



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

History B 4045

40452 20th Century Depth Studies

Report on the Examination

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40452 20th Century Depth Studies

Introduction

This was the first examination of this unit in this specification. Candidates seem to have coped well with the question paper, and virtually no rubric errors were reported. The new answer booklets were mostly used well – though with the usual missing (or inaccurate) question numbers and the minority of candidates who fail to set out their answers clearly. This was in sharp contrast to the vast majority who produced answers that were well set out and usually easy to read. Many used paragraphs very sensibly, and this certainly helps examiners to give the maximum credit possible. Many wrote in clear English with appropriate good spelling and specialist vocabulary, though this, of course, was a challenge to some. Timing of answers did not seem to be much of an issue; there were very few unfinished scripts, and most of those who were clearly rushing towards the end had often wasted time with irrelevant sections earlier in the examination.

The standard seemed high in many centres, with the most able candidates gaining very high marks, including some with 60 out of 60. Those candidates of lesser ability still seemed able to cope with the structure of the question paper and understood the demands of the questions, even if their responses were sometimes very limited. What limited the marks of some candidates was the failure to respond to the demands of the question. This was particularly true in Section A, and this report will address issues arising from this observation.

In Section A by far the most popular topic was Topic 3 (USA in 1920s), taken by nearly two-thirds of all candidates. Weimar Germany was more popular than the Russian Revolution. In Section B the most popular topic was Topic 5 (Hitler's Germany), followed, in order of popularity, by Depression and New Deal, Vietnam, Stalin's USSR and US Civil Rights. Northern Ireland and the Arab-Israeli options gained a very small percentage of candidates each.

Section A

Many candidates had significant problems in this section over the inappropriate use of their own knowledge. The 4 mark question was intended to test comprehension and inference, yet thousands of candidates did not just stray into own knowledge; they virtually ignored the source to offload what they had learnt. In these instances, often any deductions or inferences made arose from outside knowledge rather than the source content itself. Often the answers were far too long; only a few lines were needed. Other candidates merely paraphrased the content of the source, sometimes doing just enough to gain a low mark in Level 2.

The 6 mark questions were intended to test the ability to provide explanations. Sometimes here the temptation was to describe at great length the situation or event prior to the area covered by the question, e.g. long descriptions of the Munich Putsch.

In the 10 mark utility questions, knowledge was again often impressive, but at the expense of answering the question. Sometimes, especially in Questions 06 and 09, substantial slabs of knowledge were inserted at the beginning of answers before even a rudimentary mention of the source or the exact task posed by the question.

Topic 1: Russia, 1914–1924

The standard of answers was overall higher on this topic than on the others in Section A. This was, however, related directly to the fact that, on average, the centres who chose this topic had more able candidates.

Question 01

Candidates often strayed beyond the content of the source into their own knowledge, often writing far too much as a result. Some lost sight of the exact focus of the question on the power of Tsar Nicholas II. Some merely paraphrased the content, often sufficiently to get low Level 2. However, many were able to make simple suggestions that allowed full marks.

Question 02

Many candidates were very knowledgeable about the Whites, with exact details of names and objectives. Some, however, strayed significantly into the strengths of the Reds at the expense of the question. This is distinct from those candidates who used knowledge of strengths of the Reds to juxtapose a White weakness; if used judiciously as a tactic, this could strengthen the valid argument being made.

Question 03

Many answers were very strong on provenance; some were also excellent on knowledge. Some only covered one 'strand' of the mark scheme, and, even though they could gain up to 8 marks, it seemed a shame that they did not apparently have the techniques required to gain full marks. Many candidates wrote separate paragraphs for the two strands, with a concluding paragraph. This is excellent as it helps the examiner to separate out the two aspects of the answer and give the maximum credit possible. Indeed, many candidates did gain full marks on this question with answers that went far beyond the 'bias' of provenance into arguments concerning the need under Stalin to write acceptable versions of Bolshevik history, and included as well substantial detailed factual knowledge of the events of late 1917 in Petrograd. Some candidates wrote in considerable factual detail about the Bolshevik Revolution, but failed to link their knowledge securely with the question or the source. Only a few confused the events with those of the Civil War.

Topic 2: Weimar Germany, 1919–1929

Able candidates coped well with the three questions, but the general comments made above frequently applied.

Question 04

Simple inferences were sometimes made very clearly, but often candidates could not resist using their knowledge. It is understandable that they wish to include the Dawes Plan to show understanding of US loans. However, the use of own knowledge led on to deductions being made from this rather than from the content of the source.

Question 05

There were many good answers seen here, with good basic knowledge and understanding of the positive and negative consequences. Apart from factual errors, the most common faults in answers were substantial details on the putsch itself (irrelevant), vagueness about the trial

process, and ending the answer in the mid-1920s with no awareness of the date limit of 1929 in the question.

Question 06

Many answers were very detailed and some were excessively long. Knowledge about the terms of the Treaty of Versailles was very useful – but only when it was used to substantiate an argument. (Some candidates actually wrote the terms of the treaty in detail before even mentioning the source or the question). Some answers were also excellent in their understanding of the significance of how the war had started (German invasion of France) and ended (with an armistice, not actual defeat). Others compared the treaty to that of Brest-Litovsk. Others were able to contrast blaming France (as in the cartoon) with blaming the “November criminals” (who the source ignored). Curiously even very knowledgeable candidates, quoting the exact amount determined to be paid as reparations payments, sometimes quoting the year as well, did not make the link that the sum had not been fixed at the time of the cartoon. Therefore, the cartoon was bemoaning the principle of reparations, rather than any exact sum. Sometimes excessive analysis of the content of the cartoon drawing led to bizarre suggestions, and, worse still, led the answer away from the focus of the question – which was on German reactions to the treaty.

Topic 3: USA, 1918–1929

The three questions in this topic were completed less successfully than those in Topics 1 and 2. However, this was often not due to lack of knowledge, but rather its inappropriate use at the expense of the question.

Question 07

This question was often the victim of candidates offloading their considerable knowledge about jazz, prohibition and flappers. Many gained 3 marks for simply stating that the source suggests that jazz became more popular during the 1920s. The most astute candidates made inferences about the association of jazz with daring and illegal activities which provided a thrill and excitement.

Question 08

Some excellent answers were seen to this question – but also many weak ones. Usually was caused by answers that were concerned with the economic boom of the 1920s and had little or no reference to the Stock Market. Answers focusing primarily on the boom and concluding with reference to the question could gain a mark in Level 2. For Level 3 answers needed to be more appropriately focused on the demand for shares; low taxation; the lack of government regulation of the stock market and banks; and buying shares on the margin. Developments in mass production and the growth of hire purchase could be explained to make one developed point.

Question 09

As already stated in the introductory comments, this question invited huge amounts of information on Prohibition and Gangsters, unfortunately often at the expense of the question. Many even started with their knowledge, without even mentioning the source. Many failed to see the significance of ‘American attitudes towards organised crime and gangsters’. Better answers were able to relate the smartly-dressed man on the magazine cover to attitudes that many Americans shared because they were anti-Prohibition (thus allowing the use of knowledge about prohibition and the role of gangsters in supplying what people wanted). The

best candidates contrasted this with arguments that some Americans would be appalled by Capone's treatment as an iconic hero. He was a villain (with details of his murderous activities). The other excellent argument concerned those who were in favour of Prohibition and supported the ban when it was imposed in 1920. As an example of even very able candidates not relating their knowledge to the source or the question, many provided exact details, including the exact date, about the Valentine's Day Massacre, without actually relating this to the fact that the magazine was published in the following year, apparently without showing any adverse reaction to the events of the previous year. However, other candidates did write very convincingly about the likely motives of 'Time' magazine in featuring Al 'Scarface' Capone on its front cover.

Section B

The 8 mark 'describe' questions were often well-answered. Most candidates managed to remember to refer to the source (there is no need to do more than that unless it is helpful to do so). However, some answers went on to try to evaluate the source, especially in Questions 10 and 14, and this is not required in this part of the examination. The instruction to 'describe' means just that! It is accepted that some answers also include elements of explanation, and this cannot be avoided, especially on some topics. However, the main reward given by examiners is for factual details.

The 12-mark questions showed that most candidates had been prepared well. Most realised the need for a balanced answer, even if sometimes the arguments and facts presented were very thin on the ground. Examiners marked answers using the mark scheme, looking for developed aspects for Level 3, and then took into account the overall balance of the argument, raising the mark within the Level reached, or, if necessary, moving into the Level above. This occurred, for example, when essays were clearly good Level 2 in terms of their content, and needed to be rewarded for their overall plan and argument – thereby moving into low Level 3. It is very difficult to show this exactly in a published mark scheme, but it is important for teachers and candidates to know that a clear plan and argument are being rewarded appropriately.

Topic 4: Stalin's USSR, 1924–1941

Question 10

This was often well answered on the purges and show trials, with very exact factual details. Some featured only purges or show Trials, which, in effect, meant a maximum mark within Level 2. Some confused the focus of the question with the earlier killing of the kulaks. Some insisted on evaluating the cartoon, especially as it is American and therefore heavily biased against Communism!

Question 11

Many answers were excellent, contrasting the successes of the Plans with their shortcomings and/or the social consequences for millions of workers. These high-scoring answers included exact dates and statistics, as well as showing depth of understanding about the nature of the industrialisation process and its importance to the USSR. Some included Collectivisation in their answers, or, indeed, made it their main focus.

Topic 5: Hitler's Germany, 1929–1939

Question 12

Bearing in mind that Questions 12 and 13 were the most popular questions in this section, they were not the best answered.

Some candidates wrote succinctly with considerable detail about Nazi policies and traced how these escalated during the 1930s. At the other extreme many candidates wrote long introductions about Hitler before 1933 and how he had become anti-Semitic in his views (with a considerable variety of opinions given for the reasons). Then the answers tended to give general points about how the Jews were treated, reaching the mass-transportation of the Jews far too early in their answers. All details about ghettos and the final solution are, of course, totally irrelevant. In weaker answers, the only detail provided was often about Kristallnacht, and even then it was often linked too closely with the photograph in the source.

This report is taking the opportunity to correct what is perceived to be a common error. Many candidates referred to Jews being forced to wear the Star of David, often early in Hitler's regime and many linked it with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. In fact, it was Heydrich who suggested that Jews be made to wear the star in 1938, but this was not acted on until it was introduced in Poland in late 1939 on a local basis. It was introduced in some other Nazi-controlled areas during the war. Similarly, Jews did not have to add 'Israel' or 'Sarah' to their names in the period 1933–1939.

Question 13

The wording of the question allowed a variety of approaches, and the best answers analysed the political intrigues and showed mature understanding of the nature of the Weimar constitution which Hitler first of all used and then destroyed. These excellent answers compared the significance of the Enabling Act with other events and situations in the first half of 1933, and then compared the effect of these with other moves towards dictatorship, including the Night of the Long Knives. Some wrote in detail about fear and the use of violence, and related these to particular events, rather than just making general points about propaganda and censorship. However, many answers betrayed a lack of understanding of the actual mechanics of how Hitler moved from being Chancellor to gaining more power. How Hitler was able to make use of the Reichstag Fire was often over-simplified. Often the Communists were banned too early in the descriptions, or candidates asserted that the Enabling Act itself banned other political parties. Frequently examiners read that 'Hitler passed the Enabling Act' and similar sentiments. Many candidates focused their answers on pre-January 1933 and got involved in narrative details that were not relevant. Pre 1933 material could be used relevantly as part of an argument – for example, that the consequences of the Wall Street Crash and the fear among wealthier Germans of a Communist takeover naturally created much support for Hitler and allowed him to go outside the law without much opposition. Some answers were relevantly focused post-January 1933, but were weak because they had no sense of chronology and therefore could not provide explanations. Other weak answers merely accepted that Hitler had no political opposition and went on to explain how this meant that he could do as he wished, with numerous general examples of his actions.

Topic 6 : Depression and New Deal in the USA, 1929–1941

Question 14

Frequently this was answered extremely well. Usually the source was well-understood (though sometimes too much time was spent on analysing its content) and detailed factual knowledge about the Supreme Court's attitudes and actions was provided. Other aspects of criticism were also sometimes very well described. Weaker candidates tended to write about some of the New Deal alphabet agencies – and then go on to say that the Supreme Court criticised them.

Question 15

Many candidates were able to write detailed explanations, firstly questioning whether Hoover did fail to deal with the Depression or not (and providing balance here) and then going on to the election itself. Detailed knowledge on Roosevelt was not needed to gain high marks. However, many candidates did have this, even though some went beyond the election and included aspects of what he actually did in 1933. In particular, it should be noted that the first "official" Fireside Chat was on 12th March 1933 when he had become President. Earlier talks had been locally broadcast when he was Governor of New York. The level of detail on Hoover varied, some answers not getting beyond the Hoover Dam and rugged individualism. Many wrote in detail about the Bonus Marchers, even though some became confused about the exact details.

Topic 7: Race Relations in the USA, 1955–1968

Question 16

This was often well-answered, either on the Rides or the Marches, or both. Some candidates provided a very high level of factual detail in their answers; others were understandably more limited. Some were only able to amplify what was in the photograph by writing in general terms about brutality. Most realised that Freedom Rides concerned interstate buses, and some had detailed routes to describe. On the Marches, some only knew about the Washington March, but they could gain credit for writing in considerable detail about this event.

Question 17

Many excellent answers were seen, contrasting the advances in education with the gains in transport. The best answers tried to reach judgements about the extent of the victories in practice, as opposed to the Federal Government passing laws. Some compared short-term as opposed to long-term consequences; some contrasted local as against federal significance, often bringing in the growing role of the visual media in the 1950s. Some answers inevitably strayed beyond the 1950s, sometimes including material relevant to Question 16.

Topic 8: USA and Vietnam, 1964-1975

Question 18

Candidates from some centres provided excellent answers. Others, however, were more limited, often getting confused with the Tet Offensive, or relying almost entirely on the photograph as the basis for their answer. Some thought that the photograph was part of the Tet Offensive. Some answers started much too early, rather than with the Paris Peace Conference. Descriptions of the policy of Vietnamisation, which of course started before 1973, were allowed as the policy was still being carried out in the years 1973–1975.

Question 19

Some answers were excellent, contrasting My Lai with other events and situations. Many of the astute candidates explained about the adverse publicity in the USA about the Tet Offensive which came before My Lai. The massacre, therefore, merely served to strengthen public opinion against the war. Others argued that it was the domestic events such as the Kent State University killings that turned US public opinion against involvement in Vietnam. Some answers were unfortunately very general in argument and involved long descriptions of My Lai and how the US public was revolted by what it saw. Frequently there was the apparent assumption that film of the event was broadcast on US television immediately after the event. This misconception would seem to stem from well-known cinema films. In spite of this, for some weak candidates this question produced their highest mark.

Topic 9: Britain and Northern Ireland, 1960–1986

Question 20

This was usually well-answered, making good use of the statistics in the source. Gerrymandering was well known.

Question 21

Some answers were very good, but others included too much irrelevant material, for example about the background to Bloody Sunday in 1972. Candidates could draw evidence from various events before and after the IRA bombings in Britain, and some were well aware of internment and divisions within the IRA, but the key ingredient had to be argument rather than mere description if high marks were to be awarded.

Topic 10: The Middle East, 1956–1979

Question 22

Very few candidates chose this topic. The map seemed to cause no problems and, indeed, was helpful for providing a focus for the answers. Some were weak on the actual events of the crisis, as opposed to the background.

Question 23

Some excellent answers, but many focused narrowly on Israel and Egypt with little awareness of the wider Arab involvement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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