



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2K

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2K

Unit 2K: A New Roman Empire? Mussolini's Italy, 1922–1945

General Comments

The response of candidates to this paper was on the whole pleasing. Most scripts showed good awareness of the demands of the questions. There were relatively few cases of rigid factual description without appropriate relevance. The length of answers was almost always appropriate to the marks allocated, although a significant number of candidates spent too much time on lengthy paraphrase of the sources in Question 1 (01). Only a minority of candidates failed to produce complete answers to all the four questions attempted. Many scripts reflected an enthusiasm for the subject. Many candidates presented their work with care and thoroughness, showing depth of knowledge, good organisation and direct language. The standard achieved in the best answers was impressive.

Despite these generally favourable impressions, there were some widespread failings that should be addressed urgently by teachers and future candidates. Although many essay answers to Questions 1 (02), 2 (04) and 3 (06) were substantial and well-directed, a significant minority relied upon generalised assertions and were expressed in vague and imprecise language. It was also particularly evident that many candidates lacked an adequate grasp of chronology. Many answers, especially to Question 2 (04) and Question 3 (06), got key events in the wrong order, or did not respond appropriately to the key dates in the question, leaving significant gaps. Some answers on the consolidation of power, for example, focused exclusively on period 1924–1926 and failed to consider events in the later 1920s. Most worryingly, the majority of candidates failed to look beyond 1943 in their responses to Question 1 (02). Centres are reminded that the end date for this unit is 1945 and that questions will continue to be set on the last two bullet points of the specification.

- Opposition to Mussolini and Mussolini's removal in 1943; the Salo Republic; Mussolini's capture and death.
- Why the Fascist regime collapsed; the interrelationship of domestic and foreign policy.

Question 1

- 01** There were a significant number of responses which secured Level 3 as they were able to give a range of differences and similarities with sound contextual knowledge. However, there were a good many candidates who merely paraphrased the sources or compared the content of the sources and not the views. Candidates and centres are reminded that bland references to the origins of the sources are not useful. Some candidates made presumptions that the bodyguard who overheard the conversation was loyal to Mussolini, others that he was loyal to the king. What was required was an understanding that in a face to face conversation, the king was less likely to be truthful about his true motives for dismissing Mussolini.
- 02** There were few outstanding responses to this question due to a lack of secure knowledge about the period 1943 to 1945. However the majority of responses did secure Level 3. Few answers failed to use the sources, but it is worth stressing once again that in order to secure Level 3 both sources and own knowledge should be used. Whilst Source C was intended to be of help to candidates, the second sentence of the source was often misinterpreted. Many candidates referred to Mussolini's government's failure to 'carry out

its totally unrealistic plan', when the source was referring to the King's transitional government, not Mussolini's. Better answers put forward the argument that whilst Mussolini was clearly responsible for his own downfall in 1943, as a mere puppet leader in 1945, his and the Salo Republic's destiny was firmly in the hands of the Nazis.

Question 2

- 03** A common weakness of responses to this question was that candidates stressed that the most important reason why the Fascists won the 1924 election was due to the Acerbo Law. This is an inaccurate interpretation as the Fascists won 66% of the vote without the need for the Acerbo Law. Better answers focused on the violence and intimidation, fear of socialism and Mussolini's attempts to win over the elite. Very few responses showed any understanding of the merger of the PNF with the Nationalists and the importance of the Fascist list.
- 04** Mussolini's consolidation of power is a central theme on the specification and on the whole candidates had secure knowledge and understanding of the consolidation of power process. However, what was lacking in the majority of scripts was the ability to use their knowledge to answer the specific question set, regarding overcoming opposition with ease. Therefore many very knowledgeable answers were limited to Level 3 as they lacked a developed argument about ease or difficulty of consolidation of power. As stated in the general comment about the paper some responses lacked a range of evidence as they failed to cover the entire period of the question, therefore ignoring the importance of the 1929 Lateran Agreement.

Question 3

- 05** This question worked really well, the majority of answers were awarded a secure Level 3. A range of evidence regarding the motives for the battle of births was put forward. Weaker responses tended to describe the policy and its limited impact, rather than focus on reasons why Mussolini wanted to increase Italy's population.
- 06** This question proved to be an effective differentiator. Candidates who had limited their revision to the economy tried desperately to shoehorn into their responses material on the economic battles, with scant regard for the key words 'social policy' or 'widespread support'. These types of responses were awarded Level 2 for their descriptive nature. Level 3 was awarded to candidates who focused more explicitly on social policy. There was a lot of good material put forward about the ONB and OND and policies towards women, but Level 3 responses tended to describe the policies and were thin with regards to 'widespread support'. Balanced responses (Level 4) clearly stated that Mussolini's social policies in the late 1930s were less successful and actually lost him widespread support. The best answers clearly defined which sections of society were targeted by Mussolini's social policies and the extent to which the regime was successful in winning the 'hearts and minds' of the Italian public.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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