



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1J

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1J

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

General Comments

The paper proved to be an effective discriminator as a broad spectrum of candidate responses was seen. It is pleasing to note that the overall quality of scripts was comparable to the June examination and that the majority of candidates are now more confident with the new format of the AS examination. There were fewer timing issues and the majority of candidates completed two questions. However, as in summer, the second part (b) question often suffered in length and quality due to the unnecessarily lengthy responses to the part (a) questions. It is worth restating that part (b) questions are worth twice as many marks as part (a) and should therefore be substantially longer. In order to achieve Level 4 for part (b) responses answers should be balanced with a “good range of appropriately selected evidence”; this was unachievable for many due to the brevity of their answers. The most effective part (a) responses were often less than a side long. They clearly identified reasons why and often had thematic division, e.g. economic factors, political factors, short-term factors, trigger events, etc. Candidates still have an aversion to dates and many had a lack of secure understanding of chronology. There are a number of key issues centres need to address in order to ensure their candidates achieve their full potential in the future:

- stress the importance of chronology, particularly for key events such as Bismarck’s break with the Liberals in 1878, the period of the Kaiser’s personal rule and the German Revolution
- stress Bismarck’s relationship with the Reichstag in the 1880s
- make links between economic growth and challenges to the political order within Germany
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Weimar Republic and the opposition that it faced in the period 1919 to 1925.

These issues are dealt with in more depth through discussion of individual questions below.

Question 1

- (a) There were a significant number of responses which secured Level 3 as they were able to give a range of reasons why Prussia dominated the Second Reich. However, there were a good many candidates whose responses lacked development and range which resulted in Level 2 marks. Weaker responses tended to generalise about Prussia’s power and size. Other candidates underperformed because they looked beyond 1871.
- (b) Candidates must be prepared to use evidence beyond 1878 in order to achieve higher levels of response on this paper. A significant number of candidates underperformed on this question because they knew little beyond Bismarck’s struggle with the Catholic Church and socialists in the period 1871 to 1878. Centres are reminded of two central bullet points on the specification for Bismarck’s Germany 1871–1890:

- political struggles after 1878, including the Anti-Socialist Law and State Socialism
- Bismarck's relations with the Kaiser and Reichstag.

Therefore questions will be set up to 1890 and candidates will be required to illustrate an understanding of Bismarck's Germany in the 1880s in order to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Some candidates were able to engage fully with the question and the key to their success was a secure definition of conservative interests with a balanced evaluation of Bismarck's success and failures ranged across the period.

Question 2

- (a) A pleasing number of candidates were able to fully engage with this question and produced secure and well supported reasons for Bülow's resignation. A lack of range and accuracy of reasons limited some candidates to Level 2. In particular some candidates from a minority of centres confused Bülow's resignation with detail from the Eulenburg Affair.
- (b) The responses to this question varied from weak and assertive to closely argued and very well-directed. A significant number of candidates under performed on this question. They were limited to Level 2 because their responses were descriptive about economic change and political instability and were unable to make links and connections between the two. Centres are reminded of the following bullet point in the specification.

- Economic change and the growth of political opposition, including the SPD.

Less able candidates were unable to make the links between growing industrialisation and the rise of the SPD. Those able candidates were able to make these links and then balance their arguments with a range of other factors which undermined political stability in Germany, such as the role of the Kaiser and his personal rule or the rise of right wing pressure groups.

Question 3

- (a) The weakest responses ignored the date of November 1918 and wrote about the Spartacist uprising of January 1919. Many candidates have unsecure chronology of this period despite it being a clear bullet point on the specification.

- The abdication of the Kaiser in November 1918 and the revolutionary events surrounding the setting up of the Weimar Republic, 1918–1919.

Candidates in general tended to be more secure on the revolution from above, and the moves of the elite to secure their own future. Most were able to write with some focus about the devastating impact of the war on Germany, what was less well understood were the links to the Kaiser's abdication. Answers were less secure about the revolution from below. A key chronological misunderstanding once again for some candidates was that the revolution of November 1918 was directly due to the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles (June 1919) and the imposition of reparations (only set in 1921).

- (b) There were a pleasing number of articulate and well supported responses to this question which were able to draw upon secure knowledge of weaknesses of the opposition and key strengths of the Republic in the period 1919 to 1925. High performing candidates often reached the judgement that the extreme Right, who had support from the Establishment, did the most to undermine the Republic even though the extreme Left was most feared. However, some centres need to take note of the following key weaknesses in their candidates response to questions on the Weimar Republic. Many answers to these questions are disappointing in their quality of supporting evidence and depth of understanding. It is felt that some candidates are simply regurgitating GCSE material in the hopes that a good grade at AS can be achieved. This is not acceptable. The vast majority of responses fail to take note of the key dates. In the case of this question more candidates failed to go beyond 1923, despite the end date being 1925. Indeed many candidates display a fatalistic and flawed view of the Weimar Republic and thus have little understanding as to why the Weimar Republic was able to resist so many extremist attacks in the period. Responses tended to describe extremist attacks from the Left and the Right with little explicit evaluation of how the extremists did or did not undermine the Republic. The weakest answers often confused key terms such as Left wing and Right wing. If dates were used they were often inaccurate and assertion was often used as a substitute for argument. In short, some centres need to urgently address their candidates approach to answering questions set on the Weimar Republic as many are currently under performing on this section of the paper.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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