

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H105

For first teaching in 2015

Y251/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y251 series overview

Y251 is one of five units for the revised AS Level examination for GCE History. The units present a borehole approach so that students can see change and developments, and make substantiated judgements over substantial lengths of time and see issues in a wider perspective

In Section A candidates have to answer one essay question from a choice of two. The second question requires them to evaluate a given historical interpretation using their knowledge to evaluate its strengths and limitations.

To do well on Section A, candidates need to be able to consider both provenance of the sources and apply contextual knowledge to them in order to reach a judgement about the sources in relation to the issue in the question.

To do well on Section B, candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher levels candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- in answering the essay question, discussed at least two issues in depth
- gave supporting detail that was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic
- reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question
- made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question
- in answering the interpretation questions, were able to evaluate the strengths and limitations of that interpretation using contextual knowledge that was relevant to the issues raised by the quotation
- made reference to other interpretations and had good knowledge of the historical debate.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay
- were unable to support their answer with relevant material
- did not focus on the precise wording of the question
- made unsupported comments about issues which were assertions
- described the interpretation without analysing its strengths and weaknesses
- did not link their contextual knowledge to the specific issues raised in the quotation.

Section A overview

In Section A candidates are required to answer one question from a choice of two. Candidates are likely to spend up to an hour on this section. Candidates can score well by considering two or three issues in depth and reaching a supported judgement. However, it is important to make sure that the issues selected allow a justifiable judgement to be reached. The majority of candidates chose to answer Question 1, but Question 2 did elicit a moderate amount of responses.

Question 1

1* How complete was Nazi control of Germany by the end of 1934?

[30]

This was the more popular of the two essays and candidates who concentrated on the Legal Revolution and its impact on Nazi control fared extremely well. Those candidates who established an initial view and considered a range of factors were able to produce an insightful response that assessed the idea of completeness. Exemplar 1 demonstrates a response where the candidate adopts a nuanced approach to this question. Weaker responses tended to provide an overview of the Nazi's rise to power, often including material which was irrelevant to this question. Strong responses tended to have a good grasp of what constituted the Legal Revolution and how the Nazis used this to extend control. Mid-level and weaker answers were able to describe some of the events without necessarily linking this to completeness of control.

Exemplar 1

When considering if the Nazi party had control in Germany by the end of 1934, we have to consider how much influence the party had on ordinary people's lives and how much power they could ~~insert~~ ^{insert} over people. The Nazi Party used the legal system to pass laws, such as the Enabling Act, which allowed control over people's lives. Furthermore, Hitler's purge had potential threat in the Night of the Long Knives, which enabled him ^{to have} ~~more~~ political power. He enforced his control via the use of propaganda and Nazification of German society. However, he didn't have full control, as the Judiciary

still had freedom, as well as the
 Church, who still had much influence.
 That being said, to a large extent the
 Nazi control in Germany was complete
 by the end of 1934.

Question 2

- 2* 'Society in the German Democratic Republic was transformed between 1949 and 1963.' How far do you agree? [30]

This question was less popular and elicited a small range of responses. The best responses approached this question in a thematic way producing a response which included the role of women, religion, economy, personal freedom etc. Weaker responses tended to focus on the GDR as a whole, rather than focusing on society. A significant number of answers dwelt on politics and the economy. Weaker answers tended to examine how successful East Germany was in comparison to West Germany and in fact in a few cases some candidates confused West Germany with the GDR.

The best responses were able to look at different aspects of society and consider the extent of change (for example for women, children, and in terms of religion). Some linked government policies to these aspects (e.g. availability of consumer goods, food, etc.). Collectivisation was generally well-understood, where used. Few responses discussed the physical development of towns and urban areas to promote a socialist way of life or indeed examined changes to the standard of living. Where this was discussed there was usually a link to the increase of mass organisations and cultural or leisure opportunities. Many candidates included information on the exodus leading up to the construction of the Berlin Wall and used this and the 1953 uprising to show how society was negatively transformed in the GDR.

Section B overview

In this section candidates are required to answer a question dealing with an historical interpretation. candidates are required to use their knowledge of the given topic to evaluate this. Candidates score highly when they consider the strengths and limitations of the interpretation using detailed and relevant knowledge of the historical context and are able to refer to the wider historical debate. Generalised knowledge will not be credited highly in this question

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation and then answer the question that follows:

'An examination of events suggests that the implementation [of the Final Solution] was haphazard... the policy was only decided at the end of 1941.'

From: N. Fellows, *Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany 1919–1963* (2017)

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied. [20]

There were a many good responses to this interpretation. The best answers focused on the language of the interpretation and used this to produce an evaluative analysis of the interpretation. Exemplar 2 demonstrates a well-focused response which uses detailed contextual support to discuss the given interpretation. Where candidates did not reach this level, it was down to a lack of specific examples and a more general treatment of the interpretation. Most candidates had a sound conceptual understanding, but it was the absence of specific details that separated high level from mid-range responses. Mid-range responses tended to give a broad outline of the history of the Final Solution and were suitably rewarded. Many understood the chosen date as being linked to the German situation in WW2 and were able to use this information to produce reasonable responses to the question.

Exemplar 2

The interpretation uses the phrase 'haphazard' to describe the implementation of the final solution. Here Fellows is suggesting that the way in which the Holocaust was executed was very disorganised and that there was no structure to it. This was indeed shown to be the case as the Germans advanced East after 1941. They were simply unprepared for the amount of Jews they encountered and were

uncertain as to what to do. This led to squads of the SS (Einsatzgruppen) following behind the army and killing the Jews in a random, unsystematic manner. In Babi Yar, near Kiev in Ukraine, the Einsatzgruppen killed over 20,000 civilians in a mass murder, before even determining whether they were regarded as 'subhuman' or not. This shows the implementation of the final solution and the murder of Jews to be originally unsystematic and as the interpretation says 'haphazard' with even soldiers unsure as to what they should have done. Another supportable aspect of this interpretation is where it says that the policy was 'only decided at the end of 1941'. This is the argument of many structuralist historians and indeed a view which can be supported by much evidence. The final solution with regards to the Holocaust is usually associated with extermination camps, which is where majority of the Holocaust occurred. However, 3 of the main extermination camps (Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka) were only built in 1942, which supports the interpretation's view that the policy for mass extermination could not have been decided before 1941. Furthermore, historical evidence such as letters show 1941 to be the year of the command for the Holocaust. In a now infamous letter from Goering to Heydrich, he commands for the 'final solution' to be implemented.

Copyright information

Question 3: N Fellows, 'OCR AS/A-Level History: Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany 1919-1963', p52, Hodder Education, 2017.

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