

REICHSTAG FIRE COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

GCSE HISTORY COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Teacher Information

Introduction:

These assignments comprise sources, questions and mark schemes which will enable your pupils to fulfil the coursework requirements in history for Edexcel Foundation specifications for first examination from summer 2003. You may use these assignments as they stand. They have been designed to assess the full range of grades targeted by the syllabus (Grades G-A*). Assistance may be given in class to aid the comprehension of the sources.

You may also adapt these assignments if wished by:

- providing additional or replacement sources
- providing additional or replacement questions.

However, if you wish to make changes you should submit these to the Edexcel Foundation for approval to ensure that revised sources or questions give candidates appropriate opportunity to meet the targets specified at the appropriate level.

Management of the assignment:

The assignment has been designed to accommodate some flexibility of classroom practice. The following points should be borne in mind:

- Although all the questions *may* be tackled as part of a single task, this is not necessary. The timing of individual questions within an assignment may be staggered over a period of time and integrated into the programme of study.
- Candidates may use the sources provided in the pack as part of their preparation for Assignment 1 but this is not a requirement.
- Your candidates should draw upon their contextual knowledge when using the sources for Assignment 2. The historical content listed below should be familiar to candidates before they attempt to answer the questions.

The Reichstag Fire

This assignment should arise from a teaching programme designed to occupy approximately half a term. Before candidates begin this assignment they should have knowledge of:

- Hitler, Nazism and Nazi beliefs
- The Nazi rise to power: the role of Hitler
- The Nazi State: propaganda; education; youth movements; persecution of the Jews
- Nazi economic policies.

Introduction

Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 but he was still very much under the influence of President Hindenburg. Also, there were only three Nazis in the government and the Nazis did not have a majority in the Reichstag. Hitler's first aim was to achieve a majority in the Reichstag. He therefore called for another election. In the weeks before the election the Nazis used every kind of propaganda as well as mass meetings and parades. They also used violence against other political parties, especially the Communists.

The Nazi election campaign was given a boost on 27 February 1933 by an unexpected event. The Reichstag caught fire and burnt down. A Communist called Marinus van der Lubbe was caught at the scene of the blaze with matches and firelighters.

Historians disagree about how the fire started. Some say that the Nazis started it and then accused van der Lubbe. Others believe van der Lubbe's claim that he acted alone.

In this assignment you will investigate how the Nazis used the Reichstag fire to increase their power in Germany.

SOURCE A: a photograph showing the Reichstag on fire on the morning of 28 February 1933



SOURCE B: Van der Lubbe's statement to the police, shortly after his arrest

At the outset, I must insist that my action on 27 February was inspired by political motives. I was a member of the Communist party until 1929. In Holland I read that the Nazis had come to power in Germany. Since the workers would do nothing, I had to do something myself. I thought arson a suitable method. I did not wish to harm people, but something that belonged to the system. As to the question whether I acted alone, I declare emphatically that this was the case. No one at all helped me.

SOURCE C: an extract from Goebbel's diary for 27 February 1933. Goebbels was entertaining Hitler to dinner on the evening of 27 February 1933.

At nine the Führer came for supper. We had a little music and talked. Suddenly the telephone rang. The Reichstag is burning. I thought the news pure fantasy and wouldn't even tell the Führer about it. After a few more calls I got the terrible confirmation it was true. I informed the Führer, and we raced downtown at 70 m.p.h. The whole building was in flames. Göring met us, and soon von Papen arrived. It had already been established that the fire was due to arson. There was no doubt that the Communists had made a final attempt to seize power by creating an atmosphere of panic and terror.

SOURCE E: a cover of a book called 'Armed Uprising' published in Germany in 1933. The illustration shows armed communists and the Reichstag building on fire.



SOURCE E: the official announcement about the Reichstag Fire by the Prussian Government, 2 February 1933 [Berlin was in the part of Germany known as Prussia]

This act of incendiarism (arson) is the most monstrous act of terrorism so far carried out by Communism in Germany. Government buildings and essential factories were to be burned down. The burning of the Reichstag was to have been the signal for a bloody revolt and civil war. Today was to have seen throughout Germany, terrorist acts against individual persons, against private property, and against the life and limb of the peaceful population.

SOURCE F: from a journalist's interview with Hitler, March 1933

It is nothing but a damned lie and a malicious libel. It is ridiculous. Europe, instead of suspecting me of false play, should be grateful to me for my drastic action against the Bolsheviks. If Germany went Communist, as there was every prospect of it going until I became Chancellor, the rest of civilised Europe would fall prey to this pest. The attack on the Reichstag was just one of a whole series of terrorist activities which the police are able to prove were planned by the Communists. We have seized hundred-weights of material in the secret cellar of the communist headquarters proving that these fires were to be the beacon signals for a nation-wide campaign of dynamiting and mass murder.

SOURCE G: the report of Martin Sommerfeldt, Göring's press officer, about the fire and how the news was received by Göring, 1947

I heard that the fire was discovered at 9 p.m. by a civilian who notified the nearest policeman. The latter alerted a police patrol, the police alerted the fire brigade. The policeman saw a man tugging wildly at a curtain over one of the large panes in the lobby and fired a shot at him. When the people entered the building they found burning firelighters everywhere, which suggested arson. They managed to collect about a hundredweight of this material and arrested a man who seemed to be running berserk in the corridors.

Göring looked at it. 'That's sheer rubbish [he said]. It may be a good police report, but it's not at all the kind of communique I have in mind. One hundredweight of incendiary material? No, ten hundredweight or even a hundred.' And he added two noughts to my figure.

'That is quite impossible minister! No one can possibly believe that a single man can have carried that load!'

'Nothing is impossible! Why mention a single man? There were ten or even twenty men! Don't you understand what's been happening? The whole thing was a signal for a Communist uprising! They must have come through the tunnel!'

SOURCE H: the testimony of Karl van Ernst, S A Gruppenführer. He was killed in a purge in 1934. His testimony turned up in Paris soon afterwards.

I suggested to Göring that we use the subterranean passage because that would minimise the risk of discovery. Goebbels insisted on postponing the fire from 25 February to 27 February because 26th was a Sunday, a day on which no evening papers appeared so that the fire could not be played up sufficiently for propaganda purposes. Göring and Goebbels agreed to throw suspicion on the Communists. The Dutchman had to climb in the Reichstag after we had left and the fire was already started. Van der Lubbe was to be left in the belief that he was working by himself.

Assignment One: Objective 1

1. Why did many people vote for the Nazi party in the elections of 1930-32? **(20)**
2. Describe how the Nazis used the Reichstag fire to increase their power in Germany in the years 1933-34. **(15)**
3. How important was propaganda to Nazi control over Germany in the years 1934-39? **(15)**

(Total: 50 marks)

Assignment Two: Objectives 2 and 3

1. Study Source A.

What can you learn from this source about the Reichstag fire?

(6)

2. Study Sources B and C.

How useful are these sources as evidence about the Reichstag Fire?

(10)

3. Study Sources D and E and use your own knowledge.

Explain what use the Nazis made of the Reichstag fire in the 1933 election campaign.

(12)

4. Study Sources F, G and H.

Do Sources G and H support the evidence given by Hitler in Source F? Explain your answer by reference to all three sources.

(8)

5. Study all the sources and use your own knowledge.

'The Reichstag Fire was the most important reason why the Nazis were able to gain complete control over Germany'.

(14)

Use the sources and your own knowledge to explain whether you agree with this view.

(Total: 50 marks)

Coursework Assignments Mark Scheme

The Reichstag Fire

Assignment One: Assessment Objective 1

1. *Why did many people vote for the Nazi party in the elections of 1930-32?* (20)

Target: Causation/recall of knowledge

Level 1: Simple statements giving reasons for voting for the Nazis supported by some knowledge, e.g. propaganda; unemployment. (1-5)

Level 2: Developed statements giving reasons supported by relevant knowledge, e.g. extent of unemployment; examples of propaganda. (6-10)

Level 3: Developed explanation supported by selected knowledge showing understanding of the influence of events and factors 1930-32 and the links between them e.g. shows impact of Wall Street Crash on support. (11-15)

Level 4: Developed account sustained by precisely selected knowledge which analyses the complexity and interrelationship of factors and motives influencing the Nazi support e.g. impact of Wall Street Crash considered in relation to Nazi assertion of national revival and analyses (16-20)

2. *Describe how the Nazis used the Reichstag fire to increase their power in Germany in the years 1933-34.* (15)

Target: Key features/recall of knowledge

Level 1: Simple statements offering some ways the Fire was used by the Nazis, e.g. they blamed the Communists, Communists arrested. (1-5)

Level 2: Developed statements giving ways the Fire was used by the Nazis supported by relevant knowledge e.g. describes links between Fire and passing of Enabling Law (6-10)

Level 3: Explores the implications of a range of ways in which Nazis used the Fire e.g. in considering the impact of Fire examines uses of propaganda to identify scapegoats and suggest they were putting state at risk, for passage of Enabling Law and banning of opposition parties. (11-15)

3. *How important was propaganda to Nazi control over Germany in the years 1934-39?* (15)

Target: Analysis of key features to make judgement about consequence/recall of knowledge

Level 1: Simple statements giving some examples of propaganda the Nazis used e.g. rallies, Hitler Youth, film. (1-5)

Level 2: Developed statements giving examples of effectiveness of propaganda e.g. rewriting of textbooks influenced education, Hitler Youth promoted military values. (6-10)

Level 3: Developed explanation supported by appropriately selected knowledge showing understanding of the degree of importance of propaganda against other methods of control in police state. (11-15)

Coursework Assignment Mark Scheme

The Reichstag Fire

Assignment Two: Assessment Objectives 2 and 3

1. *Study Source A. What can you learn from this source about the Reichstag fire?* (6)

Target: Comprehension of and inference from sources

Level 1: Information taken from source or sources at face value, e.g. it was a big fire, the whole building was ablaze etc. (1-3)

Level 2: Inferences from the source, e.g. big fire still burning the next day, people stopped to stare etc (4-6)

2. *Study Sources B and C. How useful are Sources B and C as evidence about the Reichstag Fire? Explain your answer. .* (10)

Target: Evaluation of utility of sources

Level 1: Simple statements taking the sources at face value e.g. it was arson; it was done by the Communists etc. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements considering reliability of sources, using nature, origin and purpose, e.g. Source C is diary of a Nazi, so could be altered to fit their view of events; Source B, van der Lubbe's account, says he acted alone. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation evaluating the sources as evidence e.g. both sources give evidence that Communists were involved and also that there were political motives. Source B suggests no widespread plot. Van der Lubbe, frustrated at lack of worker action, does the job himself. Source C gives evidence that Nazis wanted to use it as evidence of widespread Communist involvement. (7-10)

3. *Study Sources D and E. Explain what use the Nazis made of the Reichstag fire in the 1933 election campaign.* (12)

Target: Analysis of sources/key features

Level 1: Simple statements about uses of the fire using the sources as information at face value and/or some knowledge, e.g. blamed the Communists; Communists arrested. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements using the sources as information and supported by some relevant knowledge, e.g. describes links between fire and Hindenburg's declaration of state emergency. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed analysis using the sources as evidence and supported by appropriately selected knowledge, e.g. uses Source D and own knowledge to consider impact of propaganda during the election campaign (7-10)

Level 4: Sustained argument, using the sources as evidence and supported by precisely selected knowledge, e.g. examines the significance of both Sources D and E as evidence about nature of propaganda, uses own knowledge about key issues in the election campaign and assess impact on election outcome. (11-12)

4. *Study Sources F, G and H. Do Sources G and H support the evidence given by Hitler in Source F? Explain your answer by reference to all three sources.* (8)

Target: Cross-referencing of sources to reach a judgement

Level 1: Simple statements using the sources at face value e.g. both Sources F and G agree on the weight of the incendiary material, but disagree about a plot etc. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements making links between the sources e.g. Source F says that the police can prove the fire was a Communist plot. Source H says that the Nazis started a fire and agreed to throw suspicion on the Communists. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation using the sources as evidence e.g. considers the extent of the support to Source F either by detailed consideration of the evidence of both Sources G and H OR considers extent of challenge in the light of the implications of their provenance. (7-8)

5. *Study all the sources. 'The Reichstag Fire was the most important reason why the Nazis were able to gain complete control over Germany.'*
Use the sources and your own knowledge to explain whether you agree with this view. (14)

Target: Analysis of interpretation of an event/ recall of knowledge (AO3)

Level 1: Simple statements using the sources at face value Or own knowledge offering points in support using sources or own knowledge, e.g. the fire was important, Communists were blamed. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements making inferences from the sources offering points in support of choice using sources and supported by relevant knowledge, e.g. describes the links between the Fire and the passing of the Enabling Law. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation using the sources as evidence giving a judgement about view and supported by selected knowledge, e.g. consider the impact of the Fire, its links with state of emergency and Enabling Law and introduces other factors such as propaganda, police state (7-11)

Level 4: Sustained argument using the sources as evidence and supported by precisely selected knowledge, which critically evaluates the relative significance of the role of the Fire against other factors, e.g. propaganda, police state, Hitler Youth, education. (12-14)