

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# **HISTORY A**

**H505**

For first teaching in 2015

## **Y221/01 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 Y221/01 series overview

Y221 is one of twenty four Units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about one hundred years through a short answer essay and a traditional essay. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay and candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short essay question (a), candidates need to consider the significance or importance both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

To do well on the traditional essay 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.

<b><i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following</i></b>	<b><i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short answer essay.</li> <li>• Reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important.</li> <li>• Linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question.</li> <li>• In answering the essay question candidates discussed at least two issues in depth.</li> <li>• The supporting detail was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic.</li> <li>• Reach a supported judgement about the issue in the question.</li> <li>• Make a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered only one of the issues or discussed one in a superficial way.</li> <li>• Produced a judgement that was not supported and was therefore assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response.</li> <li>• Were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question.</li> <li>• Showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay.</li> <li>• Were unable to support their answer with relevant or accurate material.</li> <li>• Did not focus on the precise wording of the question.</li> <li>• Made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Which of the following was a greater success for the government of the Federal Republic of Germany in the years 1949–1963?
- (i) The economy
  - (ii) Foreign policy

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This was the more popular of the two questions on this paper. In general it was well-answered. However a significant number of candidates wrote quite generally about the success of both factors, ignoring the overall success that these policies were for the government. Weaker responses described the policies rather than assessing success. The best answers had an in depth knowledge of both factors and were able to link the two together. For example, arguing that without a successful pro- Western foreign policy the West German economy would have struggled. Better candidates saw the limitations of foreign policy by assessing the poor relations with East Germany and to begin with, a problematic relationship with France.

Economic policies often lacked specifics- while there was often mention of an economic miracle, few candidates were able to name Erhard as the architect of economic policy or what it entailed. Better responses gave detailed analyses of the growth in productivity, declining unemployment and the improvements to the standard of living.

In general too many candidates simply gave a descriptive account of both policies with little evaluation of 'greater success'.

## Question 1 (b)

- (b)\* 'The main reason for the worsening of the quality of life of German citizens in the years 1939–1945 was the impact of Allied bombing.' How far do you agree? [20]

Most candidates were able to give at least three factors as to why life got worse for German citizens during WWII with the stronger ones able to give a judgement on 'how far'. The more successful answers tended to focus on Total War as a more important factor in worsening conditions, particularly after 1942. There was surprisingly little reference to the Soviet invasion of Eastern Germany and the problems this caused for the population not least of which was a refugee crisis that overwhelmed what was left of a functioning government in 1945.

'Allied Bombing' was more likely to see specific examples being used, and was often slightly stronger in terms of precision, if somewhat shorter although specific reference was often limited to Hamburg and Dresden. Some stronger responses differentiated between German citizens by arguing that it tended to be only city dwellers who suffered from bombing whereas Total War affected the entire population. The chosen exemplar demonstrates strong analysis of the impact of allied bombing and this approach led to a high mark in the essay.

Weaker responses discussed the entire Nazi period and how life got worse because of a lack of freedoms or worsening pay. Discussion of women tended to fall into this category with answers focusing on the "Three Ks" and a reversal of Weimar era reforms. The dates of the question were sometimes ignored in these responses.

The Final Solution tended to be dealt with poorly with many descriptive responses on the death camps. Better responses recognised that the majority of citizens were not directly affected but the focus on transporting millions to the camps took away precious resources from the civilian population.

There was also some confusion over 'quality of life' with responses focusing purely on morale and how this worsened in 1944 leading to growing opposition to the regime. These responses tended to drift off into tangential areas.

### Exemplar 2

On the other hand, another factor which can be seen as the main reason for the worsening of the quality of life of Germans can be

seen as with the rationalisation that was introduced, firstly by Speer in 1942, and reaffirmed with Hitler's rationalisation decree later on. This can be identified as a key reason for lower quality of life as it meant that food consumption was limited, meaning that most Germans were hungry and malnourished and also that some other basic goods such as toilet paper were no longer being produced. This is as resources now had to go towards the war effort, so in essence, the guns and butter debate outlined by Cobden as Germany now had to focus on the war effort, guns rather than consumer goods i.e. butter. This resulted in a worsening of standards of living as common household goods were not only scarce, but sometimes completely discontinued as in

order to accommodate war production. It can also be seen as having a wider impact than the Allied bombing as it had widespread effects, it was ~~so~~ affected all German citizens as the Gauleiters helped to implement these rationing on a local level. ~~In addition,~~ This also consequently led to higher prices as there were food shortages, as well as shortages for other consumer goods due to their scarcity and ~~the~~ therefore, they became more expensive, this meant that Germans had to use more of their disposable incomes

to purchase them, leading to ~~lower~~ less money available to them. The inflation also meant that their savings were now worth less.

However, the extent to which this caused a worsening in the quality of life of Germans can be seen as limited as support for the war effort was still strong as late as 1944, suggesting that the ~~strict~~ rationing had not really decreased the quality of life of Germans too significantly. The opposition to Hitler and the war ~~only~~ <sup>could</sup> be seen mainly from the army with the Stauffenberg bomb plot and there is little evidence for any uprisings caused as a result of the rationing.

## Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) Which of the following was a more significant reason for political instability in Germany in the years 1919–1924?
- (i) The impact of the Treaty of Versailles
  - (ii) Economic problems

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

As with 1a there was much description of the factors without any real evaluation of significance. The best answers had an in depth knowledge of both factors and were able to link the two together. For example, arguing that Versailles exacerbated existing economic problems. Many answers were able to discuss both factors in detail but without linking them to political instability. The introduction to the exemplar chosen highlights a candidate who was able to link both factors and assess their impact to political instability.

The best responses were able to identify what political instability was— a rise in votes for the Nazis and KPD and the numerous putsch attempts following the signing of Versailles. However many candidates simply referred to 'political instability' and so answers were quite general in nature.

The short term impact of the Treaty of Versailles and the development of the “stab in the back” myth was frequently noted and there were some good references to Weimar coalitions. However there were also some significant misunderstandings with one common error being to blame the Spartacist revolt on the Treaty. This took place in January 1919.

Economic problems tended to be limited to discussion of the hyperinflation crisis with little on the immediate post-war problems of Germany or the growth in popularity of left-wing groups because of the problems of the working-classes.

Stronger answers also argued that economic problems were solved by the actions of Stresemann in 1924 while the Treaty remained a running sore in German politics.

## Exemplar 3

It can be argued that the <sup>impact of the</sup> Treaty of Versailles was a more significant reason for political instability in Germany in the years 1919-24 as it directly led to putschés from both the left and the right. However, economic problems, most notably ~~the~~ hyperinflation, were crucial in destabilising the political climate as <sup>money</sup> conditions were unable to respond effectively to the issues. It is important to note that both the factors are interlinked, as, without the burden of reparations from the Treaty of Versailles, Germany's economic situation would have been far less dire.

## Question 2 (b)

(b)\* 'The government of the German Democratic Republic entirely failed to achieve its domestic aims in the years 1949-1963.' How far do you agree? [20]

This was the answer that elicited the weakest responses. A worrying number of students wrote about West Germany rather than the GDR and scored no credit as a result. A small range of responses had extensive knowledge of GDR domestic policies, although these tended to identify what the GDR set out to do and how far these aims were achieved. This can be seen in the chosen exemplar which clearly sets out these ideas in the introduction. More able candidates marked themselves out by giving a judgement on 'entirely failed' arguing that in some areas including education, equality and collectivisation there was some success.

A few answers successfully argued that up until 1961 the evidence of failure was clear as many citizens simply left the country and moved to West Germany but the closing of the borders in 1961 brought more stability to the country and a gradual improvement as citizens accepted their fate and worked to make the GDR a success.

For many, there tended to be a lack of breadth across the different factors proposed in the mark scheme, with many only addressing 1 or 2 from each side of the debate.

## Exemplar 4

It can be argued that the government of the German Democratic Republic did not entirely fail to achieve its domestic aims, as many ~~the~~ moves towards socialism were successfully implemented in a political, economic and social sense. As East Germany was to become a Soviet satellite state, the main overall aim of Ulbricht and his government was to introduce socialistic ~~the~~ policies, and many were achieved. However, the government did fail to win the support of ~~the majority~~ <sup>many</sup> of the ~~nation~~ population, shown through 2.6 million people leaving ~~to~~ from East to West Berlin from 1949-61. As such, ~~the government~~

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