

# History

Answers and commentaries

A-level (7042)

## **2L Italy and Fascism, c1900— 1945**

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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# Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History Component 2L Italy and Fascism, c1900–1945 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

## Question 1

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying education in Fascist Italy in the 1930s.

**[30 marks]**

## Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**

## A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2L – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

**L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**

Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

## Student responses

## Response A

Source A has provenance that can be seen as reliable to ~~telling us~~ informing us about the way the education in Fascist Italy was used to influence hearts and minds of children. As an elementary school book for seven year olds that was compulsory, it reflects ~~how~~ the way information was either exaggerated or changed in order to increase the idolisation of Fascism, seemingly being ~~one~~ a part of the getting rid of all textbooks that were not 'Fascist approved' by 1929, and implementing a standard textbook that ~~ensured~~ the 'Libro Unico' that ensured all children learn the same information. This, when paired with the <sup>source's</sup> content, infers that education was used to socially condition children into over-glorifying Fascism and the 'Il Duce', as we see the March on Rome, which was essentially a constitutional appointment of Mussolini as Prime Minister, presented as with "black shirts" entering Rome and "putting everything in order". This seems useful as a reflection of the way Fascist propaganda glorified Fascism as a dynamic, revolutionary movement, as the undertone suggests that ~~that~~ it was a revolutionary coup, arguably exaggerated to condition children into believing 'Il Duce' was a heroic ~~and~~ figure who ~~saved Italy from~~ and "changed Italy", which shows how education in the 1930s arguably used exaggeration of history through a Fascist lens to strengthen 'the Cult of the Duce'.

However, the source's <sup>content</sup> ~~provenance~~ can also make it unreliable to understanding the extent of successful indoctrination in Fascist Italy, as it can ~~be~~ mislead me into believing it was successful, despite ~~the school system including the influences~~ evident ~~resistance~~ to ~~Fascist~~ threats

to the Fascist influence of education. Schools ~~attendance~~ ~~dropped in the first~~ also included ~~unifixes~~ and ~~panels~~ included Catholic interests, so one can assume that the overglorification of the Duce who said "go away all nasty Italians who do not know how to think for the good", and the inferable attempt to create idolisation of Il Duce and Fascism was undermined by the ~~authority~~ moral and symbolic authority of the Pope and Church. The source's ~~provenance~~ reinforces unreliability, as it is clearly attempting to influence all Italian children by being compulsory, yet this means its intentions ~~cannot~~ accurately tell us ~~if they~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~was~~ successful. Many in the south did not attend school post 11, so the ~~source~~ inferable that it was ~~successful~~ conditioning is due to the provenance of the source making it unreliable.

Overall, the source is reliable in showing the state's intentions to condition children to into overglorifying Fascism and Mussolini, but less reliable to accurately showing failure to influence the hearts and minds of Italian children, and to showing threats to this aim.

Source B has provenance that makes it reliable to understanding 1930s Fascist education, as it is a British political science writing, meaning he is informed in understanding political aims that his interview with Mussolini can reflect. This can be verified by his access to original documents useful to providing an original and considered perspective of Fascist education. He is also unlikely to be inclined to glorify the successes of aims, as he is British, and so unaffected by the propagandisation of Fascism ~~in Italy~~ <sup>in Italy</sup>.

The content is also therefore useful, as the "danger of dismissal" that forced "the rest to conform" reflects how anti-Fascist teachers were harassed by 1929, and is valuable to showing how the reaction of ~~the~~ teachers caused ~~successful~~ conformity successfully. We also see how his unbiased view means he informs us on failure of the Fascist investigation of education as he speaks of complaints about slow progress that reflects how <sup>Fascists</sup> ~~it~~ was not ~~at~~ yet an absolutely overbearing influence on schools ~~at~~ by 1935.

The source's provenance can be seen as somewhat unreliable due to ~~how~~ him ~~is~~ being British, as he could be somewhat opposed to Mussolini's regime, having witnessed the League of Nations condemn his attack on Abyssinia with poisonous gas in 1935. The content of an overly critical tone reflects this, saying "teacher" ideals are "incompatible" with the "essentials of Fascism".

with language of 'netting' children that ~~is~~ perhaps reflects an unreliable, judgemental perspective that is not wholly based on facts ~~about~~ Fascist education's success.

Overall, the source is reliable in telling us of the success and failures of Fascist education, however, the tone can possibly make it unreliable in understanding the success in which Mussolini 'netted' children!

Source 1 has provenance that is reliable in ~~telling~~ telling us about Fascist aims towards education, as it is written by Bottai, the minister of education, who is ~~likely~~ ~~to~~ a ~~po~~ primary source of knowledge due to him himself having responsibility over making education 'Fascist'.

The nature of the charter itself also clearly intends to properly outline the "principles, goals and methods of Fascist school". The content reinforces this, as we see valuable insight into how Fascist education intends to "shape the human and political conscience of the new generations", which reflects how ~~the textbooks~~ ~~the~~ ~~textbooks~~ ~~also~~ ~~Unica~~ textbooks would ~~to~~ speak on history through a Fascist lens ~~and~~, and how geography would focus on the superiority of Italians in eugenics. ~~This~~ ~~means~~ influencing social and political views. It's focus on the "duty" of children ~~and~~ on "political and military preparation", ~~also reflects~~ and on "home management for girls" is further useful to understanding how education in 1930s aimed to 'raise up children'.



to serve the state militarily in line with Mussolini's 1927 'Battle for Births' policy to increase the population to 60 million by 1950.

However, the provenance is unreliable in showing us how successful these aims were, as it is a Fascist School Charter intending to enforce Fascist authority over education. Furthermore, the authoritative tone around the duty of "all students" does not reflect how the huge, rural south were largely not attending school post 11, and how there were still Catholic schools allowed ~~to~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~was~~ that influenced the "human and political consciences" both of which the Fascist State allowed.

Overall, the source reliably informs us on the Fascist aims of indoctrination by the late 1930s in preparation for war, but less reliable in showing how the Fascists made allowances that loosened their authority over the young.

### This is a Level 5 response

This script demonstrates a very good understanding of all three sources. It maintains its focus on the issue of 'education in Fascist Italy' and reaches a judgement on each source. There are developed comments on the provenance, which are pertinent and show understanding of context. This shows an awareness of the purpose. For example, Source C is understood to be a statement of Fascist aims and is linked to the 'Battle for Births'. Source A is recognised as being within a pattern of Fascist educational practice. In this case the context of 1922 is also used skilfully to demonstrate the nature of the propaganda. Awareness of purpose leads on to successful evaluation because it highlights the limitations of the sources, which are considered for all three sources. Possible limitations are illustrated with reference to the text. For example, Source B's provenance suggests it might be critical, which is explicitly linked to the tone and language used.

## Response B

Source A has value for an historian studying how the Fascist regime attempted to use propaganda to indoctrinate the youth ~~text~~ through education.

The value of this source can be demonstrated through its ~~content~~ <sup>providence</sup>. The March on Rome 1922 was exploited by Mussolini as a propaganda triumph, because of how successful the march was in helping Mussolini in becoming prime minister. The inclusion of this occasion in an 'elementary school' text book demonstrates how Mussolini wanted to ~~groom the youth~~ mould the youth's minds from their earliest years and therefore adds value to the source. Similarly, the use of a script ~~text~~ structure aims to create the impression that it is normalised to speak of the Fascist regime in such a positive manner, for example 'Long live Italy!', and therefore grooming the children to believe and also act this way. This adds value to the source in terms of understanding how Mussolini used propaganda within the education system to promote fascism and indoctrinate the youth because

of its emphasis on the positivity of the March on Rome from children to children and it seems as though here, Mussolini is creating his own history due to his obsession with legacy and need to create a Roman style - Julius Caesar Empire. \*

The value of source A can also be seen within its content. The fact that the March on Rome is painted in such a positive light through the use of ~~ex~~ exclamation marks and capital letters works to emphasise to ~~the~~ its elementary school audience that it is normal to speak about the occasion this way. This is valuable because it demonstrates how Mussolini indoctrinated the youth through propaganda. Similarly, the use of the phrase 'Black Shirts enter Rome and put everything in order' ~~also~~ highlights Mussolini's use of propaganda because it doesn't take into account the reality of the event. The March on Rome by 30,000 Black Shirts on 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1922 was achieved through violence and intimidation of the Squadrists,

\* The script structure is easier to follow for children of elementary school age and therefore demonstrates Mussolini's

Shrewdness in producing successful propaganda.

it was not peaceful as the source suggests. In addition, this quote would suggest that once the Blackshirts entered Rome, that all problems simply vanished and this is not accurate. Mussolini's ~~consolidated~~ road to Premiership and then his appointment as PM did not solve all of Italy's problems, evident through the Matteotti crisis of 1924. This decreases value from the source in terms of the reality of events, but ~~increases~~ sustains its value in terms of the fact that ~~Mussolini~~ the book speaks only the positive of the occasion and therefore how Mussolini was using propaganda to indoctrinate the youth through education in the 1930s.

Conclusively, <sup>source A</sup> ~~this source has~~<sup>is</sup> of extreme value for an historian studying the use of propaganda to indoctrinate the youth through education.

Source B has value for an historian studying the ~~that~~ understanding of the Italian education system ~~by~~ from an international perspective.

Source B's value can be demonstrated through its provenance. The extract has been written by Fier, who is British. This increases the source's value because, as a Brit, Fier has not been subject to any propaganda and can therefore provide ~~the~~ a subjective account of the education system. However, the fact he is foreign from Italy could decrease the source's value because it means that Fier does not have an inside perspective on ~~the~~ education in Fascist Italy and the information he is receiving about education is coming directly from Mussolini, which suggests that he is going to learn what Mussolini wants him to and not the ~~whole~~ reality. The fact that Mussolini is likely to promote the positive aspects of the education system and not focus on the whole picture, means that perhaps Fier has not received accurate information and therefore the source's value is decreased because of this. #1

Source B's value can be demonstrated through its content. Fier has understood the difference between loyal fascists and tactical

Fascists - people who have bought into the regime ~~the way~~ to make personal gains. This is shown through the quote 'The danger of dismissal caused the rest to conform, or appear to conform.' This is valuable ~~the~~ because of the historical context that Teachers had to become members of the PNF in 1933, in order to keep their jobs. 90% of Teachers conformed in 1933 because they wanted to keep their jobs and continue to educate, which demonstrates the surface level conformity in which Fire mentions: 'appear to conform'. Within the ~~set~~ source, Fire goes on to mention how 'They are not to escape! If they can be netted in the school, good! If not, they will be caught outside!'. This increases the value of source B because it demonstrates the fact that if Mussolini was unsuccessful in indoctrinating the youth through educational reforms, such as having a portrait of himself in every classroom, then he would ~~not~~ ~~then~~ expose the youth to propaganda in another way; through the ONB becoming compulsory in 1934 and membership shooting to 8.5 million. Mussolini

also bans Catholic action in 1931 in order to remove a conflicting ideology. However, the source's value decreases because it fails to take into account the idea that children were likely to join the ONB because of the sporting opportunities available and future job prospects, rather than because they were buying into the Fascist Regime and ideology.

In conclusion, Source B is somewhat valuable for an historian studying the role of the ONB and teacher membership in 1933 in creating a nation for fascists during the 1930s.

#1 - Similarly, as a socialist, Finer ~~is~~ will have some conflicting views to Mussolini and Fascism and is therefore likely to be critical of the Regime and Mussolini's educational reforms.

Source C is valuable ~~in~~ for an historian studying the Fascist Regime's aims ~~in~~ within education in the 1930s.

Source C's ~~value~~ value can be

demonstrated through its provisions. It ~~is~~ was written in 1939, which is the year that membership in the ONB becomes compulsory and therefore take up in the Fascist Regime seems ostensibly mass. However, it is hard to gauge how many children joined for Fascist ideologies and how many joined for sporting opportunities. This affects the value of the source because in the eyes of Fascist officials, such as Bottai, it seems as though the indoctrination of the youth is ~~going~~ successful, ~~to~~ and therefore Bottai may be overly confident within the 'Chapter', regarding its aims and goals.

The value of Source C can be viewed in its context. The quote "...which is achieved in the Fascist State..." is a product of its providence. The reality is that Mussolini had failed to create a ~~state~~ nation of loyal fascists and instead created the conditions for surface level conformity. This is demonstrated through the historical context that the of the 'Reform of



Customs' during the 1930s and  
 how Mussolini failed to change the  
 behaviour of Italian women, who  
 continued to wear trousers.  
 Therefore Bottai's claim that  
 there was a united 'Fascist state'  
 is weak and decreases value of  
 the source. Similarly, the quote 'social  
 mission of women are quite distinct  
 in Fascist life' suggests that  
~~the~~ women's role is clear in fascist  
 society. Whilst it is accurate  
 their role is clear, take up  
 in these ideals ~~was not~~ did  
~~reflect~~ not reflect positively.  
 In 1930, girls the ~~age~~ from the  
 ages 10-14 were more likely  
 to join the Catholic Action  
 group because they did not  
 enjoy the traditional, domestic  
 activities they had to do in  
 the DNB and would rather do  
 sport in Catholic action.

Conclusively, source C has little  
 value for an historian studying  
 the goals of the fascist education  
 system, because of its prevalence,  
~~it is not~~ the content ~~is~~  
 suggests an inaccurate  
 suggestion of events.

**This is a Level 3 response**

The script shows some understanding of the content of all of the sources and is aware that they are sources and so makes some attempt to comment on the provenance. The grasp of historical context is not always secure, and it is not consistently applied to the focus of the question. The answer is over-reliant on repeating the content of the sources, and conveys the view that if some content can be proved to be 'wrong' then it is 'less valuable'. The comments on 'tactical fascism' and 'surface level conformity' show some insight in reference to B and C but the overall judgement on Source C confuses goals and events and is not convincing. The comments on Source A are heavily dependent on the source text, with only a little relevant context. The commentary on A loses focus on the issue of education.

## Question 4

To what extent was the fall in support for Mussolini in the years 1940 to 1943 solely due to the failure of Italy's military campaigns?

**[25 marks]**

### Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

## Student responses

## Response A

The fall in support for Mussolini in the years 1940-43 emerged for varying reasons but the most impactful of these was Italy's involvement in WW2 and the failure of her military campaigns. Although economic hardship and falling living standards also contributed to falling support for Mussolini, these issues are inseparable from Italy's involvement in WW2 making them secondary in importance for the fall in support of Il Duce in the years 1940-43.

~~Italy's~~ The failure of Italy's military campaigns both created economic deprivation domestically, contributing to falling living standards, and by association falling support for Mussolini, and reduced the morale of the Italian people through news of loss of life abroad. Italy's loss of Abyssinia to the British in 1941 for example especially eroded domestic support for Mussolini as it ~~symbolised~~ symbolised the recovery of lost honour after the battle of Adowa in 1896 and the ~~victory~~ conquest of 1935, coupled with the fact that instead of reinforcing his African colonies against attack.

Mussolini instead decided to send 227,000 Italian troops to Russia which were defeated and resulted in further ~~losses~~ pointless loss of life in the minds of the Italian population. The embarrassment at Greece where 300,000 Greek troops held 500,000 Italian troops in a deadlock for 6 months with total death tolls of 32,000, only for Nazi Germany to emerge victorious in 3 weeks further justified the Italian people and made them see Mussolini as the main source of these humiliations since he had appointed himself War Minister and Commander in Chief. These military defeats also meant that supplies weren't reaching the Italian mainland as weakness in the Mediterranean caused 1/3 of supplies to be lost in transit, further worsening domestic

seeing this economic depravity be repaid by military victories. The same can be said with the growth in taxation, due to the poor performance of Italy in the war and the poor management of the armed forces, Mussolini was forced to raise taxes to 25% of national income by 1943 not only creating economic hardship among an already suffering population, but placing himself as the author of Italians' misfortune. Thus, it can be concluded that economic hardship as a cause of discontent with ~~Mussolini~~<sup>Mussolini</sup>, opinion of Mussolini. Thus, Italy's military defeats in WWII were the main reason for the fall in support for Il Duce (1940-43) both through the humiliation they suffered, the pointless loss of life they caused and the worsening economic impact on living standards they resulted in.

One could argue however, that it was in fact economic depravity within Italy during WWII that caused the tangible decline in living standards which actually ~~was~~ was the most important factor in causing a reduction in support for Mussolini (1940-43), despite this being ultimately influenced by WWII. The 25% fall in industrial production, 20% fall in steel manufacturing and subsequent boost to taxation totalling 25% of national income by 1943 naturally caused a sharp decline ~~in~~ support of Mussolini during the WWII period. The fact that, during this same 3 year period, ~~the~~ ~~drop~~ ~~in~~ ~~grain~~ ~~production~~ ~~dropped~~ ~~by~~ ~~1.6~~ ~~million~~ ~~tonnes~~ ~~further~~ ~~caused~~ ~~an~~ ~~economic~~ ~~hardship~~ ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~natural~~ ~~fall~~ ~~in~~ ~~support~~ ~~for~~ ~~Mussolini~~.

However, the economic downturn which turned many Italians against the fascist regime and Mussolini was in fact caused by WWII and the military failures incurred in the conflict. The 1.6 million tonne drop in grain production only occurred due to the drafting of southern farmers into the armed forces which caused greater discontent with the fascist regime since ~~they weren't even~~ ~~Italians~~ were not

was merely a consequence of Italy's military failures in WW2 and Italy's involvement in the war in the first place.

Finally, a case could be made for falling living standards individually as a cause of growing discontent and falling support for Mussolini, although this too was caused by Italy's involvement in WW2 and the military defeat that emerged from it. The falling calorie consumption which by 1942 was 1/5 of pre-war levels and the food rationing which was comparable to Nazi-occupied Poland naturally cultivated discontent for Mussolini among Italians seeing as he was the head of state until 1943 and the man who had made all decisions in government up to that point. The growing inflation rates during the war and further cuts to food consumption in a 2/3 fall in pork production further fuelled a fall in support for Mussolini and provides a somewhat convincing argument for this being the main reason for the fall (1940-43) in the first place.

However, just like economic hardship, falling living standards and domestic suffering were again caused by Italy's involvement in WW2 and the military failures it incurred throughout the conflict. As previously discussed, the deaths of soldiers abroad and the drafting of citizens in key positions such as farmers for contribution to living standards stalled agricultural production by 25% (1940-41) and the ~~losses of~~ ~~submarine~~ ~~battles~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~Mediterranean~~ ~~where~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~first~~ ~~3~~ ~~weeks~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~conflict~~ 710 of Italy's submarines had been sunk further prevented supplies from entering the mainland. This in turn forced food rationing within Italy to be comparable to Nazi-occupied Poland and bread rations to be the second worst in Europe behind the USSR at 150g per day. The ~~poverty~~ Maltona crisis was also caused by military failures in WW2 whereby the injuries of Italian soldiers which in Greece alone totalled 100,000 caused a shortage of medicine in Italy thus

causing malaria cases to spike on the mainland due to lack of medical supplies. Thus, as with economic hardship, falling living standards were ultimately caused by ~~economic and failure of military~~ in Italy's involvement and military failures in WW2 making that the main reason for Mussolini's falling support (1940-43)

Overall, Italy's military objectives and involvement in WW2 was the sole reason for the fall in support for Mussolini in 1940-43. Not only did it result in falling support for Il Duce after news of humiliating defeats abroad and pointless loss of life, but the military objectives incurred further caused economic hardships and falling living standards domestically causing the eventual collapse of the cult of Il Duce by his dismissal in July 1943

### This is a Level 5 response

This script shows understanding of the full demands of the question. The argument is sustained throughout, with an analytical approach, and the supported knowledge is specific and precise. The treatment of the failures of Italy's military campaigns 1940-1943 is very good. It makes reference to specific campaigns in Abyssinia, Russia and Greece, and further comments on the impact of these failures on 'support for Mussolini', which shows good understanding of the key issue. The opening paragraph proposes a balanced argument and this promise is fulfilled. There is appropriate and specific reference to economic problems and declining living standards. The overall judgement is substantiated by an exploration of the links between the factors, which leads to a convincing conclusion.

### Question 3

'Mussolini's successful consolidation of power, in the years 1922 to 1926, was due to the compromises he made to secure the support of the Italian elites.'

**[25 marks]**

### Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**



## Student responses

## Response A

It is important that despite being PM by 1922 in no way was Mussolini a dictator with divisions in the fascist party and large amounts of opposition in government. However by 1926, he was essentially a dictator ruling by decree. There are multiple factors that contribute towards this like Mussolini's political skill to gain support of the nationalists and his use of fascist violence. However, it is beyond doubt that the main factor that secured his consolidation was the weakness of his opposition.

Mussolini's political skill can not be understated with his ability to undermine his opponents and draw in the elites. By 1923, the FNF had merged with the nationalists which was great for Mussolini politically as the nationalists had a large base of support and it saw the merging of 2 factions ~~of~~ with similar ideologies. This move also brought in influential nationalists like Federzoni and Rocco who were well liked by the Italian elites. Mussolini, also understood the divisions in Italy and this was emphasised during the Matteotti crisis and Aventine succession in June of 1924 with Mussolini

publicly denouncing those who left parliament claiming they were acting 'unconstitutionally'. This came from the fact that he knew that the King's support was invaluable to constitutionally keep him in power despite liberal and socialist calls for his resignation and his good relationship with the King emphasised this point and although despite not agreeing with the political assassinations, nationalists and the old Italian elites believed he was the only man who could stop a socialist revolution in Italy. This was a result of Mussolini's political skill as he was able to convince the elites he was a strong leader. This was truly emphasised by his decisions to work within the confines of a liberal system and therefore opposed radical fascist disruption which meant removing influence from radical fascists like increasing party membership from 600,000 to 938,000 to dilute squadristi power and using Farinacci to purge the cabinet of all radicals and by doing this he became very popular with the elites while retaining his own power base.

However, it is undoubtable that incompetence of opposition was the main reason for his consolidation of power. This can be shown with the Aventine secession in 1924 (30<sup>th</sup> June) in which 150 anti-fascist walked out of parliament. Although a strong statement against fascist violence the removal of the 150 mp's made it even easier for Mussolini to pass legislation which was exacerbated by the fact that he already had 66% of the seats by 1924. Furthermore, despite the opposition having a common enemy in Mussolini refused to work together with the socialist breaking up into 3 sub-parties showing how they weren't strong enough to provide adequate opposition. This was shown further with the Liberals, in a pursuit of anti-socialists, can be seen a major reason why Mussolini gained power. The establishment of the Acerbo laws in 1923 can be put down to this as the influential liberals like Giolitti and Salandra supported them as they blamed Italy's proportional electoral system on the rise of socialism and instability after WW1. This shows how there was no effective opposition to Mussolini during these years as they were all divided themselves.

It can also be argued that fascist violence was a factor in his consolidation as the fear of political assassinations grew and fascist fraudulence and violence can be seen as one of the major factors in Mussolini's success in the 1924 elections.

The Blackshirt movement that won Mussolini the premiership in 1922 was still prevalent in the eyes of the King and military believing that a fascist revolution could occur at any point in time. However, by 1925 Mussolini ended the blackshirt movement as it was radical, made his rule seem more illegitimate and didn't have the strength to run a state bureaucracy. Focus went on the military with Mussolini <sup>raising</sup> ~~claiming~~ offer wages and becoming head of the armed forces on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1925. Instead of the blackshirts Mussolini utilised MSVN which was a private militia and OVRA (the secret police) to keep opposition in check showing Mussolini always relied on intimidation and violence. At the height of his power <sup>in 1926</sup> he was able to banish political opponents using OVRA in a process known as confino showing how Mussolini used the military to legitimise his ~~po~~ own power over the radical fascists.

All in all, despite Mussolini's political skill and ability to secure support from Italian elites using the confines of the liberal system and reducing the power of radicals fascist and socialist alike through intimidation and violence. It is clear to see that it was the incompetence of his opposition that gave him the opportunity to capitalise on these mistakes and consolidate his power.

**This is a Level 3 response**

This script shows an understanding of the question. The question has been addressed and there is an awareness of key issues around the consolidation of power by Mussolini. However, there is a lack of precision in the argument, especially about the given factor of 'compromises made by Mussolini'. This has been interpreted in the more general sense of 'political skills'. There are relevant references to the issue, for example Mussolini's willingness to 'work within the confines of a liberal system', and his 'good relationship with the king'. The statements about how this made for a successful consolidation of power are inadequately supported. As a result, although balancing factors are commented on and supported, the overall judgement is unconvincing.

# Get help and support

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