



---

History

Paper 2K (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 05/01/16

---

## Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Paper 2K (AS): Specimen question paper

**01** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining why the United States entered the First World War in 1917?

[25 marks]

#### Student response

Source A is from the German Chancellor and is an official statement that defends Germany's actions. It uses strong language to shift the responsibility, accusing Britain of ignoring 'the laws of humanity'. Bethman-Hollweg argues that the US is not an enemy of Germany and claims that they have been forced into this situation due to the British blockade. He points out that the two countries have been at peace for a century and that it will be the US that breaks that if they intervene. The British Blockade was having a very serious impact on Germany, leading to rationing and food shortages. The British did stop all shipping regardless of neutrality so it is possible to have some sympathy with this view. The German fleet was trapped in port and there was little else to do in order to end the blockade. Germany had not directly threatened the US but they had caused losses, most infamously with the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915. They were warned off by the US at that time and did stop the unrestricted attacks so Germany did know the risks when they resumed the tactic in 1917. The Kaiser was reportedly worried about US influence in the Pacific so that was another factor. The US was mainly against intervention in the war but German actions at sea did change the mood. The Zimmerman Telegram which was sent to Mexico and intercepted by British spies would have further damaged the Germans reputation in the US. This view is unbalanced in its version of events and tries to exonerate Germany completely. So this source is valuable to explain the German motives for resuming unrestricted submarine warfare despite the risk they knew they were taking but is not entirely accurate.

Source B is from President Wilson's speech to Congress so he is going to be persuasive and maybe scaremonger to win support. He also uses the word 'humanity' but he sees it as lacking in Germany. He is arguing that the US has tried to avoid war but has been pushed into it due to German actions. US lives had been lost and he says it is a German declaration of war on the US. Wilson may be accurate about the trigger event for the US entry into war but he does not tell the whole story. The US had loaned lots of money to the Allies during the war, so had a vested interest in an Allied victory. They would not get their money back if Germany won. Also, the sinking of the Lusitania led to a suspension of the German submarine tactic but also led the US to start preparing for war. The Preparedness Programme was begun in America so it might look like Wilson was just waiting for an excuse to enter the war. Wilson also leaves out any mention of the British Blockade and just gives a one-sided view of the situation at sea. However, there is no doubt that the indiscriminate use of submarines was seen as unacceptable and the morality of attacking commercial shipping definitely played a part in the US decision to enter the war.

Both sources state that unrestricted submarine warfare was central to the US decision to join the war. However, Source A tries to justify the use of the tactic and shift blame onto the British, whilst Source B places the blame entirely on Germany. Source A is clearly desperate to avoid a war with the US so may be less valuable as he will say anything at this point to shift responsibility. Source B is from Wilson himself so is more valuable in understanding his decision to seek support to enter the war.

### **Commentary – Borderline Level 4/5**

This is a strong answer, although lacking full development in parts. It is especially strong in its assessment of Source A, commenting effectively on tone and making important references to provenance. The content and argument are fully explored and the deployment of knowledge of context is very strong.

Whilst the latter is evident also in the assessment of Source B, there is slightly less effective comment on tone, but the rest of the answer and the judgements made are strong.

This would be borderline level 4 and 5.