



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2G

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2G

Unit 2G: The Forging of the Italian Nation, 1848–1871

General Comments

There was a wide range of responses to this paper. Many candidates produced work of high quality, deploying substantial detailed knowledge in direct and convincing answers. Such scripts were often impressively well written, showing conceptual depth and concise expression. At the other extreme, the work of a significant minority of candidates revealed major weaknesses of basic knowledge and understanding. Such scripts seemed to show inadequate awareness of the demands of A level History.

It was pleasing that most candidates made effective use of the time available and produced answers of the appropriate length and depth to all four questions they attempted.

Question 1

- 01** Many answers to Question 1 (01), on Cavour and Garibaldi, were undermined by uncertain grasp of what the sources actually meant. Such answers were often very literal and uncritical in handling the evidence of the sources and did not 'pair' selected evidence appropriately. Although many answers included worthy attempts to use own knowledge to support their comparisons, there was a widespread failure to apply this material to specific comparisons of the source evidence. Many answers made effective points about the provenance of the sources, contrasting Cavour's private, contemporary views against those of a later historian; but too many weaker answers provided merely stock, all-purpose speculation about the differences between primary and secondary sources.
- 02** In Question 1 (02), on the importance of nationalism for the advancement of unification between 1859 and 1861, a handful of able and well-equipped candidates under-achieved by ignoring the requirement to make explicit use of the sources but there were many extremely good answers that provided a secure argument about the influence of nationalism, balanced against a range of well-understood other factors. Several high-scoring answers showed analytical depth and differentiation in assessing the complex and ambiguous role of Cavour and the extent to which Garibaldi's actions accelerated the momentum of unification. Weaker answers depended too much on a literal and insecure paraphrase of the sources and also showed a poor sense of chronology by including irrelevant material from 1848 or earlier.

Question 2

- 03** Answers to Question 2 (03), on Charles Albert and the invasion of Lombardy, were often effective in identifying a range of motives and in explaining the precise context of his 'window of opportunity' at a time of Austrian weakness. Several high-quality answers showed a sharp appreciation of the difference between outward appearances and ulterior motives. Less successful answers were often far too descriptive, especially concerning the background situation, offering only indirect and implicit explanation of the reasons for the King's actions.

- 04** In Question 2 (04), on the importance of Pius IX for the failure of the 1848–1849 revolutions, many answers were based on sound knowledge and were able to balance the significance of the Pope’s role against a wide range of other factors. It was a pity, however, that many well-informed and well-written answers deployed their pre-learned material on these issues in a rather rigid and general fashion, without focusing on the specific events and consequences in 1848–1849. Another common shortcoming was to describe in detail the actions of the Pope during his liberal phase before the Allocution. Such material was not made relevant to the question why the revolutions failed.

Question 3

- 05** Answers to Question 3 (05), on the Italian seizure of Rome in 1870, were often direct and effective, based on confident knowledge and understanding of the context of the long French occupation before 1870 and the specific circumstances brought about by the Franco-Prussian War. Many of the best responses showed a pleasing ability to differentiate between short-term and long-term causes. Weaker answers were far too descriptive, providing massive background material on events from 1848 to 1867 without any focus on the specific circumstances in 1870.
- 06** In Question 3 (06), on the extent to which Italy was a united nation by 1871, the best answers were impressive, showing detailed and wide-ranging knowledge about the various ways in which the new Italy was divided by geography, history, economics and culture. The problem of ‘Piedmontisation’ was often explained in real analytical depth. Less successful answers relied on relevant but generalized assertions. One weakness, even of good answers, was a tendency to range across the period as a whole, rather than linking their evidence specifically to 1871.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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