



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS2J**

***Report on the Examination***

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## *Unit HIS2J*

### **Unit 2J: Britain and Appeasement, 1919–1940**

#### **General Comments**

Most candidates coped with the time allowed of one and a half hours adequate for studying and answering the compulsory ‘sources’ question, and then answering their choice of a second question. Very few did not answer Question 1 first. On the whole management of time was good with few candidates ‘running out of steam’, at least in terms of time in their final answer. Most were also able to balance time sensibly between the 12 and 24 marks questions. Indeed the only candidates who really found that more time would have been helpful were those whose knowledge and understanding were extensive. Just a few candidates answered a full question, or both, in ‘reverse’, that is the 24 marks part before that for 12 marks. This led to some difficulties in Question 1 where either little or no attention was paid to the sources in answering 02, or the reverse where sources were used but there was little own knowledge in evidence. The latter approach led to repetition when part 01 was tackled.

Marks awarded to individual candidates ranged from near the maximum to those in single figures. Scripts which achieved high marks, or responses to individual questions with marks awarded in Levels 4 or 5 of the Mark Scheme, received them because they addressed the assessment objectives of this ‘Study in Depth’ of Britain and Appeasement. They analysed, gave evidence for explanations and judgements, and used effectively the sources in Question 1. They deployed relevant knowledge, communicated their understanding, and had conceptual awareness. Answers which received very low marks, in Level 1 or at the low end of Level 2, displayed little knowledge, were frequently confused or generalised, or in Question 1 did not understand the sources. For most candidates in this examination performance was neither very good, i.e. at Levels 4 and 5, nor very inadequate. Many were awarded marks in Level 3 or at the upper ends of Level 2. Knowledge for this Study in Depth was limited for many of the candidates. For example, many deployed little own knowledge in responding to Question 02 beyond reparations and the Locarno pact, both of which featured in the sources. Some were too reliant on the sources altogether in this Question. In answering Question 04 many wrote general statements about appeasement and/or almost ignored the years 1935–1937, quite often instead writing about the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia. In Questions 04 and 05 and indeed others a substantial number of candidates believed that Neville Chamberlain was Prime Minister from 1935 (or even earlier).

All scripts were marked in accordance with the Mark Scheme. Question 2 was more popular than Question 3 with about two thirds of candidates answering the former. Of the 12 marks questions performance was better in 01 than in 03 and 05, mainly because of use of material in the sources. In the essay questions (for 24 marks) there was little difference in overall performance in Questions 02 and 06, but that in Question 04 was weaker mainly because of lack of focus on 1935–1937 in many answers.

Quality of Written Communication was generally satisfactory. The worst spelling mistakes of proper nouns were of some of those which actually appeared on the paper, namely ‘Versailles’, ‘Austria-Hungary’, ‘Keynes’, ‘Abyssinia’ and ‘Austen Chamberlain’. Indeed there were some who believed that Neville Chamberlain was the Foreign Secretary (or even Prime Minister) during the 1920s. Some candidates used the word ‘of’ instead of ‘have’. Whereas strong

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responses made arguments confidently, weaker ones implied uncertainty, or lack of conviction by using phrases such as 'it could [or may] have been a reason'.

### **Question 1**

- 01** Less than half of the candidates achieved marks in Levels 3 and 4. The Question asked candidates to use Sources A and B, but also their own knowledge. For many, being awarded marks below Level 3, was due to failure to use any own knowledge at all, or at best make only a faint reference. For others there was no attempt to identify (and explain) similarity, which in these sources was the view of Germans of the Treaty of Versailles. The Mark Scheme at Level 3 demands identifying differences in the sources, similarity and own knowledge.

Apart from a few candidates who misread or did not understand the sources, the majority saw clearly the over-harsh view of the Treaty in Source B compared with the view in Source A that it was not unduly harsh. Most responses were able to illustrate that with some exemplar detail from the sources. There were a few answers which did little more than paraphrase or even quote almost word for word from the sources without comment. These responses were placed in Level 1 or at the bottom of Level 2. Some answers asserted that because the two sources were written at different times and that Source B was a book published in 1992, 20 years later than Source A this was why it had a different view. Many of these same responses also asserted that because the title of Carr's book was *A History of Germany*, he took the German side and because Farmer's book was *Britain: Foreign and Imperial Affairs 1919–1939*, the author wrote from a British point of view. Such material was given no credit. Similarly those who asserted that the sources had been 'adapted' and therefore were unreliable received no credit for such a statement. The sources did of course have minor adaptations from the originals which were made simply to help candidates with such matters as difficult language or terms. However, almost 10 percent of candidates did explain the differences, identified the similarity and placed their answers in some (but necessarily not too extensive) context of own knowledge, for example the plebiscites being promoted by Woodrow Wilson's policy of self-determination or elaboration of Clemenceau's influence and/or the views of Keynes and/or Lloyd George. They were awarded marks in Level 4.

- 02** This question proved to be a little more difficult than anticipated, certainly in terms of candidates fulfilling all of its demands. A small minority ignored the sources, at least in not making any explicit use of them. Another minority did virtually the opposite and relied almost exclusively on the sources. In this latter case they did make some obvious use of Source C which had not been required in answering part 01. Approximately one third of candidates did achieve marks in Level 3 and above with 12 per cent being awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5. Level 2 marks were awarded to the highest proportion of responses. Those answers in the higher levels displayed explicit understanding and developed a balanced argument which considered not only British governments' possible reaction to the harshness of the Treaty of Versailles but also other motivating factors such as maintaining European peace and seeking genuine reconciliation with Germany. Such responses often stressed the relationship between Austen Chamberlain, Briand and Stresemann. They frequently argued that Locarno did not change the terms of the Versailles Treaty but succeeded in achieving voluntary German agreement to them rather than being enforced as in the original 'Diktat'. Weaker responses tended to assert that Locarno was a change to the Treaty of Versailles. Similarly stronger answers saw the Dawes and Young Plans as alleviating some of the harshness for Germany over reparations, whereas Level 2 standard responses saw just change from Versailles by British governments realising that the original Treaty had been too harsh. Very few, even

amongst the best answers, distinguished between the policies of various governments even though the Geneva Protocol as well as the Locarno Treaty was featured in Source C. Most responses made some use of the criticisms of Versailles in Source B, although as with other points in the sources only the better answers integrated them as opposed to simply identifying them.

There were two major weaknesses of responses placed in Level 2 (and Level 1). The first was lack of range, so whereas most could write a little about reparations and Locarno, there was little from own knowledge about developments such as the naval agreements, the Dawes and Young Plans, the Kellogg-Briand pact or the economic and military issues for Britain. The second major weakness was inability to argue a balanced case by considering other reasons for British governments' policies towards Germany in the period other than reaction against the perceived harshness of Versailles given in the question.

## **Question 2**

- 03** Approximately two-thirds of candidates chose to answer Question 2. Of those about 50 percent achieved marks at the top of Level 2 and above in this part with more being awarded marks in Level 4 than in the other 'explanation Questions', 01 and 05. Those who did achieve marks in Level 4 and, also to an extent in Level 3, focused sharply on the reasons for the British government opposing the invasion of Abyssinia. They cited reasons such as public opinion (including in some cases reaction to cinema newsreels), the need for the National government to respect the public view with the General Election approaching, Britain's support for the League of Nations and especially collective security, Britain's neighbouring colonial interests in East Africa and a possible threat to the security of the Suez Canal. Many of the best answers did place Britain's opposition in some context of the dilemma for the British government given the existence of the Stresa Front and the leaking of the Hoare-Laval Plan, but the focus on reasons for government opposition to the invasion of Abyssinia was consistently maintained. Responses receiving marks in Level 2 had one of two flaws (or in a few cases both). Some focused on why Mussolini invaded Abyssinia with information on, for example, his desire to create a new Roman Empire, alleged French approval and British 'silence' at the Stresa conference. The second and more common flaw was to focus on explanation of why Britain allowed Mussolini to take Abyssinia because of a desire not to allow him to leave the Stresa Front 'and ally with Hitler', why sanctions were weak or Britain's policy as seen in the Hoare-Laval Plan. In many of these Level 2 responses there was virtually no explanation of Britain's opposition as such with quite a proportion of candidates seeming to answer, at least in part, Question 06 on the January 2010 paper.
- 04** This part of Question 2 saw relatively few responses being awarded marks in Levels 4 and 5. Well over one third received marks in Level 2. Too many responses dealt in generalisations about the effects of the Depression or, in some cases, hardly mentioned the effects. The Wall Street crash was mentioned by many, but the follow-up often did not go much beyond simply stating that Britain therefore had little (in some cases 'no') money to spend on the military and therefore appeasement had to be followed given 'the might of Germany'. These answers and certainly those with Level 1 marks made virtually no specific references to the years 1935 to 1937. Indeed many instead wrote about the Sudetenland crisis (and even later events). A substantial number believed that Chamberlain was Prime Minister from (of before) 1935. Responses in the higher Levels did provide depth on the effects of the Depression. A few recognised Chamberlain as Chancellor responsible for financial policy and government spending. There was some elaboration of Britain's concentration on economic and financial problems in dealing with unemployment and recovery with a handful of answers also mentioning the costs of

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empire. Many weaker responses lacked range on reasons other than the Depression for the policy of appeasement, although some did refer to the Peace Ballot and the Fulham by-election. There was, however, little if any reference to actual events of 1935-37 and Britain's reaction to them. The stronger responses did have a range of reasons beyond the effects of the Depression such as the influence of public opinion, as a reason for lack of rearmament, and the perceived weakness of the League of Nations after the invasion of Abyssinia. Surprisingly many weaker responses made no reference to the Stresa Front, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, re-occupation of the Rhineland or the Spanish Civil War, though most did perceive German rearmament as a reason for appeasement policy. Answers in the higher levels did look at both the Depression and other reasons in the context of at least some of the significant events of 1935-37. Only those in Levels 4 and 5 really had depth in terms of supported judgement in evaluating whether the Depression was the main reason or not.

### **Question 3**

- 05** This question was not particularly well answered overall. One third of the responses gained marks in Levels 3 and 4, but most of the remainder were awarded marks in Level 2. The small minority of responses which did gain marks in Level 4 linked convincingly Chamberlain's personality and background with both domestic and foreign issues in the year 1937. Their reasons for Chamberlain's policy of appeasement included his loathing of war and experiences of members of his extended family in the Great War, his alignment with anti-war public opinion, his business-like approach to believing the dictators to be honest men who like himself would keep their word, his belief in peaceful negotiation and compromise, his familiarity with the economic and financial problems facing Britain, his anti-communism, and the horrors evident in the Spanish Civil War in which he refused to allow Britain to become actively involved. The majority of responses, however, displayed two main weaknesses, failure to focus on 'personally' and on '1937'. Several seemed to indicate that Chamberlain had been Prime Minister for some years before. Most of the answers in Level 2 did point out Chamberlain's anti-war stance, but it was stated as a generalisation. Very few referred to the Spanish Civil War. Some did refer to German rearmament and the relative weakness of Britain, though few of these connected this with Chamberlain's personal commitment. However, the main weakness of Level 2, and indeed those in Level 1 was to write irrelevantly about the Sudetenland crisis and Munich, or indeed about events in 1939.
- 06** This question was answered fairly successfully with a higher proportion of responses, than in the other two 24 marks questions, being awarded marks in Levels 5, 4 or 3. These amounted to over one third of the responses. Rather more than another third of answers were given marks in Level 2. Responses in Levels 4 and 5 contained balance between argument about the appropriateness of the policy of appeasement and the other alternatives such as intervention in the Spanish Civil War, (difficulty of taking) action over Austria since the failure of the Stresa Front and Italy's alignment with Germany, war itself or at least more positive action over the Sudetenland crisis or over the invasion of Czechoslovakia. They considered Churchill's views, in some cases the changing view of the Labour Opposition and also Chamberlain's failure to make common cause with the Soviet Union. Such answers emphasised how appeasement was essentially abandoned in the spring of 1939 despite Chamberlain's lingering hopes even at the beginning of September. The debate over historical interpretation was evident and most of the stronger answers concluded that whereas alternatives to appeasement policy could have been considered, with Chamberlain in charge and given the perceived relative military strengths of Britain and Germany, appeasement was the only realistic policy. Answers which were placed in Level 2 for this Question sometimes made references to Churchill,

or failure to join with the USSR, or to historical interpretations, but lacked depth especially in relation to the last issue. As in some responses to other questions, principally Questions 04 and 05, answers which were placed in Level 2 also had difficulty in covering the dates given. Most did consider the Sudetenland crisis, but many frequently made no mention of the Anschluss, or the critical events over Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939. Indeed some responses virtually repeated what they had said about the Sudetenland crisis when looking at the wrong year in their response to Question 05. Nevertheless it was good to see a few really sound answers which, not only had explicit understanding and used appropriate selective knowledge, but also were able to sustain consistent argument to reach a clear judgement.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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