



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

History 1041

Unit HIS2M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2M

Unit 2M: Life in Nazi Germany, 1933–1945

General Comments

This was the eighth paper of this specification, so it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of students are thoroughly prepared in terms of the ‘house style’ of the questions. There were very few rubric infringements and even fewer examples of students who were unaware of what they should at least be trying to do to score highly. Familiarity has bred great technical expertise in some centres and many students are clearly well drilled about how to structure answers, though this occasionally leads to a stilted and mechanical style of response. Perhaps this is inevitable and understandable given the pressures to teach effective examination technique in addition to subject content, but it does stifle a little originality of presentation of argument. Nevertheless, there were some outstanding responses showing great insights from many committed and well taught students. The best responses were a joy to read and some confirmation that Nazi history has not lost its ability to inspire intellectual curiosity and academic rigour.

Question 1

- 01** This question was a little more challenging than in some previous papers because the key differences of views between the sources were less apparent at a first reading, whereas the similarities stood out more obviously. However, many students understood the greater criticism of the Strength through Joy movement within Source A, and picked up on Welch’s emphasis on the Nazis’ ‘hidden intentions’ to use the Strength through Joy movement as a method of control and as a ‘sop’ for low wages and increased hours of work. Source B, on the other hand, suggested a more genuine and enthusiastic appreciation of the new opportunities available, despite grumbles over costs.

Weaknesses persist, however, in some students’ approach to this question. The most commonplace is the persistence of endless generalised commentaries on ‘reliability’ and ‘bias’ and simplistic statements about the relative worth or otherwise of ‘primary’ sources in relation to ‘secondary’ sources. The relevance of the provenance of sources and how to use this information is a weakness of many students. In addition to this, too many students still forget that they should be drawing attention to differences and similarities of **view** in the sources, not simple differences of ‘fact’ or ‘type of source’.

A particularly common misunderstanding in this question was that many students, and perhaps more than we would have expected, confused the SPD with the SD, which clearly skewed their interpretation of the source’s provenance.

- 02** This question produced a range of good responses at the top level, showing a solid awareness of Nazi ideology in relation to ‘community’, though weaker students failed to offer a clear working definition of *Volksgemeinschaft* beyond what was given in the question. A few students seemed unaware of the key racial nature of Hitler’s national community and some showed their limited understanding by writing critically of the exclusion of minorities such as Jews, inferring from this, therefore, that the Nazis failed. The weakest answers were generalised responses offering very little from beyond the sources; the best identified a range of relevant social groupings analysing their level of integration into Nazi society. Disappointingly, few students included any discussion of the

peasantry in their responses, the grouping perhaps most identified by the Nazis as the 'life spring' of the nation.

Question 2

- 03** Many students attempted this question and the range of responses was, therefore, correspondingly mixed. At the lower level, students wrote in rather generalised terms and in rather obvious ways about the purpose of rallies: to win support, as propaganda, to show their power and discipline, to intimidate opponents, and so on. Some of these were reasonably comprehensive in their range. Generally however, at this level, it was clear that students saw 'rallies' as just another means of 'getting the message across'. Better answers went deeper and were able to develop this thinking to explore the mentality of German propagandists, the scale of their vision and the astonishing stage managing of these events, and used the Nuremberg rallies as their focus to explain the importance of bringing the 'Volk' together in what were virtually pseudo-religious occasions. Unfortunately, some students still think that there was only one Nuremberg rally – that filmed by Reni Liefenstahl – and few had any conception why Nuremberg was chosen for these events or the significance of the mammoth scale of the rally grounds themselves.
- 04** This question offered many opportunities for students to 'show off' their learning on methods of indoctrination and, more pertinently, their understanding of the impact of such methods. One of the pitfalls of a question such as this is that it opens itself up to a largely descriptive approach through a discussion, one by one, of a range of methods of propaganda starting with 'radio' and then proceeding through other propaganda media outlined in the specification. Students who opted for this approach largely remained at Level 3. Other students who chose a more analytical approach, evaluating the relative impact of such media, did rather better. The best students were those who recognized the difficulties of making definitive judgements about the impact of propaganda and the degree of subsequent indoctrination, but were able to set out an argument and to follow it through with a sustained analysis. Many argued persuasively that radio was effective in many ways – its ubiquity, for example, and its ability to go beyond geographical restrictions into homes and public spaces and work places over the length and breadth of Germany – but that the regime's efforts to imprint Nazi beliefs into the young through the youth groups and through education, had the most long-standing effect. Clearly, many students regarded this as a 'gift' question since they had done substantial learning on methods of propaganda. There was much evidence of the depth to which this theme is covered. However, there was less evidence of analysis in depth on whether propaganda actually worked.

Question 3

- 05** Question 3 was largely ignored by most students, either because they regarded Question 2 as being 'easier' or because this part of the specification remains less accessible and is therefore given less of a focus. Given that this is a study in depth, it is disappointing that many concentrate on only one half of the chronological period of study. Most of those who did this question knew the details of the Stauffenberg assassination attempt, much of this no doubt informed by the film *Operation Valkyrie*, but fewer had considered why it occurred when it did and what Hitler's murder might achieve. The weaker students resorted to generalities about 'defeat' and 'falling morale', whereas the best had a deeper understanding of the various motivations of the conspirators.

- 06** Again, as with Question 05, this question was typified by rather generalised responses and indicated a lack of detailed knowledge of the Home Front in Germany. It is also evident that many students have only the most fleeting knowledge of the course of the war and consequently have little sense of how events at the front impacted on events at home. There is, of course, no requirement and no expectation that the 'military' war is studied, but it seems that many students would benefit from a greater working knowledge of the chronology of the Second World War as a 'scaffold' onto which an analysis of the Home Front could be hung.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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