



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1J

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1J

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

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 1

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 1 papers were noted:

- Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three, each consisting of a part (a) and a part (b), i.e. 4 sub-questions in total. Whether due to timing issues or to a misunderstanding of the rubric, a few candidates either answered all six sub-questions or answered only one question. The format of Unit 1 papers is significantly different from AQA's legacy units, so it is vital that all candidates are aware in advance of what they will be required to do.
- Timing issues caused other problems too. This is a one hour 15 minute paper, thus allowing roughly 12 minutes in which to complete the (a) questions and 25 minutes for the (b) questions. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper and in addition to those who attempted only one question, there were others who missed out a part-question or lapsed into notes. Selecting relevant material and maintaining a strong focus on the question is part of the skill being tested in this examination and candidates need to realise that they will penalise themselves heavily if they fail to tackle the two questions required, in full. Furthermore, since they are asked to write in continuous prose – which is the only way any sense of argument can be conveyed – notes will never score highly.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates had not studied, or revised, the full specification content for their chosen alternative. It must be emphasised that the three questions may be drawn from any part of that content. Without a secure understanding of the complete content, candidates will find it extremely difficult to perform well.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

The paper proved to be an effective discriminator as responses varied from the weak and insubstantial to the well-expressed, confidently argued and securely supported. Timing problems were clearly apparent for many candidates sitting this unit. It is advised that candidates spend 12 minutes on part (a) questions and 25 minutes on part (b) questions. It is worth noting that part (a) questions are worth 12 marks, whilst part (b) questions are worth 24 marks, therefore due to the weighting of the marks it is expected that part (b) answers are to be twice the length of part (a) answers. For many candidates this was not the case. Some part (a) answers were overlong and digressed from explaining a number of factors to describing events and policies. Part (b) answers were in general thin and lacking in substance. The purpose of the part (b) question is to test a candidate's understanding of a historical debate, for them to engage in an argument and formulate their own judgements and conclusions. What is not required is rote learning of schools of historical thought, as under examination conditions this is often inaccurate, incomplete and often little more than descriptive context. Candidates need to address the specific question set and put forward a balanced argument.

Some candidates failed to answer more than one question, and were thus restricting themselves to a maximum of 36 marks. Please note that it is a requirement of AQA unit 1s that two questions are to be attempted.

As the study of history is being assessed it is not too much to ask that candidates have a sense of chronology and key turning points. Dates (accurate or not) were very thin on the ground. As this unit is a study of German history it is expected that candidates are able to spell certain historical terms and names accurately, especially if they appear on the question paper.

Question 1

- (a) This question elicited some very secure and direct responses. Most could give three or more reasons why the Kulturkampf was introduced and only a few digressed into the terms and impact of the legislation. Many candidates secured at least Level 3 for this question.
- (b) Unfortunately this question was often not securely answered. The issue of domestic problems was interpreted in a very narrow way, and was restricted to either the treatment of the Catholics or Socialists and often looked no further than 1878. The best responses defined domestic problems and assessed Bismarck's success and failure over the whole time period of the question asked.

Question 2

- (a) In general this question was not answered as confidently as Question 1(a) or 3(a). Most were able to identify a couple of reasons why Caprivi introduced a 'new course', but some lapsed into a description of what the 'new course' was.
- (b) There were a range of responses to this question. Some lapsed into a narrative description of the Kaiser's relationship with his numerous chancellors. Others described the historical debate about the Kaiser's period of 'personal rule'. These types of responses, depending on depth of detail and explicit links, were awarded Level 2 or low Level 3. A few were able to engage effectively and confidently with the specific question set, often making judgements about key turning points in the Kaiser's relationships with his chancellors and were awarded Level 4.

Question 3

- (a) Responses to this question varied greatly. Some lapsed into a description about the impact of hyperinflation on the German population and there were many tales recounted about money being used as fuel, wages being collected in wheel barrows and children flying kites made out of money. Most were able to link the impact of war expenditure and the Treaty of Versailles on the currency and were thus usually awarded Level 3. The best answers could identify the trigger events for the currency collapse which were the French/Belgium occupation of the Ruhr and the Government's policy of passive resistance; when linked to longer term factors such as the war, these responses were justly awarded Level 4.
- (b) Responses in general were very disappointing and there was very little understanding displayed about the nature of Germany's economic recovery post 1923. A lack of balance and depth were the main reasons why most responses were limited to Level 2/low Level 3. The majority knew nothing about the work of Schacht and the stabilisation of the new currency, the Rentenmark. Vague assertions were made about the work of

Stresemann and he still remains a popular hero as the saviour of the Weimar government, although few could substantiate their hero worship with accurate historical facts. The many variations of the spelling of the new currency and Stresemann's name continues to astound the examination team.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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