



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS2M

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit HIS2M

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

General Comments

This paper did not cover the war years, which previous papers have suggested is perhaps less comprehensively taught in some centres than the period from 1933 to 1939. In comparison to January 2010, therefore, the spread of candidate choice on Questions 2 and 3 was more even, though a majority of candidates – roughly a ratio of 2:3 - chose Question 2. There were some very strong answers to both questions. However, knowledge of the role of the SS tended to be somewhat generalised and generic and some candidates struggled, therefore, to apply what they knew to Question 05, which focused on the reasons for the emergence of the SS as the primary security force in the Nazi state. Overall Question 1 proved to be very accessible to most candidates, with few very weak scores.

Once again, time management was good and few candidates ran out of time. Those who did tended to spend too long on what they thought was their ‘strongest’ question and did not leave themselves sufficient time for their second answer. Some candidates chose to do the optional question first and compulsory question second but there is little evidence that this constitutes a best approach in terms of scores. Candidates are perhaps best advised to choose the approach that most suits their own temperament. The improvement in responses to Question 01 as seen in the previous paper was sustained, with Level 3 becoming more accessible.

Candidates are increasingly aware of the importance of ‘structure’ in their answers. However, many tend to adopt quite a formulaic response which can help the less certain candidate but might hinder a stronger candidate from accessing the very highest marks which require greater conceptual depth. Assertion remains an issue. Candidates need reminding that judgements need supporting with evidence rather than being stated as ‘fact’. Similarly, most candidates understand that ‘balance’ is required for Level 4 but to reach this level, discussion of ‘how far’ or ‘agreement or disagreement’ within a question needs to be well-developed.

Question 1

01 It is encouraging that an increasing number of candidates understand that comparison questions such as this demand a discussion of **both** similarities and differences and that own knowledge needs to be applied to support their explanation. The key to scoring well on this question is to focus on **the extent to which** the sources differ and for candidates to use their contextual knowledge to explain why. Good responses were also able to identify the significance of the gender of the two authors and a possible difference of chronology – one earlier in the period, one perhaps later – as reasons why their experiences might have been different. The best candidates used a mixture of differences, similarities, provenance and own knowledge in their answers. A few candidates still simply paraphrase - repeating what each source says in turn – without drawing out explicit differences, but this is becoming rarer. The language used in the sources did not seem to cause any problems.

Some candidates still spend valuable time repeating the basic provenance of each source: ‘adapted from...’ etc and unnecessarily copying out excessively long quotations

from each source. Bias and reliability are still too often asserted in simplistic fashion, e.g. Kranz, he 'approved' of some Nazi policies, so, must have been indoctrinated, so, cannot be a reliable witness. It is worth repeating from the last report that the question as such is not about reliability and candidates waste time discussing how the sources are adapted. The sources are adapted purely to make them more accessible to the candidate. Language has been modified to allow candidates to see what the source is trying to say.

- 02** A lot of assertion found its way into many responses to this question. Weaker candidates simply accepted that indoctrination was successful because membership of the youth groups was compulsory or because school teachers and the school curriculum were so controlled. Clearly, Nazi ideology proved very difficult to avoid but this is some way from asserting uncritically that it was 'successful'. Not enough candidates tried to grapple with a definition of 'success' and few considered how other influences – parents, church, cultural upbringing – might have worked to limit or counter the omnipresent Nazi propaganda. Many candidates knew a lot about the youth groups and about specifics of the Nazified curriculum but there was a tendency to present this in great chunks of description instead of using this knowledge to illustrate specific points of analysis.

Some candidates understood the problems of assessing the extent of indoctrination and this proved a fruitful means of showing depth to their thinking if well developed. Both Source A and Source B gave clear evidence that there was a mixed response to attempts at indoctrination and that motivation for membership of the youth groups prior to compulsion was very varied. Some candidates were able to use this as an effective means of integrating these sources into their discussion and of adding depth.

Good answers recognised that the Nazi regime had a profound positive impact on many young people but were able to balance this by evidencing the limits to that impact, whether by reference to declining attendance and irritation at the militarisation and weakening quality of leadership within the youth organisations or to the evidence of the emergence of 'rebellious' youth groups in the later 1930s.

Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates knew that such opposition 'factions' existed but had a weak chronological understanding, with many, for example, using the White Rose as evidence of opposition even though this occurred well beyond the time scale of the question. It is important to keep alerting candidates to the importance of chronology and of the requirement to focus their responses to the confines of the dates given in the question.

Some candidates went off at a tangent, discussing the impact of propaganda in a broader sense, writing at length about press censorship, radio and cinema, rallies and parades. Whilst it might have been appropriate to draw a connection between indoctrination and wider channels of propaganda, most candidates who went down this route lost focus on the thrust of the question resorting to too much description, generalisation and irrelevance.

Question 2

- 03** Overall this question was answered well with only a tiny minority of candidates seemingly never having heard of the Enabling Law. However, a number of students confused the Reichstag Fire Decree and the subsequent creation of a permanent state of emergency with the Enabling Law. These candidates sometimes wasted time by writing about the background to the fire and whether it might have been a Nazi conspiracy.

There was a tendency to narrative in some answers. These candidates told the story of the passing of the Law rather than focusing on the reasons for its implementation. The best answers saw it as the foundation stone of Hitler's 'legal dictatorship' and were able to structure their answers within this overall context.

Candidates need to offer a range of factors - at least three developed reasons - to move beyond Level 2 and they must show some linkage between them or some recognition of the relative importance of factors or how one factor might lead to another to challenge for the highest marks.

- 04** Candidates who recognised the focus of this question – the balance between 'legality' and the use of terror and violence ('illegality') in the period January 1933 to August 1934 – scored well. Some candidates interpreted the question too broadly and wrote about 'how Hitler came to power', including irrelevant discussion on the role of the elites, Goebbels' mastery of propaganda and Hitler's own charismatic abilities. The key to the focus of the question was 'by legal means'.

Some candidates were very well informed on the relevant period but focused too much on 'showing off' their knowledge and spent too much time describing the course of events rather than developing a relevant evaluation. The question, however, differentiated very well, allowing able candidates to grapple with the 'quasi-legal' means by which Hitler secured his dictatorship and there were some very impressive and thoughtful responses which acknowledged the legal framework constructed by the Nazis but which showed excellent awareness too of the fundamental role of terror and intimidation and how the context of previous governmental weakness (Weimar) worked in the Nazis' favour.

Perhaps the biggest overall weakness exposed by this question was that whilst many candidates showed a good knowledge of the process of 'Gleichschaltung' they tended to discuss events in isolation without making connections to the overall goals of Nazi policy. Answers tended to follow the 'then he did this and then he did that' approach and tended not to make explicit the reasons why actions were taken and how developments were interlinked.

Question 3

- 05** This question proved challenging to many candidates but in fact was tackled very well by those candidates who took time to reflect and who looked to focus on explanation rather than description. Clearly the Gestapo-SS complex is a difficult area of study for many candidates but it was encouraging to see many solid responses to this question.

Candidates needed to show some of the following:

- the need for centralised control – continuation of Gleichschaltung
- Himmler's ambition and loyalty – culmination of SS ousting SA in the Night of the Long Knives – confirmed the SS as the ideal vehicle to lead the regime's all pervasive police and surveillance system
- Hitler's need for efficient and ruthless coercion
- SS willingness not to feel restrained by legal or bureaucratic limits or qualms
- Hitler's need for an elite organisation to pursue and enforce the party's ideological goals – not only to safeguard the regime but to create the 'new order'
- the need for an elite racial vanguard for the Third Reich.

- 06** This question produced a full range of response. It was evident that weaker answers often resulted from candidates not having a secure chronological understanding, for example focusing on opposition to the Nazis in their rise to power or, more usually, drifting into the war time period and writing in vague terms about the White Rose or about assassination attempts on Hitler. Again, there is some evidence that candidates are generally less well informed on the later years of this period.

Some candidates too are guilty of not paying sufficient attention to the particular wording of questions. For example, too few candidates made paid attention to the descriptor 'considerable' and few really attempted to develop discussion about what might constitute 'opposition' – active or passive – and their relative threat to the regime.

The best answers showed an awareness that Nazi totalitarianism was incomplete and that opposition was a reality, ranging from day to day grumbling to active resistance. Candidates were able to draw examples of opposition from the rural and urban working classes, church opposition, youth rebelliousness and concern in military circles. This was balanced by reference to the fact that most discontent remained low-key and that there was very little evidence of this developing into broader open resistance. Most complaints centred on economic conditions, church opinion was split and political opposition was minimal. People in general seemed to prefer the Nazis to the Weimar Republic.

Sophisticated answers concluded that it is difficult to evaluate the depth of opposition, particularly given the difficulties of assessing public opinion and seeing beyond the propaganda, and showed greater conceptual depth in analysing the nature of conformity and resistance.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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