted that overall there is a great deal of good practice seen in this option which centres must be highly commended for.

Question 1

- 01** Source comparison techniques have improved significantly in some centres; however the improvement is not universal. Effective responses started with the similarities within the sources and then went onto look at the differences (of which they were many). Many students picked up on the differences in tone and went on to explain reasons why the sources had a different interpretation, focusing on the ideological differences of the two authors. These responses were awarded Level 4 and pushed to the top of the level if own knowledge about the removal of workers' rights was offered. Whilst it has been noted that the majority of students have clearly secured an effective examination technique for the source comparison answer, some still struggled. Answers which merely summarised the two sources are not an effective approach. It is the **views** of the sources which should be considered, not the source content. It is important to note that difference by omission is not a valid comparison. Therefore responses which merely rephrased what Source A said and then what Source B said did not score highly.
- 02** The concept of economic modernisation was a very effective discriminator. Some students struggled and failed to adapt their pre-learned material on the success and failures of the economic battles. The marks for these responses varied from Level 2 to Level 3 depending on depth and quality. For Level 4 a more direct approach and analysis was required. Some centres were clearly prepared, having taken note from January's

exam. Most effective answers looked at Mussolini's attempts to modernise agriculture, living standards, transport, developments in industry, survival in the Depression, etc. The best responses analysed why Italy failed to transform itself industrially by looking at conflicting ideological goals and the impact of foreign policy on Italy's economy. Few responses failed to use the sources; however there is still a minority of students who write a good essay but get stuck in Level 2 because they have forgotten to use the sources. Conversely there were many students who, thrown by the question, produced little beyond the sources. It is worth noting that a response based almost entirely on the sources will also be awarded Level 2. For Level 5 to be awarded all three sources must be integrated into the answer.

Question 2

- 03** A key reason for underperformance on this question was students failing to focus on 1924. Some treated it as a 'reason why Mussolini was appointed in 1922' question these responses were awarded Level 2 as they had some relevance as long term factors. To gain Level 4 there had to be a secure appreciation of the King's motives for keeping Mussolini in power. Please note that a response which asserts "and this then links to..." is not an effective way to secure Level 4, it is clearly a taught technique in some centres. Examiners are looking for categorisation of reasons, developed priority, explanation of why one reason is more important than the other, not a superficial declaration of links.
- 04** Students were clearly prepared in terms of the different methods Mussolini used to secure his dictatorship and most responses were able to refer to terror, propaganda, the use of law/political skill and compromises with the elite. However, for some students this "balanced" approach was somewhat superficial as they could describe the methods, but not analyse how effectively these methods helped Mussolini secure his dictatorship. Consequently these types of responses were awarded Level 3. Some centres had clearly prepped their students to make reference to Mussolini's social reforms. These responses were not very effective as they described his attempts to change society, which is more an impact of Mussolini's dictatorship, not creation of it. Other responses were limited to Level 3 because their knowledge of terror was limited to 1922–1924. Some students had been clearly taught that the Matteotti Affair was a key turning point in Mussolini's creation of his dictatorship their only flaw was that they did not associate Matteotti's death with an act of Fascist terror. Better responses analysed how terror was effective in removing and silencing opposition, but how its impact changed over time. Very knowledgeable responses argued that the use of terror changed over time and how Mussolini's regime relied more on psychological rather than physical terror. Better responses also clearly understood how Mussolini used the law to establish his dictatorship and relied on deals with the industrial and religious elite in Italy to maintain his power.

Question 3

- 05** Some students spent too long explaining why the Salò Republic was created. However the majority were able to explain a variety of reasons why the Salò Republic collapsed. A few were very detailed and developed which is a very promising sign that some centres are clearly teaching the whole specification in great depth.
- 06** This question was a very effective discriminator. Responses were either excellent, Level 4 plus or very weak Level 2. The main problem was that most students were unable to explain how long term weaknesses led to downfall in 1943. Long term weaknesses were identified and described, but the analysis was lacking in terms of how they linked to July 1943. Short-term problems were often better developed, but too many responses made

vague references to Mussolini's poor war effort and were unable to substantiate Italy's many defeats in battle.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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