



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2G

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2G

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

General Comments

The quality of response from candidates was very good. The vast majority of candidates used the available time well, producing relevant answers of appropriate length to all four questions. Most scripts were well-organised and well-presented. Very few candidates made the mistake of neglecting to use the sources in Question 1 (02). It was pleasing that most answers were based on a sound grasp of the demands of the question – narrative description for its own sake was a relatively rare occurrence. The work of the best candidates showed balanced arguments supported by confident knowledge.

There were, however, some failings worthy of note. Many candidates under-achieved through sloppy, ill-defined use of English, with potentially relevant arguments undermined by reliance on loosely expressed general assertions. In Question 1 (01), the handling of the sources was often far too literal and uncritical, trying to base comparisons on mismatched evidence; in Question 1 (02) too many answers began with a literal paraphrase of the sources without sufficiently direct links to the answer to the question. Such an approach does indeed ensure that the sources are not missed out altogether – but those candidates who *used* selective evidence from the sources to support a direct argument in response to the question reached a much higher level of achievement.

Question 1

- 01** There were many convincing answers to this question, on Cavour at the 1856 Paris Peace Conference, providing direct assessment of similarities and differences in the views expressed by Hearder and Duggan. Rather fewer answers went beyond this to provide the depth of comment or differentiation required for Level 4. Weaker answers relied on a literal, line-by-line approach to the sources that often led to confusion and to inappropriate selection of evidence. It should also be said that a stock, ‘all-purpose’ approach to the provenance of the sources is always unproductive. It is far better to consider the *views* expressed by the sources.
- 02** In this question, on Piedmont’s contribution to Italian unification, many well-informed answers showed a solid understanding of lessons learned from the failures of 1848–1849, of the economic and political strengths of Piedmont, of the role of Cavour and of the importance of the actions and attitudes of foreign powers. Weaker answers suffered from the tendency, noted above, to deploy extensive literal evidence from each of the three sources in turn, before the *purpose* for using this evidence had been made clear. A few candidates also included irrelevant material from well after the end date of the question. The overall response to this question was convincing.

Question 2

- 03** In this question, on the reasons why Pope Pius IX was considered a possible leader of the Italian cause in 1848, most answers were based on sound knowledge of Pope's liberal reforms, the role of key individuals such as Gioberti and the importance of the ability of the Church to reach across regional and class differences. (Several candidates made effective points about the weaknesses of other leaders of the 1848 revolutions who lacked this universal appeal). It was surprising, however, that so many candidates were tempted into including plainly irrelevant material about the Pope's change of heart and the proclamation of the Allocution.
- 04** Answers to this question, on the extent to which the failures of the 1848–1849 revolutions could be attributed to 'poor leadership', were generally good and sometimes impressive. A large proportion of candidates wrote confidently about the range of other factors leading to failure; sometimes this approach was over-emphasised and the key issue of leadership was neglected or entirely forgotten. The most successful answers showed excellent understanding of specific aspects of leadership, such as the military failures of Charles Albert, or the lack of coordination between different revolts in different places at different times. It was pleasing that a number of high-quality answers were able to differentiate between examples of poor leadership as opposed to examples of effective and determined leadership elsewhere, such as the defence of the Roman Republic.

Question 3

So many candidates were attracted to Question 2 that there were far fewer responses to Question 3, mostly but not always of lower quality.

- 05** Answers to this question, on the incorporation of Venetia into the united Italy, were often based on sound knowledge of Bismarck's diplomacy and the various battles in 1866 but tended to be too descriptive, without a sufficiently direct focus on explanation.
- 06** In this question, on the 'political compromise that satisfied nobody' after Garibaldi's victories in the South, many successful answers provided relevant and balanced arguments about the contrasting aims of Cavour and Garibaldi. Some candidates were able to go beyond this to discuss the views of various sections of society in Italy, or of foreign powers. Overall, however, too many answers were very descriptive and lacking in depth and development.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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