



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

History 1041

Unit HIS2M

Report on the Examination

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Unit HIS2M

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

General Comments

As also highlighted in my last report, this paper rather confirmed an imbalance in the coverage of the specification by some Centres. The period 1933 to 1939 is generally very fully taught but the war years seem to be less well-covered. Indeed, the difference in the depth and range of knowledge and understanding between these two parts of the specification is often very pronounced. Many candidates can write endlessly about ‘propaganda’ – though not always with an appropriate degree of focus – as evidenced in Question 06 - but the same candidates seem in possession of only the vaguest knowledge of developments on the Home Front during the war, as demonstrated in responses to Question 02. It would seem that a better balance may still need to be achieved in preparing candidates for future papers.

I would recommend a stronger focus on 1939 to 1945 in terms of how the war impacted on the civilian population, with candidates becoming more familiar with how this changed over time and how the winter of 1942–1943 might be regarded as a turning point in the civilian experience.

Question 3, which focused on Media and Propaganda, proved a more popular optional choice than Question 2, with approximately 1 in 3 candidates only choosing the latter. Nevertheless, this did not seem to result in any marked difference between the questions in terms of marks scored.

There were relatively few very weak scripts and few incomplete scripts though, despite warnings in earlier reports, a minority of students seem still unable to allocate a proportionate amount of time to each question. Fortunately, it is only a tiny number who still resort to writing out the question so eating into valuable planning and thinking time.

Question 1

01 There is a continued improving awareness on the part of candidates of the requirement to identify difference *and* similarity and as a consequence, provided some explanation can be supported with relevant own knowledge, an increasing number of candidates are reaching Level 3.

However, many candidates’ understanding of how to use ‘provenance’ remains very variable. The provenance of sources is best applied when it can be used to explain difference and similarity in the views expressed within the sources. What is not needed is ill-directed, generalised comment about ‘bias’, ‘reliability’ or ‘usefulness’. More helpful is an appreciation of the ‘agenda’ of a specific source, whether it is more or less objective, the degree to which it is critical or uncritical, the range or typicality of the view it expresses and so on. If candidates can begin to see ‘provenance’ as another form of ‘own knowledge’ which can be used to explain the views expressed in the sources, this will serve them better than repeating generalised mantras such as ‘primary good’, ‘secondary bad’ or that anything written long after the event might be somehow tainted because it is not contemporary. Moreover, candidates should be guided away from extensive paraphrasing of the sources and the use of over-lengthy quotations. Weaker candidates

can spend two paragraphs paraphrasing each source before they even begin any comparison.

The responses to 01 were often full of such provenance-based commentaries, some of which were carried to excessive lengths. Source A in particular was subject to immediate suspicion by some candidates because its author was Speer, a leading Nazi, therefore 'it must be unreliable'. Few candidates appreciated rather that Speer's view was much more personal and uncritical, whereas the German historian Fischer was offering a greater overview than Speer and was likely to be more objective.

The best approach to question 01 is to encourage candidates in turn to identify difference and similarity of view and to explain these through their knowledge of context and their appreciation of provenance. This is a comparative question and, therefore, 'own knowledge' must be used to explain, not merely as an opportunity to demonstrate loosely related 'facts'. In addition, candidates need reminding that a judgement about 'how far' is required, hence the importance of assessing the *degree* of difference or similarity. Expressed well and done with some precision and a reasonable range of own knowledge; this should take candidates into Level 4.

- 02** There were some very good responses to this question from a minority of candidates who were well-informed, illustrating their responses with good knowledge and understanding of the extent of physical destruction caused by the mass bombing and of the attempts of the regime to maintain morale through propaganda and through interventions to combat shortages and homelessness. However, many more offered generalised responses only, with a significant number of candidates knowing little beyond what was contained in the source material. Having little specific knowledge about the impact of mass bombing, many responses drifted towards writing about the general impact of 'war' without forging links to the focus of the question. Many of these candidates struggled to reach Level 3.

Question 2

- 03** This question proved accessible to most candidates who chose it. Some drifted into description of women's roles (Kinder Kirche Kuche) but most understood the requirement to identify specific reasons why membership of the BDM was promoted, though there was a tendency for weaker candidates to 'overlap' their explanations. Encouragingly, more candidates are trying to distinguish relative importance (prioritisation) in order to access Level 4 but for many this tends to be limited to simple concluding statements such as 'the most important reason was...'. Candidates need continued encouragement to explore the interrelationship of factors in order to avoid the tendency to see explanations as 'stand alone' entities rather than linked parts of a wider process
- 04** This was a question which offered candidates broad scope to develop discussion on a range of issues dealing with support and, in particular, to distinguish between simple conformism and committed loyalty, and to discuss the degree of complicity of different social groups with the regime. A small number of good candidates grasped this opportunity very well, though in practice most candidates reached Level 4 by a more formulaic route: identifying, in turn, groups which supported the Nazis and those which did not.

Weaker candidates generalised and showed less awareness of the complexity of response to the Nazis within the different social groups. Many, for example, adopted rigid standpoints, arguing either that workers were won over (jobs, KdF) or were not (abolition of unions, low wages) or that peasants worshipped the Nazis because Nazi ideology

lauded the peasant (Blood and Soil) or were alienated (dissatisfaction with the limits to legislation). The realities were, of course, less black and white and it would be encouraging to see more candidates aware of the broader range of opinion *within* social groups.

Nevertheless, the recognition by candidates of the need to balance their answers is growing. The best responses tended to place their discussion within the framework of Nazi attempts to build a 'national community'. The extent to which the Nazis succeeded in creating a true 'Volksgemeinschaft' would be a very useful learning activity.

Question 3

- 05** This question was both popular and accessible to most candidates, though some were unable to resist taking the opportunity to 'show off' their knowledge of propaganda media (radio, film etc) rather than focusing on explanation. However, many were able to develop a range of reasons, but as with Question 03, without always separating factors very explicitly.
- 06** This question resulted in many responses which leaned towards description as a lot of candidates showed themselves eager to relate the depth of their 'knowledge' of, mostly, radio or newspapers or film or parades or posters, though a broader awareness of cultural propaganda was less in evidence. This resulted in many formulaic responses arguing, almost stereotypically, that some forms of propaganda 'worked' and some did not. Typically, many thought that the radio ('it was everywhere') had a big impact but that newspapers ('dull and boring') did not. Clearly, there is some validity in these views but there were a number of candidates who were able to take their analysis deeper than this and who were able to discuss the difficulties of reaching judgements about the impact of propaganda and the relative effectiveness of how it influenced peoples' thinking.

Many candidates, for example, were well acquainted with the Hitler myth but were much less aware of which groups or classes responded more positively than others to this, which were more likely to see through the propaganda and which remained relatively immune and unconvinced by the qualities the myth attributed to Hitler. Issues such as the Hitler myth and the extent to which a 'national community' was created lie at the heart of this part of the specification and candidates would benefit from addressing these issues explicitly.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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